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Series: Game Plan

Message: Part 3 - Over Armor

Verse: Ephesians 6:10-18

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Play Intro Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlxpk6arvC0>

I sure would hate to be on the receiving end of some of those hits. If you watched the Cardinal game you probably saw Kurt Warner take one of those hits. In football that kind of hit is called a “de-cleater” when you get hit so hard your cleats leave the ground. I came in early this morning to make sure Kurt was still standing upright on my insert. Not a great day for the Cardinals and Thank God Kurt was OK.

If you are visiting with us today my name is Pastor Chad and I am the Children’s Pastor here at Christ’s Church and I am delivering this week’s message in our Game Plan series. During this series we are using various sports as illustrations of Christian strategies. Last week Pastor Gary used his baseball illustration this week we are going to use my favorite sport... Football.

Now I’m sure you didn’t notice the large goalposts behind me. There is a very important reason they are here... last week right after the Packer game I got a call from Coach Whisenhunt who said he may be looking for a new kicker. So after the service if you would like to try out for the Cardinals we will be having kicker tryouts from the center isle after the service.

There is so much preparation that goes into playing a football game, especially in the NFL. You don’t just show up on Sunday and play. Every day of the week you are intensely working long days... studying film of your opponent, game planning, practicing, lifting weights, rehabbing injuries or anything else you can do to ensure a victory. It is a lot of hard work and preparation.

As I was researching the routines of football teams I ran across a step-by-step pre-game to do list for football players. It had 19 steps that you take from the time you arrive at the field to when you run out of the tunnel. Now I’m not going to cover all of them but just highlight a few.

- Arrive at the stadium at least two hours prior to kickoff.
- Put on your game pants and get your ankles taped.
- Put on a pair of socks, cleats and gloves.
- Run around, stretch your muscles, walk laps, play catch with another player, or even sit idly for 10 or 15 minutes.
- Strap on your shoulder pads and jersey.
- Put your helmet on your head and check its fit.
- Run through individual warm-up drills
- Use the final 10 to 15 minutes before kickoff to relax, pray, get your equipment adjusted, study your playbook or do anything else you feel you need to do.
- **Gather with the rest of the team to say the Lord's Prayer.**
- Storm out of the locker room and onto your team's sideline prepared to wage war.

I found it interesting how much intensity goes into preparing to play a game or how the routine ended with “prepare to wage war”. Before a football player goes out to “wage war” against his enemy he has to put on this PHYSICAL ARMOR. His helmet, shoulder pads, shoes, gloves and so on...

So how does all this relate to us as believers? According to the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians as believers we are at WAR because he calls on us to put on our Armor.

In Ephesians 6:10-18 he wrote:

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.

What type of war is Paul talking about?

Ephesians 6:11-12

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.

He clearly states that our “struggle is not against flesh and blood”. It is “against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” The essence of the war we are talking about is a spiritual war.

Let me give you the definition of spiritual warfare.

Spiritual warfare is that conflict being waged in the invisible, spiritual realm that is being manifest in the visible, physical realm.

In other words, spiritual warfare is a battle between invisible, angelic forces that affect you and me. The effects this battle are very visible in the kind of problems they create in our physical realm... such as anger, fear, self-centeredness, deception, doubt, control, and corruption just to name a few.

So we know we are in a spiritual war who is the enemy?

Now unlike a football team who faces a different enemy each week. We have to face the same enemy day in and day out.

In verse 12 Paul states our enemy is the "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms".

Our enemy is the devil. I truly believe we have a hard time comprehending how clever and wicked his schemes can be...

I rarely watch the news. I stopped watching the news on a regular basis about 10 years ago. To me it appears so focused on the evil acts of people and rarely focuses on the good things people do. You never see "Breaking News" about a group of people going down to feed the homeless. It's always something like robbery, a high speed chase and that's on a slow news day it's usually an even more evil type of crime that starts off a news cast. It can be frustrating to see how much "air time" the devil gets.

We have to be on guard at all times.

I Peter 5:8-9 "8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings."

JUST REMEMBER WHO IS BEHIND IT ALL!

