

Fellowship Bible Church
"All Dressed Up and Ready to Go"
Dr. Crawford W. Loritts, Jr.
12-30-2012

TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:10-18

No matter what 2012 was like for you, no matter what test or trial you went through or victory, and maybe this was a banner year for you or maybe it was a mixed bag for you, the reality is if you said "yes" to Jesus Christ, no matter what has happened to you, nothing will eternally affect you. Did you get what I just said? Did you get that? Did you get that? Nothing will eternally affect you. This is all temporary. This is all temporary. Success is temporary. Be careful of your halo. Your halo can become your noose. Success is temporary, sickness, sorrow, and sadness, all temporary. Jesus is eternal and you are in Him [applause]. Amen [applause].

Father, we rejoice in You, and thank You Your Son paid it all. He paid for our debt. He transferred us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, and even those who are listening to me today if they have not made that decision yet, the fact that they are breathing means that they still have the opportunity to say "yes" to You. Thank You, LORD Jesus, no matter what happens to us, as the apostle Paul said in Romans 8, "nothing" can separate us from You. The enemy can try his hardest, but ultimately he is shooting blanks. Thank You, LORD Jesus, that we are in You, we are protected by You, we are hidden in You, and that You have been everything to us. Even though there have been moments this past year that we have cried, our hearts have been broken, saddened, and fearful, and all of that stuff has cascaded down around us, praise God we are still in You. We are still standing and we are still here and You are still with us. We love You, LORD. Bless us. We pray in Jesus' name.

You may be seated. I have to brag on our church a little bit here. Do you see that cross back there? Yeah, some of our members designed that and donated that to us and we are just grateful to God for them and say thank you [applause]. That is wonderful. The other thing is if you have been coming to Fellowship just within the last month or six weeks you have seen the variety of different musical talent up here. It never ceases to amaze me, the depth of our musical bench. I mean it is absolutely wonderful! Again, I just want to praise God for each of them. We do not pay them and they commit to excellence. They are here late rehearsing on Thursday evenings. They come here early Sunday mornings to go over it again, just to make sure that we can be ushered into the presence of God. I have to thank you guys for what you do [applause]. It is just really a blessing. Don't take that for granted.

If you have a Bible, I want you to turn with me to Ephesians chapter 6 and I want to read verses 10-18. Some might say I have a tad bit of an unusual closing of the year message, but I will explain that in a second. Ephesians 6:10-18:

**"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.
Put on the whole armor of God,
that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.
For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against
the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness,
against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.
Therefore take up the whole armor of God,
that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.
Stand therefore,**

**having fastened on the belt of truth,
and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,
and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.
In all circumstances take up the shield of faith,
with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;
and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit,
which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit,
with all prayer and supplication.”**

I have entitled my message today, “Dressed and Ready to Go.” You might say, “Crawford, that is a little heavy passage.” Well, some might think it is an ominous message as we step into 2013. In recent years I think we have underemphasized, or “under-“ and I put quotes around this term “-valued” the role of the devil in our walk and in our relationship with Christ. I think many Christians have been sideswiped and blindsided by the enemy’s tactics and the reality that we are living in the context of spiritual warfare. For those of you who are longtime Fellowship attenders, you know that I am a little bit leery of people who go to one extreme or the other when it comes to the devil. There is a brand and a bunch of Christians that so heighten the role of Satan that in a very weird sense they are seduced into worshipping him. They don't mean to, but they give him inordinate attention, and I don't think we need to do that. But, I don't think we need to go to the other extreme as well, where we act like he does not exist and we act as if his presence is not real.

I just feel led to give you this message as we launch into this next year of 2013. Our church and our leadership have some things on our hearts that we are believing God to do for us. There are some significant changes that will be made. There are some things in which we believe the LORD is leading us to do, and never forget this. If there is one thing that I have learned in all these years that I have walked with Christ, anytime you do what God tells you to do, expect hell to be unleashed. The enemy is there. He is not happy about spiritual transformation. The enemy is not happy about your growth, not happy about your development, and not happy about my growth and my development in the LORD. There is the reality of warfare that we live in and that we need to be made aware of. Now I am going to say this again in a second, but I want to say this. Ephesians 6:10-18 is not to be read with shaking hands in fear. It is to be read with a smile on your face because this text is our confidence. It is our confidence. Paul did not write these words to scare us. He did not write these words to frighten us. He wrote these words to say, “Stand up and keep moving.” This is our hope and our confidence.

