

"The armour of God"

A young man of thirty-two had been appointed president of the bank. He'd never dreamed he'd be president, much less at such a young age. So he approached the venerable Chairman of the Board and said, "You know, I've just been appointed President. I was wondering if you could give me some advice." The old man uttered just two words: "Right decisions!"

The young man had hoped for a bit more than this, so he said, "That's really helpful, and I appreciate it, but can you be more specific? How do I make right decisions?" The wise old man simply responded, "Experience." The young man said, "Well, that's just the point of my being here. I don't have the kind of experience I need. How do I get it?" Came the terse reply, "Wrong decisions!"

And I guess the point of that story is to highlight that many of us have and will make the wrong decisions at times. And I'm sure if we we're honest enough to admit this to ourselves, we would admit that we all have made some really bad decisions over the years. But bad decisions aren't all bad if we learn from our past experiences and the experiences of others.

It's a bit like my little friend Ted. It seemed like Ted was always in trouble. He tried His hardest to make good choices, but it was always easier to make bad decisions. When his mom said, 'clean your room', he'd play his video game. When his dad said, 'rake the leaves', he'd play in the sandbox. And I don't know about you but I can relate to that, it's always easier to do something you want to do isn't it?

Anyway one afternoon Ted went to visit his grandmother. As they were sitting on the front porch, Ted began to tell his grandmother about how he was always in trouble. And again I know we can relate to that feeling too, that feeling of no matter what I do it's never right. Have you ever met with your friends and one of them says, 'are you OK, you don't look very well?' And we reply 'yes I'm fine thanks'. And then a little later in the day you meet someone else and they ask, 'are you OK, you don't look very well?' And we say 'I'm feeling fine thanks'. But you go away and you start to feel unwell, why is that?

Well if someone keeps telling you, you look unwell you start to think that you are unwell. It's a bit like a child who is constantly being told that he is bad, after a period of time that child will never know what being good is because he has been convinced in his mind that he is bad all the time and there is no point of trying to be good.

And Ted is a bit like that, he feels like he is always in trouble. But after Ted had finished talking with his Grandma, she said, "I know what you need...you need some Armour!" "Armour?" Ted asked excitedly. "Isn't that what soldiers wear?" Ted said, jumping out of his chair. "Yes, Ted, but not any type of armour, you need the armour of God!"

You see loved ones, Ted's grandmother realised we're all in a battle! We have an enemy who wants to steal away everything God wants us to have. Only it's not a battle we can see. Our enemy is Satan - and Satan lives in the invisible world of the spirit.

Even though we can't see him, Satan is very real. And he wants nothing more than to take us away from God. And Satan is sneaky. He will use every trick to get us to turn away from God.

If you have ever seen a wrestling match, you know it is not pretty. It is sweaty, sticky, dirty, and painful. When you wrestle, you get down and get dirty. There is no half-hearted involvement. You give it everything you've got, or you lose. Anthony T. Evans wrote: "I know a bit about wrestling because my brother, Arthur, who was the Maryland state wrestling champion in his weight class. At his championship match my brother weighed in at about 230 pounds and was going up against the three-time Maryland state champion who out-weighed him by 35 pounds.

"The armour of God"

Before the match, a reporter asked, 'Who is the toughest wrestler in this room?' My brother, humble fellow that he is, said, 'You are looking at him!' The reporter looked at him and asked, 'What makes you think you are so tough? You are about to fight the man who has won the state championship three times in a row.' My brother replied with a very insightful comment, 'I know. He is bigger and perhaps stronger than I am, but I know his methods.'

You see loved ones we are in a similar fight against Satan. Just as that wrestler needed to learn his opponent's moves, we need to understand Satan's moves. We need to know how he operates, so that we can prepare ourselves 'to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm' as **Ephesians 6:13** tells us.

And there is no place in Scripture which reveals Satan's schemes better than **Genesis 3**, which records Satan's initial contact with man. As the story unfolds, we clearly see Satan's strategy to ruin the human race. Now you don't have to be afraid of Satan - but you have to be ready to fight him! **James 4:7** "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you".

And so, like a great warrior, you need to put on your armour. And because your enemy is a spirit, God will give you spiritual armour. So Paul says to us in **Ephesians 6:10** to put on the whole Armour of God.

In Bible times soldiers would wear very heavy armour. In fact, when **David** went to fight the giant **Goliath** he couldn't wear the armour because it was too heavy. These days' soldiers don't wear armour, but you might find it interesting to know that many Christians wear armour everyday and it would be a good idea if you did too.

