

SOUTH CAROLINA BASKETBALL

PREGAME DEVOTION THEME

2008



EPHESIANS 6

"The Full Armor of God"

GAMECOCK DEVOTION



@ Ole Miss

Sword of the Spirit!

Our final piece of armor is the Sword of the Spirit! This is the first and only truly offensive weapon God gives us to fight with! All of the rest of the armor seems to have a defensive theme to it so that we can be prepared when the devil attacks, however the sword is clearly designed for hand to hand offensive combat. The Roman soldier usually carried a spear as well as a sword. We have seen frequent representations of the legionary standing upon guard, and he almost always stands with a spear in his right hand, while his sword hangs at his side. But Paul, for excellent reasons, concentrates our offensive weapon, because it answers all. We are to use *the sword* and use it well. Many never get around to using the Sword effectively. While it is true that the defensive weapons may prevent Satan from getting to us, if we neglect to use the Sword, he tends to just hang around, lingering around with us as the days go by, until one day one of the defensive weapons is allowed to slip. Then he makes his move. When we follow up the defensive weapons with effective use of the sword, we not only hold him at bay, we drive him off! We tear down his evil work! Therefore, if you are going to this fight, see to it that your only weapon is always in your hand.

Jesus Himself gave us an example. When Jesus was attacked by Satan, He spoke directly to him. ("Be gone, Satan! **For it is written...**" (Matthew 4:10) He has given us a model to follow. God has given us Scriptures to use to drive Satan off. Satan would like for us to feel so foolish about using them that we would try "some other strategy." We need to tell him what God has given us to tell him! Knowing God's word truly can help you avoid/conquer so many of the temptations of the enemy because it was written as life's instruction manual. To beat doubt, worry, frustration, lust, anger or any of the sinful emotions this world is full of we must know what God says about them. My prayer for all of us is that we would have our swords by us and ready to use so we can push the enemy back on his heels during this fight called life.

I wonder what would happen if we treated our Bible like we treat our cell phones. What if we carried it around in our purses or pockets? What if we turned back to go get it if we forgot it? What if we flipped through it several times a day? What if we used it to receive messages from the text? What if we treated it like we couldn't live without it? What if we gave it to our kids as gifts? What if we used it as we traveled? What if we used it in case of an emergency? What if we upgraded it to get the latest version? This is something to make you go...hmm...where is my Bible?

Ephesians 6:17

And the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God

SOUTH CAROLINA BASKETBALL



Any competition we face in life begins with yielding and/or submitting!! As a player, you must yield to the rules of the game, your coaches, and the referees, all of which are not always easy. As a staff you must yield to the coach, his ways, and his strategies so that you can reflect his leadership style throughout your program. As a coach, you must yield to the administration, the infamous APR, and the NCAA regulations as you aim to take your team as far as destiny will allow.

In life, we are also challenged with yielding so that we can compete, but our coach does not leave us unprepared. As we yield our lives to the control of God, He prepares us for battle with weapons and armor. This armor consists of both offensive gifts and defensive gifts. The offensive gifts He gives us help us to attack when we have the ball, and the defensive gifts we are given protect us when the enemy is aiming to attack. In this brief summary of God's armor I hope you will be challenged to both yield and compete for a greater purpose than you ever have before! Fight Hard!

-Jack Easterby
Character Coach
South Carolina Basketball

GAMECOCK DEVOTION



@ Vanderbilt

Preparing for Battle!!!

The Christian life, in summary, is a battle on a grand scale, because when God blesses, Satan is certain to attack. When we are walking in humility rather than pride, in unity rather than divisiveness, in love rather than in lust, in light rather than darkness, in wisdom rather than foolishness, we can be absolutely certain we will face conflict. The true Christian described in Ephesians chapters 1-3, who lives the faithful life described in chapters 4-6:9, CAN expect to be involved in the battle described in 6:10-20 (verses below). So how do we get ready for battle? To me there are a few things we need to understand as a **“beginning scouting report”** of the battlefield. As we face life and the temptations that lie therein, the more we know about the enemy and his devices, the more likely it is that we can call on God’s strength in those areas to defeat him. However we cannot enter battle alone and unprepared, so we must begin understand the following:

1. What/who are you fighting for? **The Lord!**
2. Why fight for Him? **He fought for me!**
3. Who/what are we fighting against? **Satan and the powers he posses (vs. 12)**
4. How long will we be fighting? **Until we reach safe ground (Heaven)**
5. When does this battle start? **Immediately, RIGHT NOW! In every decision!**

Ephesians 6:10-18

10Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

GAMECOCK DEVOTION



GEORGIA

The Helmet of Salvation!