You may have heard this story. During World War II on a remote island in the South Pacific there were some Japanese soldiers that had not gotten the word that the war was over, and they had lost, so they were still fighting. Well, the bullets were real. Even though they lost, the bullets were real. So, it is with Satan. He was defeated at Calvary. His power was broken at Calvary. His prevailing strength was broken at Calvary. When Jesus died on the cross in our place and for our sin and then rose again on the third day, He defeated the enemy. He defeated death; however, the enemy is still very, very active, very active, although he has been defeated. His major attack, particularly among Christians, is to take us out. He wants to discourage us. He wants to divide us. You know he wants to make us depressed. He wants to do all these things and so he is coming after us with real warfare, real warfare, and that is why the apostle Paul wrote Ephesians 6:10-18.

I carry with me in my pocket, and all the time this is with me. A very generous member of our church several years ago gave me this coin. It is an amazing coin. I use it to mark my golf ball. It is really a conversation piece. It is illegal. It is too big to mark a golf ball with, but I want people to see it. It really is the wardrobe or the equipment that we wear for those of us who are in spiritual battle. It says, “**Put on the whole armor of God**” on this one side, and on the other side it lists what that armor really is. I carry this with me not as a good

luck charm. I am not into that as that can become an idol, but I carry it with me as a reminder that the enemy is not hiding, that the enemy is real, that he is around us, and that he seeks to destroy us and seeks to do whatever he can to knock us out of the game. I want to walk through Ephesians 6:10-18 and I want to take my time as we walk through this text because I really believe that this passage's truths, although known by a lot of Christians, are virtually ignored by us. Yet, here is how we win the fight and we win the battle. The way to hang, what Paul is saying in this passage, is very simple. You can outline it either way. My youngest son preached a message on this, and we were talking about this text and he gave me his outline and I had already put mine together. I said, "I would have plagiarized and you could have saved me some work, boy," but he talked about the exhortation, the enemy, and the equipment. I said, "That will work," but I have outlined it this way: the warrior, the war, and the wardrobe – the warrior, the war, and the wardrobe. I just want us to walk through this text and listen very closely to what the apostle Paul is telling us. Again, he is passing on the focus that we need to have as we are engaged in this battle.

1. THE WARRIOR (6:10)

First, the nature of the warrior, and verse 10 says:

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might."

Don't miss that. He says, "**be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.**" I think he is saying several things here, probably three.

A. Acquire His Strength (v. 10a)

Number one, acquire His strength. Be very careful of Christians who always walk around talking about, "I say to you Satan." I say what are you going to say to him? What are you going to say? What are you going to do with the devil? None of us in here is a match for the enemy, not one of us here. He will blow us away. You are talking about one of the highest of all the archangels. He is an angel, but he has supernatural power, so Paul begins not by talking about, "Well, you know what your background is and your experience may be and all of us stuff." He says, "No, I want you to be strong in the LORD." Number 1, you have to acquire strength from Him. Get your strength from Him. Utilize the resources available to you, and we are going to talk a little bit about that later on because I think he unfolds that.

B. Use His Strength (v. 10b)

I think the second thing he says is use His strength. "**Be strong in the Lord.**" This is a reference to our position in Christ. This is consistent in the book of Ephesians. If you go back to the first paragraph or really the second long paragraph in chapter 1, he talks about "**in Christ, in Christ, in Christ, in Christ.**" We use his strength. It is not Crawford's know-how. It is not what I have done before. It is not the books that I have read, neither is it you. You will never win spiritual warfare if you think you bring a lot to the table. Our strength is not found in us; it is found in Him.

C. Stand in His Strength (v. 11, 13-14)

Thirdly, he says stand in His strength. Stand in His strength. It is interesting. I mean Paul just repeats himself over and over again, and this is part of what the New Testament tells us is the primary way the devil is defeated is by resistance. Notice he says in verse 11 "**stand**" and verse 13 "**withstand**" and verse 13 again "**stand firm**" and verse 14 "**stand therefore.**" I think Paul wants us to stand. I think he wants us to stand.

