**Gleaner’s Sunday School Lesson at First Baptist Church**

**May 21, 2023**

**Unit:** **Dealing With Temptation:** One of the great truths–and joys– of the Christian life is that when we come to Christ, He forgives us and removes the guilt and power of sin.  Unfortunately, we still deal with the temptation to sin.  The old sin nature tries to exert its influence in our lives. How do we defend ourselves against the schemes of the devil?    These sessions have helped us discover how to stand our ground, avoid sin, live faithfully for God, and live lives that please Him.   Join us now for Session #6.

**Session #6**: **The Strength to Stand Against Temptation**

**Scripture:** Primary Source:  *Bible Studies for Life, the Senior Adult Personal Study Guide* Spring 20*23* beginning on **p.136** or open Bible to **(Ephesians 6:10-18)**

**Prayer:** Father God, we praise You today for Your greatness, Your majesty, power and glory, and especially thank You for the promise “I am with you and will watch over you wherever You go (Gen 28:15).” How thankful we are that we are not alone in our battles. Please bless and be with our families, friends, college students, missionaries, and pastors. We continue to pray for those grieving or experiencing illness. May they experience healing peace. May Your Will be done, in Jesus' holy name I pray,  Amen.

**Question #1 (p.136) When have you needed to wear protective gear?** Each of us will never forget learning about and wearing protective gear, masks, gloves, etc.  during the recent COVID pandemic outbreak.  Our author tells the story of Nazi soldiers being drafted into service during WWII without proper training. Our Christian life is also a battle.  In today's lesson, like an experienced general, the apostle Paul describes the spiritual armor God provides for the spiritual battles of His followers.  Our enemy, the devil, is vicious, but in Christ, our victory is sure.  The battle against temptation means we must be strong, suit up, and stand firm.

**Point: God equips us to stand our ground against temptation.**

**Setting:** Paul spent a great deal of time in  Ephesus on his missionary journeys.  It was the major city of the area where Chrisitanity confronted other religions and Greek philosophies. Paul arose from his circumstances in prison to write this powerful  letter that didn’t combat errors or attacks on the church; rather, he addressed Chirstian doctrine and the behaviors they should produce.  He spoke of God’s plan for the church and His people.  Scholars  divide the letter into 2 sections with the first 3 chapters comprising the doctrinal section and the last 3 the behavioral section. Ephesians 6:10-18 could be viewed as a separate section altogether since it addresses the topic of spiritual warfare.

**Read Ephesians 6:10-13 (p. 138) We learn that standing against temptation and sin is a spiritual battle.**

**Verse 10:** Paul reminded the Ephesians to be **strong in the Lord and His vast strength** since the Christian life is not a physical, but a spiritual battle.  The Lord is the One who strengthens us; we do not strengthen ourselves.    God exercised his strength by raising Christ from the dead and seating him at His right hand in heaven.  That same power in our lives helps us stand strong using resources God provides.

**Verse 11:** Christians are to **put on the full armor of God so that we can stand against the schemes of the devil.** Our battle is the daily war we call the Christian life.  Each day we are engaged in any number of fights against a vicious enemy who wants to destroy us through deception and temptation.

**Verse 12:** Paul said that **our struggle is not against flesh and blood…** Our enemy is the devil first and foremost.  When Paul referred to the **rulers, authorities, cosmic powers of this darkness, evil, and spiritual forces in the heavens,** he was referring to the demonic realm. Satan is full of trickery and dishonesty and is the sworn enemy of the Lord and His church.  Relying on our own strength and intellect to defeat Satan is a recipe for failure.

**Verse 13:** But we need not live in fear because God has exalted Jesus far  above these evil cosmic powers and made Him ruler over all things(Eph. 1:20-21). **For this reason we are to take up the full armor of God, so that we may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, take** our **stand.**   We don’t suit up in our own armor or try to engage the enemy with our own resources.  We suit up in the armor that the King of Kings put on to save His people and judge His enemies.