How can you wear armour? This armour is so neat; it's like having special powers that are invisible. When you imagine yourself putting on the armour of God each day it will help you against the devil and things you shouldn't do and help you make right decisions. But the only way the armour will work is if Jesus lives inside you.

You see the devil wants us to mess up and do things God doesn't want us to do. He might try to do that by getting you interested in violent video games, shows on TV or movies that show people doing things that are sinful and try to make them look like fun. Or he might try to pressure you to do things like other kids do that we know God wouldn't want us to do. These are some of the ways that the devil tries to trick you into doing things we shouldn't, this is called sin.

But by putting on the armour of God, you will be able to stand up to these things and do what is right and make good decisions. The armour will give you God's help to fight against the bad in the world.

Anyway my friend Ted knew, by the twinkle in her eye, grandma had something fun to share. Grandma slid out of her rocker and walked into the house. As she walked into the living room you could hear the old wooden floors creaking beneath her feet. Next, he heard some rustling, and then a loud, **THUMP!**

When grandma made it back outside. She was sliding a rectangular shaped bag across the floor. Ted was so anxious to see what was inside he could hardly wait. Grandma slid back into her rocker, and reached down deep into the bag. Out she pulled a long stringy belt. "This is your belt of truth", she said as she strapped an enormously big belt around his waist. "This belt will help you remember the truth, and to tell the truth." "Jesus always told the truth!"

Ephesians 6:14 As Christians we need to tie the belt of Truth around our waist and know that God is real.

"The armour of God"

Kids you need to know God loves you, and Jesus died for your sins. God is on your side - that is the Truth.

Have you ever wore a pair of jeans which are slightly too big? So you buy a belt to help keep them up but even at that sometimes we constantly need to keep pulling up the belt to keep our jeans in place. Well in much the same way we often let truth slip down and we need to constantly hold on to the Truth, and like a good tight belt, the truth will hold us up and keep us strong when Satan attacks.

We need to be truthful and remember the truth we know about God. We can know the truth by reading the Bible, the Spirit telling us in our conscience, or by other people who believe in God the same as us. Now I understand that telling the truth for a child is never easy, why? Because they are afraid of the consequences. If David messes up his room and doesn't want to get in trouble he would simply blame Queenette because he knows he will get into trouble. I know with our kids we used to give them a choice, we would say, 'if you tell me the truth you will be punished but if you tell me lies you will be punished more'.

And for years this strategy worked but loved ones it's a sad day when Christians can't be truthful, especially with each other, isn't it? So much division and fighting and gossiping would never happen if we could only be honest with each other.

So Ted's grandma reached into the sack with both hands and pulled out two dirty flip-flops. I stepped into each one and squeezed my toes between the wedges. "These are your sandals of readiness, you must always be ready to go share the good news about Jesus to anyone!" she said.

Ephesians 6:15 In other words we need to be ready to go wherever God sends us to tell the Good News of God's amazing love for us. **First**, we need to protect our feet and go where God would want us to go. Our feet would get sore if we walked around with no shoes on, so we need to avoid places we know we shouldn't go to keep our protective sandals on.

Second, we need to be peaceful with others. If there is someone you're fighting with or if you've hurt someone's feelings you need to go ask for their forgiveness, or forgive those who have wronged you.

Third, if you find things are a little hectic God is the peacemaker, and if you ask He can give you all the peace you need. **Philippians 4:6+7** "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus".

Next grandma reached in and pulled out a vest that was fringed around the edges. "This is your breastplate of righteousness." She said with pride in her voice. "It will protect your heart and remind you that Jesus is always with you." **Ephesians 6:14** in other words this will guard your heart.

Always do what is right and good, that way, Satan won't have anything to grab onto to worm his way into your heart. You will be able to stand straight and tall, with your head held high. Think about it loved ones; if you play ice hockey you probably have something that protects the part between your neck and tummy. This piece also protects your heart.

We can protect our heart by confessing any sin we have, or saying sorry to God for things we've done wrong. **1 John 1:9** "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness".

"The armour of God"

Another important thing to remember is that if we disobey or go somewhere we shouldn't, we lose the breastplate of righteousness. We aren't safe if we go somewhere Jesus doesn't want us to go because we are disobeying Him.

There was a large lump in the bag that looked like a turtle shell. Grandma pulled it out and placed it on his head. It was something Ted had often played with; brown and green blotches were stretched perfectly over every curve of grandpa's old army helmet. **"This is your helmet of salvation; this protects your mind, and helps you to remember what Jesus did on the cross for our sins."** Ephesians 6:17 one of Satan's greatest tactics is to get us to doubt our salvation.