Again, the word “stand” means to resist – to resist. Now see this again and connect the dots here. Connect the dots. He tells us that we are to **“be strong in the LORD and in the strength of His might.”** My ability to stand comes from the **“strength of His might.”** I stand in the LORD and the strength of His might. So, my ability to stand does not cover my cute little Christian formulas. It does not come from the things that I know. It comes from WHO I know and my position in Jesus Christ. He is the power that I have to stand. I am a wuss. I am a weakling. I can’t withstand the devil apart from my covering in Christ, and you need to hear that. It is **“the strength of His might.”**

By the way, “stand” means to resist the devil. James 4:7 says, **“Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”** I Peter chapter 5 tells us **“resist him [the devil] firm in your faith.”** When you do that, the enemy comes to get you, and you don't move, and he begins to realize, “I underestimated what I was coming up against.” That is the reason why, and I am going to share some things at the very end of this message, that is the reason why, Fellowship, as a pastor I get so frustrated about some of you. I just have to tell you the truth. Some of you get the spiritual snot knocked out of you time and time again. You don't get it. You are lazy about your time in the Word, inconsistent in your prayer life, and a feather knocks us over. When are we going to get it that Christ is our life! You are not going to stand in 2013 unless there is a deep foundation. That is the only way we can resist the enemy. This is no playground stuff here. I got calls this past week of things that happened in our body. The devil is real and it is not a joke, not a joke.

Yet, remember He is with us. I love the story II Kings 6:11-17. Elisha’s servant was really scared to death when he saw the army of the Syrians surrounding him. “Oh, shimama. I mean it is just me and Elisha.” This army is around and Elisha said, “God, open his eyes. Open his eyes.” As he looked on the hillside, he saw chariots of fire surrounding them; so, I want to give you hope here. For every demon that is around us, there are angels that are around us, too. There is the very presence of God around us, and we do not need to be fearful. We don't need to be afraid; however, our keeping is not automatic, so therefore we have to run and grab a hold of His strength. Well, that is the warrior.

2. THE WAR (6:11-13)

Okay, let’s talk a little bit about the war. He spends the bulk of his time talking about the war in which we are engaged. I want to look at verse 11 and verse 13 because he says something. He repeats himself in these two verses. He says in verse 11:

“Put on the whole armor of God,”

[then therefore down in verse 13]

“Therefore take up the whole armor of God,”

The point being, in this text he says you do not have the privilege. Crawford, you don't have the privilege to pick and choose what piece of the armor you want to wear. This “ain’t” styling and profiling. This is not selecting what you want. You have to pick up every piece of this armor, and if you leave one of these pieces off, you are vulnerable. Every piece needs to be picked up and every piece needs to be put on. This armor is given to us by God. He says, **“Put on the whole armor of God.”** He bought the clothes. He bought the wardrobe. This is what He has designed for each one of us to wear if we are going to defeat the enemy and his attacks against us, so you put on the entire armor of God. It is given to us by God, and every piece is needed to be successful in battle.

Now some of us think that our armor is better than God's armor. Some of us do. That is the reason why I am a bit paranoid as a pastor, and allow me to tilt a little bit in this direction. I am a bit nervous about making sure that we have people who speak up here who will handle this book well. I don't want people up here talking about the latest, you know, motivational stuff and the hot tips and the nice little topical stuff that we can do to navigate through life, because this is some serious business. It is not our armor that we put on. It is the armor of God that He has given to us, and it is not my opinion about the Christian life. It is not my strategy in the Christian life. It is not just the good advice that I get from listening to pop speakers and this kind of thing. That is not going to cut it. It might help me feel better and it might motivate me for the day, but we are talking about substantive stuff. We are talking about spiritual warfare, and we are talking about the garment that God has given to us, and we need to put that garment on. You have to wear it. We are engaged in this warfare.

Now if we neglect to put a piece of the armor on we are actually saying to God, "Well, I don't want to be protected today. I will take my chances." It is kind of like driving without a seatbelt. You will take your chances. When you get T-boned and blindsided it could kill you or maim you, and there are many Christians who are maimed in their spiritual lives because of arrogance and pride and then an unwillingness to submit to what God instructed us to do.

A. A Cunning Enemy (v. 11)

(1) Strategic Attacks

Now having said that, I want to say two things about this enemy that orchestrates this warfare. The text says that he is a cunning enemy (vs 11).

