

## HOME GROUP LEADER'S NOTES ON ARMED #4

NOTES TO LEADERS: THE PURPOSE OF THE OPENING SECTION IS TO HELP THEM CONNECT WITH PAUL'S PURPOSE, I.E. TO PREPARE THEM FOR "THE DAY OF EVIL." THIS IS NOT A SPECIFIC DAY, BUT THE IDEA THAT THE DEVIL IS SCHEMING TO BRING EVIL UPON US. THOUGH THE IDEA OF ROMAN ARMOR IS A BIT FOREIGN TO US, WE CAN SEE THAT WE ARE IN BATTLE AND THAT GOD HAS EQUIPPED US.

### THE DAY OF EVIL

The Apostle Paul said that there is a real enemy – the devil. He intends to bring harm to God's people and God's reputation. He uses powers, cohorts, lies and schemes to bring destruction to us. So Paul said what WE must do: *"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For 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. Therefore, 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."* (Ephesians 6:10-13).

Are we in "the day of evil?" Why do you think we are or aren't?

NOTES TO LEADERS: THE ABOVE QUESTION IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THE EVIDENCES OF THE DEVIL'S WORK IN OUR LIVES, IN OUR COMMUNITY, AND IN OUR LAND. PAUL'S MESSAGE IN EPHESIANS SIX IS A CALL TO UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF THE CONFLICTS OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE. PAUL IS NOT REFERRING TO A SINGLE "DAY OF EVIL." RATHER, THAT THE DEVIL IS USING DEMONIC INTELLIGENCES AIMED AT THE DESTRUCTION OF GOD'S REPUTATION AND HIS PEOPLE. THESE DEMONS WORK THROUGH PEOPLE, THROUGH STRUCTURES, AND THROUGH VARIOUS FORMS OF MESSAGES TO TURN PEOPLE FROM GOD.

Last week, we looked at the first piece of armor, the belt of truth. What did you observe or learn about this?

NOTES TO LEADERS: SINCE WE ARE SLOWLY WALKING THROUGH THE ARMOR OF GOD, IT IS GOOD TO REVIEW WHAT WE ARE LEARNING TOGETHER.

Read Ephesians 6:10-14.

What is the goal of putting on the armor of God?

NOTES TO LEADERS: IN SHORT, "TO STAND TOGETHER." THIS MEANS THAT TOGETHER, WE (1) RECOGNIZE THE ENEMIES ATTACKS, (2) RESIST THE TEMPTATIONS TO ANGER, TO ACT OUT AGAINST ONE ANOTHER, ETC. (SEE OTHER THEMES IN EPHESIANS), AND NOT LET THE ENEMY HINDER THE PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL.

What do we learn about righteousness from the following verses?

Romans 1:17

NOTES TO LEADERS: THE GOSPEL REVEALS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD THAT COMES BY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST. WE CALL THIS "POSITIONAL" RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Romans 3:21-24

NOTES TO LEADERS: THIS IS ONE OF THE CLEAREST STATEMENTS IN THE BIBLE THAT ALL PEOPLE HAVE SINNED BUT CAN BE DECLARED RIGHTEOUS (JUSTIFIED) THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST AND THAT THIS IS A GIFT OF GOD.

2 Corinthians 5:21

NOTES TO LEADERS: THIS PASSAGE TELLS US HOW IT IS POSSIBLE FOR US TO BE RIGHTEOUS. IT IS BECAUSE JESUS CHRIST WHO KNEW NO SIN BECAME SIN FOR US; HE BECAME A CURSE THAT BLESSING MIGHT COME TO US (GALATIANS 3:13). THIS MEANT THAT HE ALSO EXPERIENCED THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR SIN. THE NET RESULT IS WE ARE GIFTED WITH HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Philippians 3:8-9

NOTES TO LEADERS: THIS ADDS THAT WE HAVE HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ON THE BASIS OF FAITH, THIS IS NOT OUR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

NOTES TO LEADERS: WHILE POSITIONAL RIGHTEOUSNESS IS A GIFT, OUR EXPERIENTIAL RIGHTEOUSNESS COMES THROUGH OBEDIENCE MOTIVATED BY LOVE FOR JESUS. GOD USES HIS REVEALED WORD IN SCRIPTURE TO TRAIN US UP IN 'LIVED OUT' RIGHTEOUSNESS.