Listen church you are saved! You are God's child! Satan has already lost, death is already defeated, and nothing can ever take you away from God. Keep your thoughts always on that! The helmet of salvation is what we use to protect our minds. Sometimes we need to remember that we're God's children and He loves us and will help us. We also need to remember what we've read in the Bible, learned from our parents and church about God, knowing all these things will help us make the right decisions.

Now what's interesting about the next two pieces of armour is that you don't have to wear them, you simply hold them instead. The next object grandma pulled out of the bag was large, and clanged around in the bag. She pulled it out by its side and grabbed it by the handle. **"This is your shield of faith, it will help you remember that Jesus is our Savior and He can protect you from all your enemies."**

First is the shield of faith. Just think of what you could do with a real shield. **Ephesians 6:16** to protect yourself from Satan's flaming arrows, take up the shield of faith. If someone throws a snowball at you, you can lift the shield so it doesn't hit you at all. We can use the shield in the same way when bad things come our way like temptations or doubt.

Sometimes the devil will try to make us think there isn't a God, or that he doesn't love us because we've done something wrong. We need to hold up our shield and stop these thoughts when this happens and remember that God loves us no matter what. Church please remember that the God of the universe is on your side. God is your protector and when you put your faith in Him, Satan cannot hurt you.

I remember when I was younger I used to watch a TV programme called 'Kung Fu' and before David Carradine could leave his Kung Fu master, his master said to him, **"Quickly as you can, snatch the pebble from my hand"**. And of course he could never do it because he was never faster than his master.

And loves ones it the same with Jesus, we're in His hands and no-one can snatch us away from Him. **John 10:27+28** **"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand"**.

By now the bag seemed flat and empty, but she reached in once more. Out she pulled a long flat stick. Something that startled him at first, because that was what grandpa would whoop him with if someone said a dirty word. Grandma gripped it in her hand and said, **"This is your sword of the spirit, it will give you knowledge, and remind you to read the bible."** Ephesians 6:17 take up the sword of the Spirit.

God has given us a weapon to fight back against Satan's lies and accusations. Our weapon is the truth of God's Word. It is the Bible. God's Word can cut Satan's lies to pieces. Use God's Word to fight Satan just like Jesus did when Satan tempted him in the desert.

The words of the Bible are your sword. We can cut anything off that isn't good in our lives.

"The armour of God"

And by remembering God's word (the Bible) we will be able to tell what is good and what is bad. Romans 12:2 "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect".

At that point Ted felt strong and bold. He sliced his sword through the air and heard it quickly whip in the wind. Grandma sat there in stillness for a moment with her eyes closed. Then grandma extended out her arm to grace his shoulder. Quietly she whispered in his ear, "There is one more thing that you're missing from your armour."

For the last time grandma reached into the bag and pulled out a small, round, smooth stone. She rolled it around in her hands for a second and then slipped it into my pocket. "This my child, is your pocket full of prayer, it will remind you to pray often." Ephesians 6:18 Prayer is the last piece of armour.

This isn't a particular piece of armour but kind of holds all our armour together. That's why 1 Thessalonians 5:17 tells us to pray without ceasing. By talking to God we can do amazing things. Nothing is too big or impossible with prayer because God can do anything that He wants to.

That doesn't mean that he will always answer the way we want him to, but He will answer the way He knows is best. When we pray we need to remember that we don't always need to ask for things. God also wants us to pray for others, for people that don't know him, for people we don't like, for people that are sick. He also wants us to thank Him for whatever we are thankful for, for helping us to do be good at something, family, friends, and toys. He blesses us with these things so we should thank him.

A good way to help you remember the armour is to put it on each day when you get out of bed, or before you go to school. Pray that God will help you remember that the armour is there and what it's used for, so you can fight the bad with good. With Ted fully covered in his armour of God he was ready to take on any evil that came is way! Obeying God is tough without the armour of God, but with it nothing was impossible for Ted.

It is reported by the Greek poets that the mother of Achilles the Grecian captain was warned by the oracle and dipped her son, as a child, into the River Lethe, thus providing an impenetrable armour for protection during the Trojan War. Paris, Achilles' archenemy, knowing of this fact, realized the only place he could attack his foe would be the heel, that by which his mother held him while immersing her son in the river. Ultimately, Paris attacked and shot Achilles in the heel and killed him.

Loved ones, there is a whole armour to protect us from Satan's attacks. We must put on each piece with prayer and God has promised to protect us, even down to our Achilles' heel.

So let me encourage us all to "take up the full armour of God, so that you may resist in the evil day". Ephesians 6:13 Satan is going to try to take away all the good things God has for you - but don't worry - God is on our side!

And with God on our side, no one - not even Satan - can defeat us. Be bold! Be strong! For the Lord your God is with you!