**"Put on the whole armor of God,
that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil."**

Look at the word "schemes" there. That speaks of cunning trickery - cunning trickery. One of the things I have learned in life and learned through my own failures and being knocked off and knocked down by the devil is this. Evil rarely looks evil until it accomplishes its goal. Evil rarely looks evil until it accomplishes its goal. Don't you ever forget that. It rarely looks evil. It looks attractive, desirable, and legitimate. Satan almost always comes at us first of all in an indirect way. He almost always will come at us in a very indirect way, a very subtle way. He is very incremental in getting us off track. He does not come at us diametrically opposed to what we are thinking or what we are believing where it is so obvious that this is wrong. That is his ultimate goal, but he comes to us very, you know, just very close to what is right.

There is this young lady looking for a man. She is a wonderful believer, but he is not. He is very moral, everything that she wants. Oh, just a good guy, good dude, really nice so you do this evangelistic dating and hearts are won. "It is almost as if we are married. Let's move in together." It happens all the time. It happens here in this church. The enemy very seldom knocks us off with a frontal attack, very seldom, very seldom. I know I ought to be giving 10%. I will just do this and catch up. What ends up happening is that the fatal attack usually takes place when we are too weak to resist. That is when the fatal attack takes place. The head shot comes later. The revelation of who he really is, is when we have no strength whatsoever to resist. We have compromised and so he takes us out of the game.

I just want to tell all of us here, do not be spiritually naïve. If it is wrong, it is always wrong. Do not compromise what is true. Don't compromise what is right. It is never just a little wrong. If it does not look right, don't fool with it.

(2) Seasonal Attacks

There are seasonal attacks, strategic attacks, and seasonal attacks. “Where do you get that from?” Look at verse 13. He says,

**“Therefore take up the whole armor of God,
that you may be able to withstand in the evil day,”**

---“**in the evil day.**” Now some scholars have gone on to say what Paul is really talking about here is the future evil day or this kind of thing. I don't think so at all. I look at the tone of the paragraph itself and what he is talking about. I think he is talking about seasons of severe spiritual attack. How many of you have been there? Yeah, yeah. How many of you have been in a place and your mind and you “ain't” thinking any bad thoughts or anything at all. Everything is wonderful and everything is cool and out of nowhere you hit this stretch where your mind is going to crazy places, or whatever it might be! Don't get lulled to sleep. Some of us skip our time alone with the LORD because we are doing so good and having our own personal private worship time and, “oh I will skip a few days, skip a few days, will just skip a few days,” and then we get spiritually cold and the enemy says, “Okay, here you go buddy,” like that. There are seasons, and some of you are in a season right now.

Two years ago, Karen and I went through a season and all we could do was live in the moment, live right now, and it is going to happen again. It is going to happen in my life and it is going to happen in your life. It is going to happen in this church. Churches have personalities. Churches have assignments and there are going to be seasons of attack in our church. We went through that in part of our history seven or eight years ago, and there are seasons, and this is the reason why the leaders here in the church and those of us on staff and the members in the body here have to be consistent. We have to have more beneath the waterline than we show on top. You have to have more under the counter than you put on display, because there are seasons, and some of us may walk in that season this year.

B. An Unseen Enemy (v. 12)

Well, he is a cunning enemy, but he is also an unseen enemy verse 12 tells us.

**“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against
the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness,
against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”**

I have read some commentaries and listened to some people who have gotten deeper about this than I think Paul is saying here. They say, “Well, you see Paul is actually outlining the four realms of demonic activity.” You could go there I guess, but I do not think that is what he is talking about. I think the bigger thing that he is talking about is he is just giving places where they work. The emphasis here is there are demonic forces at work that permeate virtually every area of our existence. Hear me on this. Hear me on this. Don't you miss this. Don't miss this. There are demonic forces at work that permeate every area of our existence. They are

under the power of the evil one and they form a united front. Demons are everywhere, everywhere. They are here in this church right now. They are in this service. They are surrounding all of us. Demons are everywhere. Evil permeates everything. The church of the LORD Jesus Christ is in the context of spiritual darkness – the hell that was unleashed up in Connecticut. Yeah, there are certain levels of human responsibility and this kind of thing, and I don't want to be that superficial, but don't dismiss the presence of the devil himself. Those demons are on your job. Those demons are in your household. Those demons are among your family members. Those demons are among us. Now they can't indwell us. My theology teaches me that they cannot indwell us, but they can influence us. So, the apostle Paul is telling us, "Look, you have an unseen enemy and that enemy is everywhere."