1 Peter 2:24

NOTES TO LEADERS: JESUS BORE OUR SINS MAKING POSSIBLE POSITIONAL RIGHTEOUSNESS. THIS IS MEANT TO HAVE THE EFFECT (MAKES POSSIBLE) FOR US TO "LIVE FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS." THE REDEEMED SHOULD LIVE RIGHTEOUS LIVES. THIS IS THE SECOND MEANING OF THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. FOR THE GIFT OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD SHOULD INVARIABLY LEAD TO THE RIGHTEOUS LIVING OF THE REDEEMED.

How is 1 John 1:9 an important part of putting on the Armor?

NOTES TO LEADERS: THE SCRIPTURES CLEARLY AND REPEATEDLY TEACH THAT WE WERE CLEANSED BY THE WORK OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS. ONE OF THE DARTS OF THE ENEMY IS TO ACCUSE US AND CAUSE DOUBT, TO PUT INTO QUESTION OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. THIS VERSE INDICATES PUTS THE EMPHASIS ON GOD'S CHARACTER – THAT HE IS FAITHFUL AND RIGHTEOUS TO CLEANSE FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS THOSE WHO "CONFESS SINS."

Why might this be our breastplate?

NOTES TO LEADERS: NOTE, THERE IS NO SURE ANSWER. THE ROMAN BREASTPLATE WAS USED IN BOTH PROTECTION FROM DARTS AS WELL AS IN HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT. IT PROTECTED THE VITAL ORGANS OF THE SOLDIER. WITHOUT BOTH THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD AND LIVING A RIGHTEOUS LIFE, THE BELIEVER WOULD BE OPEN TO THE ATTACKS OF THE ENEMY.

DISCUSS GOD'S PROVISION OF ARMOR

The Scriptures don't present the armor of God as a theological truth without essential application. We are told to "put it on!"

How would knowing that we have the righteousness of God help us stand against the devil? To what kinds of darts of the devil would this piece of armor be essential?

NOTES TO LEADERS: THE DARTS OF THE DEVIL INCLUDE ACCUSATION, DOUBTING THE GOODNESS AND CHARACTER OF GOD, DOUBTING YOUR OWN SALVATION (VERY COMMON), AND APPEAL TO PRIDE.

How would this armor help Peter after his denial of Jesus? (Read John 18:13-27) What does the devil do when we have failed or sinned?

NOTES TO LEADERS: AFTER PETER'S DENIAL, HE COULD HAVE DOUBTED HIS RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST. IF HIS RELATIONSHIP WAS CENTERED ON HIS PERFORMANCE / HIS OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS, HE WOULD BE TEMPTED TO HIDE. BUT JESUS WAS CLEAR THAT ETERNAL LIFE WAS BY PLACING FAITH IN HIM. IN JOHN 13, JESUS TOLD PETER THAT HE WAS CLEANSED. THEN IN JOHN 21, JESUS TOLD PEOPLE THAT HE WANTED HIM TO CONTINUE IN MINISTRY. THESE EXAMPLES HELP US SEE WHAT IT MEANS THAT WE HAVE BEEN REDEEMED, MADE RIGHTEOUS, CLEANSED.

If we have positional righteousness (see above), why are we so regularly called to practice righteousness? (See 2 Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 4:22-24; 1 Timothy 6:11)

NOTES TO LEADERS: THE GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD SHOULD LEAD TO RIGHTEOUS LIVING BY THE BELIEVER. GOD HAS CALLED US INTO THE LIGHT; HE DOES NOT LEAVE US TO LIVE AGAIN IN THE DESTRUCTION OF DARKNESS. GOD LOVES US AND LEADS US INTO PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

How is our righteousness evidence that God works in us?

NOTES TO LEADERS: THIS IS EVIDENCED THROUGHOUT THE NEW TESTAMENT. IT IS A THEME IN THE BOOK OF 1 JOHN, JAMES, AND OTHERS. GOD'S GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (POSITIONAL) WILL LEAD TO OUR RIGHTEOUS LIVING. THIS IS THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AS WE CHOOSE TO BE OBEDIENT OUT OF OUR LOVE FOR GOD. (JOHN 14).

**O how marvelous is our God, that "He who had no sin became sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."**

Steve