

**Sunday Sermon**  
**August 26, 2018**  
**Ephesians 6:10-20**  
**Equipment for the Journey**

### Introduction

When our daughter was an undergrad student at a university in Durham, Will Willimon was dean of the chapel there. Willimon liked to get out on campus and meet the students, and he was very good at remembering faces.

A couple of weeks into a fall semester, he ran into a young man he had met on the day the first year students were moving in. Willimon recognized him and asked how it was going, how he was liking his first days as a college student.

“Oh I like it fine,” the young man said. “Of course, things here are different. I have seen things here I have not seen before. But I am going to make it. Why, the most amazing thing happened to me just this morning.”

“Oh?” Willimon said, “tell me about it.”

“Well,” he said, “I was in the student union, grabbing breakfast, and all the tables were full, so I went over to this table where one guy was sitting and asked if I could sit there. He said yes, and I sat down. We ate in silence for a while. Then he asked what year I was, and I told him I was a freshman, and he said he was too. I asked him how he liked it here. He said it was fine, although there had been some things that he had seen and heard that made him a bit uncomfortable. I asked him what he meant by that. He said it was not a big deal, he could handle it. He said he was just different from lots of people here, he guessed. And I asked, ‘Different in what way?’

He said, ‘Well, I look at some things differently because, well, I am a Christian.’

‘Wow!’ the student said, ‘I am too! Imagine that!’ the young man said to Willimon. ‘In this whole university, two freshmen, both Christians, running into one another at breakfast. Amazing!’” (1)

### Lesson

We gave out blessings tags for book bags and backpacks today. But most days we Christians do not wear tags or badges that identify us, and it can be difficult for us to recognize each other. The world out there can be lonely, and it can be tough.

The writer of Ephesians says if we are going to survive out there, we have got to have support, and we have got to be prepared. And the writer uses the armament worn by Roman soldiers in his day to make an analogy of how to equip ourselves in the faith.

“Be prepared,” he says. “You’re up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every piece of armor God issues . . . Truth,

righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation are more than words. Learn how to apply them. You'll need them throughout your life.”

The Spirit, revealed in God's Word, the writer says, is an indispensable armament. In the same way, prayer is essential. “Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters.” (2)

### Conclusion

Some of the times I have found to be the most difficult as a parent were when I left a child standing at the door of a classroom or at the front of a college dorm or at the window of a group home. As I walked away, I wanted to turn around and say, “Wait a minute. I am not so sure about this. I am not so sure I trust you to treat my child and teach her the way I think she should be taught. I am not so sure I trust you to care for my son the way I have cared for him.”

And I wondered: Have I given my children everything they need to protect them? Have I taught them that God's truth can overcome evil? Have I equipped them, as the writer says, with the full armor of God?

We are doing a lot of moving around in this service today, at least for Presbyterians. Up and back for the laying on of hands, for the dedication of the school year, and in a few minutes, for a time of Holy Communion. You know, in the day of this epistle when the Roman army got into formation for moving, they lined up so that they moved together, so not only to protect themselves, but also to protect the persons around them, on each side and in front and behind.

The epistle says prepare yourself. You have the Spirit of God with you through Word and prayer. And then move out there together, supporting, protecting each other.

When you do, truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation will become more than words. They will become equipment for the journey. They will become a part of you. Whatever it is that you are facing this fall, take them with you. Amen.

### Notes

1. William Willimon, “Get Ready for a Fight,” sermon preached at Duke University Chapel, August 21, 1994.
2. Adapted from Eugene Peterson, Ephesians 6:10-18 paraphrase in *The Message*.