The word "wrestle" is a very interesting term that he uses. It is amazing. He does not use "box" where you hit at a distance. He uses the term "wrestle," and it refers to the closeness of our struggle with the power of evil, the closeness of our struggle with demons. I don't know if you have ever had an oppressed mind. I don't know if you have ever been so overwhelmed by temptation that you thought it was going to destroy you. You know exactly what Paul was talking about here. He is not talking about something out there away from you. He is talking about the wrestling that is there. It is this close contact. I wrestled a little bit in junior high school. I tell you, it wears you out. You are intertwined, and that is what he is saying. "Look, look, look. This is not at a distance. There are seasons of attack and they come at you. They are there."

So, he sets up the wardrobe. He builds his case. The warrior -- hey, hey, don't go around here saying, "Be gone Satan." By whose authority? No, no. Well, how do you deal with him? You stand in the strength of your position in the LORD Jesus and you draw upon that strength to fight the enemies that are there. Then he underscores the reality of the struggle. Here is the war. We have us a cunning enemy, and he is invisible. If you knew who he was, you can take him out, but you cannot see him. He is all around us, right next to us. He works through our family members and works through our colleagues and works through us. He is there.

3. THE WARDROBE (6:14-18)

A. What We Wear (6:13-17a)

(1) "The Belt of Truth"

I want to suggest to you that he gives us, and I am just going to briefly walk you through this, seven pieces of armor here, seven pieces of our wardrobe. The first five are the things that we wear. They are defensive and the last two are offensive. So here is what we wear, verses 14-17, and I am just going to give a brief description of each one. Verse 14 says,

**"Stand therefore,
having fastened on the belt of truth,"**

Now unlike what we think when we say "belt of truth," we think it is just a thick belt right here, but no, no. He is thinking of Roman soldiers. It was not just a thick belt, but it was a leather apron that was attached to a thick belt that went down and protected the thighs and the groin area. There is another reason for that thick belt. You were also able to fasten the loose parts of your garment and tuck them in. I think what he is saying about this is, "Look, look, look. Truth is foundational. It is interesting that he begins by making a statement about truth, because he understands the devil is the **"father of lies."** If there is a lie, there is a work of demons. If there is lying, there is the work of the devil. The Bible says that Satan is **"the father**

of lies.” What Paul is saying is truth matters. Now I think that this is truth not only lodged in the Word of God, but truth generally, truth in all things. Make sure that there is a commitment to truth, to tell the truth. Tell the truth. Truth matters. Evil cannot flourish apart from lies and the distortion of the truth. So, he begins with truth first. Trim your garments, protect yourself, and embrace truth.

That is the reason why I tell parents all the time, all the time, all the time, do not ever, ever let your child get away with telling a lie. It is not cute. It is the foundation for satanic activity, and in fact, that is how the “fall” came, by the perpetuation of a lie. Put on truth.

(2) "The Breastplate of Righteousness"

“The breastplate of righteousness” was a piece of armor that covered the chest to protect it from blows and arrows, but as you consider how Paul talked about righteousness and justification in the book of Romans and in the book of Ephesians here, what Paul is really saying is that we are forever secure in Christ and justified in God’s sight. He is our righteousness. This is a statement of confidence. **“Put on the breastplate of righteousness.”** Don't be shaky about your position in Christ. You got it. You are covered. Thank Him for it. Keep that on you. It protects your heart. He can’t get to your heart! He can’t knock you out if he gives you a chest shot. You have on the breastplate of righteousness. You know that you are in Christ. You know that you have been declared righteous by Him. You are His child! You will never stop being His child. You have been declared righteous by Him.

(3) "Shoes... The Gospel of Peace"

Thirdly, he says put on the shoes, the shoes.

