

September 10, 2023

The View

“Sirs, we wish to see Jesus.” — John 12:21

Welcome Visitors

Our goal at the Folsom church of Christ is to do everything according to God's word, including respecting its silence. We are not a denomination, not part of anything larger than this local church; we have no earthly "headquarters." The five elders oversee this church and, ultimately, we answer only to Christ. The comments you hear today are primarily for the benefit of our own members, as we examine Scripture and seek to be built up in our faith in Christ. If you don't understand something, please do not hesitate to ask the preacher or one of the elders. We welcome and appreciate your comments and questions on any issue and especially if you see or hear anything that you feel does not correspond to God's word. We are here to serve; please help us do that.

***Please fill out a visitor's card and put it in the collection plate when is passed.
We do not solicit donations from visitors. See page 4 for more information.***

Mark Your Calendars

Bible Exhibit, with Mike Wilson, October 21, 2023

Invite your friends and relatives.

Schedule

The Lord's Day

9:30 AM Bible Classes

Auditorium: "Jesus at work in the Gospels."

Young Adult Class (room 12): "Jesus: making the best use of the time." Ephesians 5:15-17

Room 15/16: "Building a Great Marriage"

10:30 AM: Assembly

Preaching Today

David Posey: Hebrews Series: "Faith for the Tough Times"

Livestream at 9:30 & 10:30 <https://tinyurl.com/5f2cbm3y>

Bible Class: 5:00 PM @ the Building

"Praying the Psalms" (Auditorium)

HS/College Class, 5 PM Every Sunday @ David & Christie Posey's home (unless notified otherwise)

Middle school class: monthly (contact David Sanderson (david.r.sanderson@intel.com)

or Seth Reagan (sethreagan@gmail.com)

There are several on-going Bible classes in the homes of members. Check with David Posey or one of the other elders if you would like to join one of those classes.

Wednesday 7 PM @ Building

Bible classes: 5th grade and lower; 6th grade and up, auditorium: Praising God in Song

2nd Saturday Men's Bible Study: 7 to 8 AM

Bel Air Market on Bidwell in Folsom.

"Iron sharpens iron" (Proverbs 27:17). Mentoring (Titus 2:1-6).

Articles published in the View reflect only the thoughts and opinions of the author alone, not necessarily the editor, the elders or any member of the church at Folsom.

Humans in Harmony

BY MARK WHITE

I LOVE GOOD MUSIC, ALTHOUGH IT WOULD BE A GREAT EXAGGERATION TO CALL MYSELF A MUSICIAN. Harmonious chords in a piece of music are soothing and joyful to ears which can hear and appreciate such harmony. The word harmony can mean “a pleasing arrangement of parts.” Even a good painting or photograph can exhibit harmony in colors and lines.

Harmony among humans is just as pleasant as what the ear can hear or the eye can see. In fact, Christians are taught to be harmonious with one another. Romans 12:16 comes to mind: “*Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.*” (NASB) The challenge we are given here is to live in harmony with our brothers and sisters in Christ, regardless of their social or economic status.

A story was once related to me of a poor man in filthy, ragged clothing who visited the worship service of a rather affluent congregation. He sat down on the pew beside a woman whose clothing and jewels advertised her wealth. The woman scooted as far away from the visitor as she could. When a deacon came by, she asked him in a loud whisper — “*Do you smell what I smell?*” The

deacon sniffed the air around them and then said, “*Yes, I think it is the odor of self-importance.*” That may be more than just a preacher’s story. I am sad to think I may have been places where this could very well have occurred.

Christianity is the great equalizer among humans. It brings harmony to their association in Christ. Among other things, Galatians 3:28 emphasizes the equality Christ brings to people — “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*”

Jesus Christ does not recognize social class distinctions, nor does He seek to maintain a certain caste system among those who follow Him. In fact, James 2:1-6 speaks directly to this issue:

“My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, ‘You sit here in a good place,’ and you say to the poor man, ‘You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,’ have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? Listen, my beloved brethren; did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of

the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and drag you into court?” Christians must simply not observe class and social distinctions in their fellowship.

A number of years ago, two men served together as elders in their congregation. One of these men was the President of a local college, while the other man was a groundskeeper at the school, responsible for the lawn and shrubs around the campus. However, when the two men sat down together in elder’s meetings they were equal in their roles as shepherds of the flock. Each had great respect for the other as brothers in Christ. In matters pertaining to their local flock, one man’s judgment was just as good as the other man’s. They worked together harmoniously despite their economic and social distinctions as far as the world is concerned. In Christ, they were brothers — sons of

the same Father and servants together in the Kingdom of God. In Christ, their relationship was not only possible, but probable. Christ brings together all sorts of people, whose kinship in the Lord is the overriding concern of their lives. Paul may have been specifically addressing the “upper class” in Romans 12:16, but our experience indicates that the lesson is needed by all of us. We sometimes hear those with little money

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speaking disparagingly of those who have much money. We have also heard those with limited education make fun of those with advanced academic degrees. There seems to be an innate desire to think we are better than others for *some* reason — because of where we live, because of the tone of our skin, because of the kind of automobile we drive — you can add to this list. Such matters are of little importance to the faithful Christian. He loves all people, and he is humble. He seeks harmony among God’s people.

May God help us to act like Jesus toward all people everywhere. In almost every congregation, there are people who feel as if they do not belong there. They see themselves as different from everyone around them. Perhaps they are painfully shy. In attempting to create a harmonious atmosphere among us all, faithful Christians will reach out to those who are on the fringe, expressing their love and acceptance. Humans in harmony is possible only in Christ. Let us therefore open our hearts to each other.