John 8:44 "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

We have all tried to change people in our lives who are not doing right. What we need to understand is that what happens through people, including you and me, has its roots in something much larger. I'm not say that this makes it OK when people do wrong things. We are still responsible for our actions. But understanding who the real enemy is helps us focus in our reactions.

We know that we are at war... We know who the enemy is... How do we prepare to fight the enemy?

Ephesians 6:10;13-18

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

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.

Verse 10 starts off stating that we are to "be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power".

Our strength to fight the enemy doesn't come from our physical strength. Remember we are engaged in a spiritual battle. The strength we use must be spiritual. It must be from God.

Philippians 4:13

¹³I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Now if you haven't already... take out the Game Plan insert out of your bulletin. Just as football player puts on their football armor before the take the field for battle we too as believers must put on our spiritual armor to prepare for battle.

Belt of Truth

Ephesians 6:14

¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist,...

The truth we are talking about is our complete trustworthy and faithfulness in God. A knowing that all Truth comes from God.

Isaiah 11:5

⁵ Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

Breastplate of Righteousness

Ephesians 6:14

...with the breastplate of righteousness in place,

By our faith in God we seek and allow Him to lead us his righteousness. His righteousness is revealed through us as believers in the good deeds we perform on his behalf.

Romans 1:17

¹⁷For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

Shoes of Peace

Ephesians 6:15

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

As believers we have been saved by faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We have a peace within us that only comes from the Lord. And with that peace we have an obligation to share the Good News with others.

Romans 5:1

¹Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Romans 10:15

¹⁵And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Shield of Faith

Ephesians 6:16

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

God himself is the shield we use to help protect ourselves from spiritual attacks. In the Old testament God is routinely referred to as a shield.

In God's Covenant With Abram God Himself states...

Genesis 15:1

¹ After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:
"Do not be afraid, Abram.
I am your shield,
your very great reward.

Psalm 18:2

² The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;
my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge.
He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Helmet of Salvation

Ephesians 6:17

¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation...

By the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, as believers we have been saved. This salvation gives us the gift of eternal life.

Romans 10:9

⁹That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved

Sword of the Spirit

Ephesians 6:17

¹⁷...and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

This is the only offensive part of the armor. The gospel of Christ only advances by the word of God. It is important as a church and as individuals we stand firm in the word of God. Not wavering to have it fit the concept of what the world wants. We only become weakened abandon the word of God.

Gloves of Prayer

Ephesians 6:18

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.

Do you ever struggle with prayer? Do you feel like you are having a hard time connecting with God in your prays? Pray is a powerful way to get in touch with God's plans for you. The best way to communicate with God is one on one. A place where there are no distractions... a quiet place...

Matthew 6:6

"But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

Take the time daily to find a quite place and talk with God.

Can you imagine the outcome of a football game if one team decided not to wear their football armor. The injuries, the pain, the suffering the players would endure because they are not wearing their armor.

The same is true for us... If we go out into the world without our spiritual armor we are open for attack. These spiritual attacks leave very real injuries, pain and suffering in our lives. Friendship are ruined, marriages are destroyed, anger intercedes... the list of goes on and on.

Be sure to put on the Full Armor of God each and every day to ensure you can defend yourself and fight back when attacked.

Romans 10:9

⁹That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved

We invite you to receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior or to place your membership with us here at Christ's Church. To do so, or for special prayer requests, please come up to the altar at the conclusion of the service and one of our Elders will meet with you.

Prayer... Full Armor of God, Haiti, Pastor Jared's Camp, MrJ's Travel for upcoming camp.

One last thing before we go.

As I mentioned earlier in my message that just before a football team takes the field they say the Lord's Prayer. Typically when we pray it is as an individual or as a small group. This prayer to me has significant meaning because of the way it starts. It starts with two simple words "Our Father". These two words are what unite us a team of believers. It is what brings us together as a body of Christ.

Before we leave today, I would like us to grab a hand, just as the football team does right before they take the field and recite the Lord's Prayer as a team of believers.

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.

Amen