**“and, as shoes for your feet,
having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.”**

Shoes circle the gospel of peace -- shoes – gospel of peace. What is he saying here? Well, Roman soldiers wore what they call “caliga.” What is that? It was a half boot that was used in especially long marches. Oh, the imagery speaks for itself, doesn’t it? It speaks for itself. What Paul is saying here is this. The gospel gives us sure footing, number 1, it gives us stability in life, but number 2 he is saying just as “caliga,” this boot, was worn for these long journeys, life is a long journey and bringing the gospel to wherever you are is your mission. It is the message that tramples and triumphs over Satan’s kingdom. If you want to give Satan a deadly blow, keep talking about the cross. If you want to give Satan a deadly blow, keep telling people about how they can have a relationship with Him. What he is saying here is just reciting the great commission. You just keep walking and stepping on the gospel as your foundation and you share the gospel, the gospel of peace. He is contrasting that with enmity and warfare. Satan’s kingdom is separated from God. They are at war with Him. We are bringing people hope! That is what you put on your feet.

(4) "The Shield of Faith"

Number 4 is the **“shield of faith.”** This is particularly emphatic here in the text. He says,

“In all circumstances take up the shield of faith,”

“In all circumstances take up the shield of faith.” The reason for that is so you may be able to,

“extinguish all the fiery darts of the evil one.”

The Roman soldiers typically had two shields. One was a smaller shield that was used in hand-to-hand combat and very, very light. The other one was the whole body shield, and that is what he is talking about here. It was a whole body shield. When they got close to an area in which there would be fighting and there would be arrows, what the enemy would do would be to dip the arrow in pitch and light it on fire. They would often drench these big shields with water. That is what he meant by, **with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;** So they would drench these shields in water and they would get behind them and the shields would cover their whole body. They would hear the thud of these arrows, some of them sticking into the shield, but it would not catch on fire. What Paul is saying here is, “Look, look. You have to believe God, not theoretically believe Him.” He says in **“all circumstances,”** not in your small group, not in your Bible study, not just in you know Sunday morning community and this kind of thing, not in your men’s fellowship or your women’s fellowship. No, no, no, out there in the middle of warfare, in that household where all hell is breaking loose, on that job in which you are being unreasonably and irrationally attacked and in your own mind where you are being bombarded by thoughts and this kind of thing, whatever you might be under, lift up the shield of faith. Lift it up.

It means to believe and apply the promises of God on your behalf, confident that He will protect us in the heat of the battle. Sometimes that is all you have. There are moments in the battle where you cannot fight back, where you have to keep your mouth shut. There are times in which you can’t do anything and you feel the heat. What do you do? You just keep believing. I want to tell you this and you have heard me say this before, but listen to me Fellowship. Most Christians get discouraged because they are trying to believe God for tomorrow or this afternoon. No, no, no. What he is saying is, **“in all circumstances,”** right now you just got to believe Him. You don't have to believe Him this afternoon because you “ain’t” in this afternoon. You have to believe Him right now. You don't have to believe Him tomorrow because you have not seen tomorrow. You have to believe Him right now. Sometimes you just have to hold that shield up and duck behind it, keep quoting the promises of God, and trust Him to see you through.

(5) "The Helmet of Salvation"

The fifth piece of this wardrobe is the **“helmet of salvation.”** Now the helmet itself was made of bronze and had cheap pieces to protect the head completely. I think what he is talking about here is he is speaking of primarily our complete confidence in our relationship with God, that we have been delivered and God has and will save His people. Let me say it in two ways here.

I don't just think that is what Paul is talking about in this text. Some commentaries that I have read will just skew this to one side, that if putting on the helmet of salvation means the assurance of your salvation. I think that is true, but I think he is using salvation in a broader sense here, in a broader sense. I think it is the assurance in my

head that I am saved and I am going to be with Him forever, but also the assurance that literally that He will deliver me. He will deliver me from the situation or He will deliver me in the situation, or He will deliver me through the situation. Whatever it is, He is going to deliver me; so, it is salvation in its comprehensive sense. He is talking about not being intimidated. In fact, this is Pauline theology because he said that in Philippians chapter 1, **“by no means.”** **“By no means”** means intimidated or frightened by your opponents. So, he is talking about a mindset. When you get up in the morning you should not go out there [whining emphasis], “The devil is going to get me and I can’t handle this anymore and I am overwhelmed by my circumstances. What am I going to do? I am not going to make it today. It is going to be overwhelming.” He says, “Put the helmet on!” Put your helmet on. You are going to make it. You are going to be fine. I needed to say that to somebody this morning. You are going to be fine! You might get some water in your mouth, but you are not going to drown. You are going to be fine. Put your helmet on. He saved you. Think about what He brought you through. You are saved forever. Think about the mess that He has delivered you from. Put the **“helmet of salvation”** on.