“The Armor of God”

What does each piece of the “armor” in Ephesians 6:13-17 represent?

The “whole armor of God” is one of the most famous and picturesque passages in the Bible. It may lose some of its impact in modern times since the “armor” in Paul’s day was literal armor that soldiers wore for battle. But most of us have seen enough movies and documentaries that portray men in armor that we are familiar with what Paul is talking about. In Ephesians 6, Paul is using “armor” as a figure of speech. The Greek word is *panoplia* which means “a complete set of something” (“panoply” as in the song, “Soldiers of Christ Arise”). Paul tells us to put on “the full armor of God” or risk succumbing to the “flaming darts of the evil one” (Satan).

However, before we “put on” the armor of God there are some things we need to “put off” (Ephesians 4:22-24). He calls it “the old self.” If you’ve got an old moth-eaten jacket you wouldn’t put a brand new jacket over it — that would be foolish. But even more foolish would be to try to cover up old sinful attitudes with new spiritual ones; that’s not possible. We are to completely put away any lingering, “pet” sins or habits. You have to **put off** before you can **put on**.

The Armor of God

Remember that this armor is “of God.” God gave us the capacity to resist temptation (I Corinthians 10:13) but that capacity only functions if we are doing battle in God’s name, with God’s armor.

We put on the **belt of truth**. A belt holds things together. The belt is truth. Today we have more access to the truth than at any time in history. We have our paper and ink Bibles but also the Bible on our computers, tablets and mobile phones. Most of us *literally* carry the truth with us all day, every day. That means we have no excuse when we neglect reading it. Jesus said, “everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required” (Luke 12:48). That should be a warning to us to read and study the truth.

Next, we put on the **breastplate of righteousness**. This protects the heart from those who would try to corrupt it. Righteousness here is simply the commitment to do the right thing (see James 4:17). Our hearts must be devoted to righteousness.

We put on the belt, and the breastplate, and look in the mirror in admiration. But we’re far from finished. The armor of God is not for show — it assumes there is a battle to be fought. We don’t put on armor and then sit in the barracks. Instead, we put on shoes or **boots** so we are ready to march out and spread the good news — we are on the move. Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 28:19 to “Go...” We come to our assemblies not to form a “holy huddle” but to get prepared to go out and be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. This assembling we do, this “going to church” is our “fueling station,” not the destination. See Hebrews 10:24-15. We come in to go out.

The next item to put on is the **shield of faith**. Note that Paul says we take up the shield *in all circumstances*. We need protection from the arrows of outside influences 24/7. A shield in Paul’s day was about 4 x 2 ½ feet, with leather over wood. Since it’s a shield of *faith*, it is perfectly effective in extinguishing the darts of temptation. When faith fails we are, in effect, laying down our shield and that makes us vulnerable.

After the shield, we put on the **helmet of salvation**. Helmets save lives. They are a crucial piece of equipment in biking,

motorcycle riding, football, hockey, baseball, and several other activities. Why? If you suffer a severe head trauma, even if the rest of your body is sound, you can lose your ability to function. Spiritually, it seems this piece of armor is designed to protect us against doubt and guilt among other things. When the devil was tempting Jesus, twice he said, “If you are the son of God...” He does the same thing with us. “IF” is designed to get us to overthink and doubt our salvation. *Am I really a child of God?* Yes: Romans 8:16. Put the helmet on and quit doubting.

Finally, we take up the **sword of the Spirit**. This may be a defensive weapon or an offensive one, but as a figure for God’s word, it is never a *destructive* one. We don’t wave the sword around and threaten people. The “sword” we take up is the word of God (II Corinthians 10:4-5). When we wield the “sword” we are wielding God’s *word* and if a stronghold is destroyed, it was the word of God that did the destroying, not us (see Jude 9).

When Jesus was tempted, each time the Satan challenged him, what did Jesus do? Run? No, Jesus didn’t flee. Instead, in each case he said, “*it is written...*” (Matthew 4:1-11). The Bible is all we need — not just quoting it, of course, but letting God’s word dwell in our hearts and appealing to it when we are tempted.

Back to the Shield of Faith

Every piece of the armor is crucial but the shield warrants some additional thought. In Paul’s time, if a man went to battle without a shield, he would be banished; he would be a soldier without honor. Why? Because unlike all the other equipment, the shields of the soldiers are used to protect not only themselves but *each other*. Listen to this exchange in the novel *Gates of Fire*:

“Have your instructors taught you why the Spartans excuse without penalty the warrior who loses his helmet or breastplate in battle, but punish with loss of all citizenship rights the man who discards his shield?” They had, Alexandros replied. “Because a warrior carries helmet and breastplate for his own protection, but his shield for the safety of the whole line.”

Steven Pressfield, *Gates of Fire*, p. 34

If you lose a helmet, or your breastplate, or your sword, you put yourself at risk. But if you lose your shield, you lose your honor because your if you lose your shield there’s a hole in the line, putting everyone at risk.

I don’t know if Paul had that in mind when he wrote this but I love the idea that each member of a local church is carrying his shield, not only for his own sake but for the sake of the entire church. It also sheds light on the figure of being carried out of the battle on his shield. In ancient Greek warfare, soldiers would carry their shields into battle, and if a soldier was killed in battle, his comrades would carry him off the field on his shield. This was considered a mark of honor and bravery, as it showed that the soldier had fought valiantly and had not fled from battle — and not lost his shield.

The expression is still used today to refer to someone who has faced a difficult challenge with courage and dignity, even if they did not ultimately succeed.

DAVID POSEY