The next piece of armor is a helmet, which covers the head. The importance of the head does not need much convincing. A soldier can, more than likely, survive a broken arm, but any injury to the head, depending on the severity, is usually life threatening. Helmets are a form of security. Most of us have used a helmet at some point in our lives. In sports, on a bicycle or motorcycle, on a construction site, or in the military, failure to have the proper helmet can prove fatal. There's also a difference between wearing a helmet and simply owning one. When warfare begins, you can always tell the person who wore their helmet from the one who merely possessed one because one is on his feet; the other can be distinguished by all the bandages! Our most critical "helmet" (whether we realize it or not) is the one that is absolutely essential for the combat we are presently engaged in spiritually! It is the helmet designed by God. Paul knew exactly what he was writing when he associated the helmet with “salvation,” because coming to an understanding that your sins hurt God and that you are in need of saving is a mental concept. There is, in fact, very little physical about it. The helmet protects the head, which is the signal caller for the whole body, by keeping it safe from the dangerous battle air. How does the helmet keep it safe during spiritual battle? It covers our minds to remind us we are saved from our own sin, and protected from stray bullets of doubt from the enemy.

"Salvation" itself is a very common topic, and yet still subject to much confusion. Salvation is received, not earned. *For by grace we are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: [it is] the gift of God: Not of works that any man should boast.* (Ephesians 2:8-9) It is His gift; not wages for our good actions. His salvation is for a purpose: to restore mankind to right relationship with Himself. And it flows from a heart of love, which God is famous for having. The salvation from God that we receive and are blessed by is free and available to all of us. However, many times it is not until we understand the severity of the battle that we understand the need for a helmet. It is my prayer that you will see, if you haven't already, that the helmet is a MUST for battle and God gives out the helmets; we just have to enroll in His army!

Ephesians 6:17

17Take the helmet of salvation

GAMECOCK DEVOTION



@ Kentucky

The Shield of Faith!

Our next piece of armor is the Shield of Faith! The shield for a Roman soldier was about two and a half feet wide, and four feet long. It was oblong in shape. The shield for the Roman soldier was made in such a way that it could absorb fiery arrows, thus, protecting the other parts of the armor. The shield can be used to protect any part of the body according to how the person uses it. We are to take up the shield of FAITH which is symbolic for complete trust and dependence **on God in all ways and for all things**. It is an unwavering confidence in Jesus Christ. We need to have childlike faith, not doubting at all. Faith in Jesus Christ (your shield) puts "Him" between you and the enemy.

To me, the Shield of Faith seems to have two parts to it. First, there is the portion of faith that God places in our hearts when we are "born again" (become a Christian). From this comes the recognition of the fact that you are in a fight and GOD provides you the equipment. As Ephesians 2:8 says, "*For by grace you are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.*" The second aspect of the shield of faith, however, **is only activated by our own personal choice to, moment by moment, trust and believe**. It's Jesus' unwavering faith that we hold up in battle, yes. But, we must choose, moment by moment, to hold it up in our battles. In other words, we literally raise this shield by making faith choices (non-feeling choices) to believe what God's Word says. (Prov. 30:5) Even though this Shield of Faith belongs to every single believer, many have gone off to battle, having left their shield at home. Although the Bible assures us that the battle belongs to the Lord (1 Sam. 17:47), and He HAS won the overall WAR, the battles are only won if we make faith choices and hold our shields up to cover our weaknesses. This is the only way we can deflect the blows of the enemy. So, yes, God will fight our battles for us, but we must constantly make those faith choices to shield ourselves from the onslaughts of the enemy. (1 Pet. 5:8) (James 4:7)

Ephesians 6:16

16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

GAMECOCK DEVOTION



Tennessee

The Belt of Truth!

The first piece of armor that God, through Paul, chooses to bring out is the **belt of truth**. A Christian's survival in the world requires a firm grounding in the absolute truth, both in the Bible and in our hearts, from the Holy Spirit. The power of truth is that it sets us free by revealing the falsity of the devil's [lies](#) and the deception they create (John 8:31-32). Just as with Eve in Eden, the devil downplays the consequences of sin and promotes its pleasures. Firmly rooted in the truth, we are best equipped to recognize the lies, resist the devil and do God's will. A Roman soldier found his belt to be an essential part of his armor. His belt gathered his armor together and secured his sword to his side. The belt also served to secure long garments so that they would not interfere with fighting. The belt tied it all together. The belt of truth symbolizes two main things. The first is **the truth of God**. Here we are talking about the objective content of truth. The emphasis is on knowing the truth of God. **Truth** exists whether people know it or acknowledge it. God's word is **truth**. Truth has content. Truth can be discovered, accepted, and applied, or it can be confused, rejected, and ignored. But whatever your response to truth --- it is still **truth**. Hopefully, you will not only discover the truth, but will choose to receive the truth. Jesus said, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Knowing the truth can set us free. Satan's lies only enslave us. Truth reveals what is real. It casts its light on the situation and enables us to walk safely. The second thing in which it symbolizes is **the truth lived out**. Here, we focus on our conduct. The emphasis is on living the truth in our daily lives. The belt of **truth** means that we live honestly, with integrity, and without hypocrisy. **Truth** must not only be possessed; it must be applied to our lives. The Roman soldier's belt did him no good until it was tightly drawn around his waist. So, our belt of **truth** is tightly fastened when we live honestly. When we walk in integrity in all of our relationships, we are utilizing the belt of truth. When we walk consistently, as he would, whether people see us or not, then we are using the belt of truth. Without it, the other armor will not stay in place.