B. The Weapons We Use (6:17b-18)

(1) "The Sword of The Spirit"

Then he talks about the weapons we use, these other two. Verse 17, in the last part of the verse he says,

**“and the sword of the Spirit,
which is the word of God,”**

By the way, the word “sword” here, and you don't see it in your English text, is not a long sword, but it is the word for a sword that was a short-handled sword that was used in close combat. It goes with the fact that we don't engage in battle with the devil from a distance. It is always up close and personal. Remember he said, “we don't wrestle with.” He chose the word “wrestle,” and by the way that is the only time in the New Testament where that word is used, right here. We wrestle with the devil. You are up close and personal with evil, so you use a short-handled sword. You use it closely. I don't want to get too deep here. There is a Greek word, the Word of God, the Greek word “rhema.” It is used interchangeably, but I do think the interpretation skews this way when he is says “sword of the Spirit,” he is talking about a relevant word for your situation, a relevant word for your attack.

My problem with a lot of Christians is we are so blasted biblically illiterate we don't know what to claim for what situation. So, when he says you take “the sword of the Spirit,” you take that short-handled sword and you know how to use it. You have a promise. When you are tempted, **“there is no temptation that has taken you such as is common to man, but God is faithful and will not allowed you to be tempted above that...”** or whatever the situation is, you get that “word” that is appropriate for that.

Jesus modeled that for us, didn't He. In Matthew chapter 4 when the enemy came to Him, how did He handle the enemy? This is where I tell some of my friends who get a little excessive and spooky in their spiritual warfare language that really is a lot of pride. I have heard Christians say, “I stood up against the devil.” Really? You did? I think he got you [laughter]. Jesus

modeled that, didn't He? He modeled an approach. Now He is the LORD of history, but what did He appeal to? When the devil came to Him, Jesus the LORD of history, didn't say, "I stand against you." What Jesus did say was, **"It is written."** **"It is written."** **"It is written."** You see the truth of God's Word is a deadly blow to the enemy, so it is **"the sword of the Spirit."** We use that sword.

(2) "Praying at All Times..."

The second offensive weapon is **"praying at all times," "praying at all times."** Verse 18 says,

**"praying at all times in the Spirit,
with all prayer and supplication."**

This implies several things, even in the midst of our battle.

- It implies an attitude at all times, **"praying at all times."** Our attitude is a prayerful attitude. When you are in the midst of attack, sometimes the very last thing you want to do is to pray. You are trying to figure things out, but no, our attitude is to pray.
- The second implication is that it is constant contact with God. Spiritual attack, spiritual warfare, is a call to deepen your worship. Did you hear what I said? Spiritual warfare is a call to deepen your worship. It is a call into the throne room. It is a call to stand under the "cleft of the rock." Do you remember several weeks ago I was talking about Moses' surrender? Do you know what he was going through? He was under attack during that time and he was all by himself. He was alone. Do you remember that message? He was all alone, and God said, "Come here and stand by Me." When you are under attack, don't run, don't run from people, don't run from God. Don't withdraw. Now is the time to run to Him praying at all times.
- I think the third thing it implies is this - a supernatural supply line - God's power and miraculous intervention is available to you as you continue to pray. "God, I don't know what to do about this. I don't know what to do about this child. I don't know what to do about this job situation. I don't know what to do about these thoughts that are just pulling me in the wrong direction. I don't know what to do with these random things that I am concluding. I don't know what to do. God, please help me. Please step in." I can't tell you the number of times that I have been driving down the road under attack and the tears were rolling down my cheeks and I was pleading for God to show up. "God show up. God show up. God show up," and He does. Sometimes He changes me before He changes my circumstances, but He shows up. So, when you are under attack that is what we are all about.

Let me give you an application and we will get out of here. So, in 2013 what do I need to think about? "Crawford, this has not been a very positive message and I was thinking about you giving some nice friendly goals," but this is a reality check here. I want us to put our minds around this before I give you six suggestions real quickly. Keep in mind that predators always prey on the weak. Predators prey on the weak. Predators don't want to deal with somebody that is going to fight back. So, it is with the enemy. If you are weak spiritually, you are being set up. So the point being is don't be a sick soldier, and I want us to keep these six

things in mind as we walk through 2013 and this will be a gift to your walk with Christ, a gift to this church. Keep these six things in mind.