**Question #2 (p. 139) What have you been taught about spiritual warfare?**

**Question #3(p. 139) What do you find challenging about standing firm against temptation?**

**Read Ephesians 6:14-16 (p. 140) Here we discover more about the armor of God**

**Verse 14, 15:** We are not called to defeat the enemy; Jesus has already done that.  We’re called tostand firm and not lose ground to him.  **We can stand, therefore, with truth like a belt around** our **waist**, **righteousness like armor on** our **chest, and our feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of peace.**

* **The belt of truth.** Satan is a liar who attacks through deception. The belt secured the rest of the soldier’s armor and held his weapons.  Everything we do is held in place when we accept and trust God’s Word.  We stand firm when we rest secure in the truth of our faith as revealed to us in Scripture.
* **The breastplate of righteousness.** Our battle is not just about knowing the truth; we must live it out.  We also stand firm against the devil’s schemes by walking in righteousness. A breastplate protects the heart.  We protect our hearts not by our own righteousness, but by the righteousness we have in Christ.
* **Feet sandaled with readiness.** Roman soldiers were issued quality footwear; studded boots that allowed them to travel great distances and yet stand firmly in the heat of battle.  We can stand firm or move forward because of His gospel of peace.  We seek to defeat the work of the enemy by proclaiming to others the gospel of peace.  This means that evangelism and missions are war-time activities.

**Verse 16: In every situation take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.**

* **The shield of faith.**  Each soldier carried a large shield; a company of soldiers could interlock shields and form a solid wall as they moved forward.  Our shield is our faith— trust in the promises and power of God;it is that faith that protects. When we trust and believe Jesus, the devil’s arrows will have no effects.

**Question #4 (p. 142)  Why are truth and righteousness so vital in standing against Satan’s temptations?**

**Read Ephesians 6: 17-18 (p. 142) We are reminded of the tools of others that are available to us.**

**Verse 17, 18: Take the helmet of salvation and sword of the Spirit–which is the word of God.  Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints.**

* **The helmet of salvation.** We also stand firm against the schemes of the devil by remembering our salvation.  Satan tempts us by getting us to doubt our salvation or despair over our sin.  We fight temptation by remembering the great salvation God has accomplished for us in Christ.  Because we are forgiven through His blood, there is nothing Satan can hold against us.
* **The sword of the Spirit.**  God has not just given us defensive armor, we also have an offensive weapon:  “the sword of the Spirit–which is the word of God.”  We rest on the promises in God’s Word to defend us, and we apply Scripture to specific situations to resist the enemy’s attacks and send him running.  We combat Satan and fight temptation, not only by standing firm on the Word but also by remembering and speaking the Word to ourselves and one another.  Look back to the way Jesus battled Satan in the wilderness using the sword of the Spirit.  We are also a band of brothers and sisters helping one another fight the enemy with the Word of God.  This battle also calls for prayer.  Prayer is not a part of the armor, but it undergirds the armor.
* **Pray at all times.** Our prayer life reveals our dependence on God.  We need to remain in constant contact with Him, looking to Him in the heat of battle.
* **In the Spirit.**  We fight in the strength of the Lord, and rely on His Holy Spirit as we pray.  Even when we feel inadequate in our prayers, we rely on the Holy Spirit who intercedes for us. “In the same way the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings.” (Rom. 8:26)
* **With every prayer and request.** Dependence on God means we bring every need and request to Him.
* **Alert and persevering.**  We don’t fall asleep on duty!  We need to be vigilant.

Paul gave us a good example of how we can pray for ourselves and others in a prayer he prayed for the Ephesians (See Eph. 3:14-21)

**Question #5 (p. 144) What makes the Word of God and prayer effective weapons when dealing with temptation?**

**Engage (p. 144)** Soldiers suit up before the conflict begins.  Once the battle is underway, it’s too late to start putting on gear.  This holds true for spiritual warfare.

1. Which piece of armor do you need to put on before the battle begins?
2. Develop a strategy to wear this piece of armor daily.  Record the steps here.

**Live it Out (p. 145)**

You are to be strengthened in the Lord’s strength, to suit up with God’s armor, and to stand firm against the devil’s schemes.  What steps will you take to make sure you are ready for battle?

* **Take your stand.**  Through prayer, commit yourself anew to standing firm in the strength of the Lord in spiritual battle.
* **Identify.**  Make a list of temptations Satan often uses against you.  Identify Scripture passages that will help you do battle against these specific temptations.  Over the next few weeks, commit these verses to memory.
* **Stand together.**  Even as Roman soldiers would often stand back-to-back in battle, you can do the same with other believers.  Discuss ways to support and encourage each other in the spiritual battles you face.

**Prayer:** *Father, thank You for providing what we need when we face temptation and engage in spiritual warfare.  Thanks that the victory is ours in Christ Jesus.*

**Watchword:**  *May the Lord watch between me and thee while we are absent one from another.*