The truth is extremely useful as it relates to battle and our conquering of the enemy's temptations. Here are the three ways we will see truth being beneficial for us as we study the belt today:

1. **The TRUTH prepares us for battle**
2. **The TRUTH helps us execute in battle**
3. **The TRUTH is a reflection of the battle**

Ephesians 6:14

Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist

GAMECOCK DEVOTION



@ Arkansas

The Breastplate of Righteousness!

Our next piece of armor that God gives us to fight the enemy and defeat his temptations is the Breastplate of Righteousness. The Roman breastplate that Paul, more than likely, looked at when he wrote Ephesians was typically made of bronze and backed with leather. It was designed to protect the vital areas: the heart, lungs, and ribs.

So, what is **righteousness**? The definition of righteousness is simply this: right standing before God! So, the first thing we need to understand is that this breastplate doesn't come from our own righteousness, or good deeds. Our righteousness was not sufficient enough to save us, and our righteousness will never be sufficient enough to keep us away from temptation. In fact, Isaiah likens our righteousness to "filthy rags." Our righteousness is not protecting at all, rather it is the righteousness of Christ which protects. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we read, "He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in him." Christ is the only true righteous one. And He has passed on his righteousness to us. Because of His work on Calvary's cross, we can now receive His righteousness. He now gives us His righteousness in exchange for ours. In 1 Corinthians 1:30 we read, "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption." When you receive Christ, you receive His righteousness. Christ's work on Calvary enables us to experience a practical righteousness in our daily lives. We no longer walk in our own righteousness, but we now walk in His righteousness. That righteousness enables us to turn away from sin and to experience fellowship with a holy God.

If we do not **put on the breastplate of righteousness**, then we will be susceptible to every temptation Satan brings along. God's grace and righteousness has been extended to us, not so we could take advantage of it and sin, but so we can break free from sin. In Romans 6:1-2, 11-13 we read, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." If we live as who we really are in Christ, then we **put on the breastplate of righteousness**. We will live depending on the righteousness of Christ, and walking in that righteousness in our daily lives. As we do, the **breastplate of righteousness** will protect us against the enemy.

Ephesians 6:14

And having put on the breastplate of righteousness

GAMECOCK DEVOTION



Florida

Walking on Good News!!!

Footwear is very important in basketball! Not just the fact that it is flashy and that it matches your team's uniforms, but, more importantly the foundation that it gives you to run, cut, start and stop while you compete. So, too, is footwear important in battle! From walking in hot deserts on rocky soils to cold beaches with wet mud, what you have to protect and surround your feet is important! This is why it is no secret that the footwear of a soldier is not just important for his/her endurance, but for his/her performance during the battle.

For our third piece of armor, God through the apostle, Paul takes us to our feet, which to some may be a forgotten element of the body needed to fight! Our feet truly are the foundation of what we stand on as we face the challenges of the enemy. So what armor description does Paul give to the feet? PEACE, which is powerful on several fronts. First, peace is the desire of every troubled heart known to mankind and since we know that all have fallen short of the glory of God then we know apart from Christ there is no peace. Second, peace is in great opposition to the enemies schemes. The enemy aims to kill, steal and destroy, which is the opposite of peace. So when the enemy aims to tear you down but sees that you have the peace of Christ, his motivation is silenced. The peace that the gospel provides is not necessarily something you will feel. It may or may not affect you in an emotional way. It is rather an understanding, a knowing, accompanied by an unwavering confidence that you and your Creator are in a right relationship and at peace with one another. That sort of confidence can only spring from meditation on, and a steadfast reliance upon, *only* the work that He has done. When you shift your attention and your dependence upon you and what you do, your peace will be lost and anxiety will overwhelm you once again. There is hope for us, however, in our search for peace of mind. It is clearly not found in the things of this world, nor is it attained through anything we can do. It is found in the gospel. It is *only* found in the gospel. In the message of the gospel, we find the One who is always reliable, always trustworthy, always faithful, and therefore, our only true source of peace. He alone dispels the fears that grip us in an uncertain world and in the midst of our own faults and failures. And it is through faith in Him and in the work that the gospel proclaims He has already done that we can *know* peace.

Ephesians 6:15

15and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.