1. Pay Attention to Your Weaknesses.

Pay attention to your weaknesses, whatever they might be, because our weaknesses are the gateway for the devil to exploit. Whether you are a fearful person or perhaps you have some weaknesses in the area of lust and whatever that might be, or maybe it is anger, you need to pay attention to your weaknesses. Face them. Face them.

2. Pace and Rhythm

I suggest to you pace and rhythm. “You say what?” Yeah, pace and rhythm. I find that there is an unusual relationship between my well-being, my emotional, mental, refreshment and my spiritual life. Pace and rhythm is very important. Sometimes the devil is blindsiding me, quite frankly, when I have been exhausted and tired, and frankly I have been exhausted and tired in ministry. I have said “yes” to too many things. I am worn out, and before you know it old sinful habits are right there on the surface, my impatience and reaction and all of that kind of stuff. The way that I know that I am getting close to an unhealthy place is when I stop responding and I start reacting. When I react to situations and react to people that is when I know I am over the edge. So, I want to suggest to you watch your pace and rhythm in 2013. Get your rest and refreshment. You have hobbies. You have things that you like to do that you park your brain in neutral. Make time for those things that invigorate you.

3. Consistency is Your Friend.

Consistency is your friend, consistent about the right thing. I don't want to sound legalistic about your prayer life or legalistic about your Bible reading, but we need to do it better. We need to do better. Maintain a deeper reservoir of the knowledge of God's Word that you can call up to the surface when you are being attacked by the enemy.

4. Obedience.

Number 4, is the biggie – obedience. Do what God tells you to do! We don't read for information. We read for transformation, and the difference between the two is personal application and obedience. Do it! Change! Make it real!

5. Community

Number 5 is community. We are part of an army. Christians are dysfunctional if they are not connected with other believers. I am not just trying to promote our small groups. Yeah, great, but if there is another group apart from our church, I would rather you be here in our church, but hey look for your own growth find that group! We need to live in community because community gives us perspective and spiritual drafting and it aides our growth in relationships.

6. Ministry – Share the Gospel and Serve Others

The sixth and final one is this - ministry. What do you mean by that? Share the gospel. Make it a part of your life to look for opportunities to share the gospel with other people and then the second part of that is serve others. It is in the giving of our lives away that makes the difference. Soldiers go through boot camp and receive training so that in the heat of the battle they can act with

instinct. They don't have to think about it. They act with instinct. I think that is why Paul outlined this passage. If every- day we put on this armor, everyday we mentally dress ourselves, after awhile it becomes instinct. When the enemy comes after us, and we don't have time to think, it is instinct.

Will you stand? Is there anybody here that senses they are under severe attack? All right. Okay. I want to pray for you. In fact, I want to do this. This is all audible here. I am not doing this to embarrass you, but everybody that raised your hand I want you to come upfront right now. A couple of weeks ago I would have been up here with you. Just come on up, and I want some elders and other folks to come up, too, and surround these people who are coming. I want all of you to know I know how exactly it feels to have to function and to keep moving, sometimes giving hope and help to other people, and you walk away you are the one who needs the hope and help the most. So, let's just place our hands on these folks, and you can extend your hand toward them, and let's just pray.

Father, in the name of Jesus we thank You for Your goodness and Your grace. Thank You, LORD Jesus, that You are with us. LORD, there are times in our lives in which all hell breaks loose and we don't know top from bottom or end from up. We get terribly confused. We don't know what to do. But LORD in the name of Your Son I pray that You will come alongside my brothers and sisters who have come up here today. Will You whisper hope in their ears, Father? Will You whisper encouragement to them? Will You let them know that You will not leave them, that You will not forsake them, that You won't give them anything that they cannot bear, that You are the great burden bearer, that the tomb is empty, and that You are with them. LORD, may they feel that today, Father. May they feel that. Will You raise up people to come along side of them and to love them and to exercise faith on their behalf even when they don't have the faith themselves to exercise. LORD, may they be strengthened. See them through, and I pray that what the enemy meant to use to destroy them You will use to leverage in their lives, to make an impact, for the glory of God. Oh, great Redeemer, redeem these situations we pray. Strengthen them. Bless this church and bless everybody that comes to Fellowship Bible Church in 2013. LORD, explode this place with joy, Your presence, strength and hope we pray. Dismiss us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.