

EYES WIDE OPEN

EPHESIANS 6:16-18

HEART OF THE MATTER - A WORD FROM KEN

Michelangelo's David is a wonder to behold. It took the master artist about three years to liberate the seventeen foot tall image of a powerful, youthful male from a single slab of carrara marble. Completed in AD 1504, it brought Michelangelo instant fame as the premier sculptor of the age.

Michelangelo's inspiration came from the Bible. He captured David at a moment of decision. Goliath was a giant of a Philistine. He taunted the army of Israel bellowing threats against anyone bold enough to engage him in combat. He made it clear, defeat me and our kingdom is yours. "But if I win (and I fully expect I will), then the people of Israel will spend the remainder of their days as our captives."

The stakes were high. This terrifying speech continued for forty days. Israel's best and brightest covered in silence. There was alarm in the camp. David, the shepherd boy, delivering food and supplies to his brothers on the front lines, could not understand. "The living God is for us," he would say. "What's the problem?" Finally, before the King of Israel, David volunteered. The contest would begin. David returned to the front.

Michelangelo caught David's pose at this watershed moment of readiness. David looks across the battlefield and eyes a giant of an enemy. There is no hesitation. Only quiet confidence. In one hand, he holds a leather strap, a sling. In the other, five smooth stones. He stands straight, tall, poised, certain. His heart would be racing, his breathing accelerated, if fear had been present. But there is no fear. His piercing gaze must have disarmed his mighty opponent. Goliath exploded in derisive laughter. But a new kind of fear gripped the heavily armed warrior. That fortieth day, he met his unexpected match.

David turned down the heavy metal armor. He had all the armor he needed: his sling and his faith. You know what happened next.

And this is the **heart of the matter**. Like David, we are in a battle. It's not a battle against flesh and blood. In David's time, Goliath wore a state of the art suit of armor. In Paul's time, the Roman soldiers wore theirs. Paul makes it clear, we have armor, too. It's like their armor; but our protection is a spiritual protection. Truth and righteousness and the gospel of peace and faith and salvation and the word of God – this is our armor. It's what we need. It's all we need.

This is armor we "put on." "Take up." When ancient Greeks defended Sparta, they developed a tactic that spelled victory. It's become known as the "Spartan Defense." Soldiers would march toward the enemy side by side in a wide line-up of marching warriors; the distance between them was the measure of their shield. When they were attacked, by flaming arrows (dipped in

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flammable pitch then lit just before they were launched) or swords at close range, they raised their heavy shields together forming an impenetrable wall.

The living God is our hope and our strength. We have an enemy. He is cunning and shrewd and relentless. Sometimes, he seems bigger than life, as Goliath.

Paul knew victory. As did David. Prepared with the protection we've been given, all wrapped up in prayer, standing tall, eyes wide open, so will we.

BACKGROUND – Paul rounds out the equipment God makes available for the believer's battle. Three more pieces of armor signify spiritual weaponry designed to help us stand. More than the full armor is needed. One more weapon of warfare remains and may well be the most critical: prayer.

Read EPHESIANS 6:16-18

Think it over...

1. The three remaining pieces of armor are the shield, the helmet and the sword. How would each of them be utilized by a Roman soldier?
2. How is faith a shield? (see Hebrews 11:1)
3. What does the helmet protect? How is salvation a helmet?
4. How is the word of God a sword? (see Hebrews 4:12) Why does he call it the "sword of the Spirit"?
5. What do we learn about prayer from verse eighteen?
6. What do we learn about attitude? Preparedness?

Bring it home...

1. David turned down the heavy armor because it was too cumbersome (II Samuel 17). How was he armed?
2. Paul tells us to take our stand. Does this mean we are passive? Is there both a defense and an offense as we engage in the battle?
3. How does our faith protect us against Satan's attacks? What would be a life-example of a flaming arrow?
4. How does our position in Christ protect our minds? (specifically, our salvation)
5. What role does the word of God play in the battle we face? Give some examples.
6. How has prayer prepared you for the battle? Be specific.

SHARE. SUPPORT. AFFIRM. PRAY.