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A Benediction Commencement 2021

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A Benediction Commencement 2021

By John McCallum

May 19, 2021

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at newsbureau@obu.edu or (870) 245-5208.

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. – Father, this has been an extraordinary year at Ouachita. Thank You for administration, faculty, staff, coaches and these graduating seniors who led the way in pulling off a full year of onsite instruction. We celebrate these graduates today, giving thanks for the education they've received, the spiritual nurture they've enjoyed and the lifelong friendships they've forged here. And we thank You for their families that have helped make this dream for their children come true.

Today they dress in cap and gown to signify what they've achieved. After today, they will be trading cap and gown for the clothes of graduate school or the workforce.

But wherever their next steps take them, would You encourage them to dress for success by putting on the full armor of God as they enter a world challenged by the residue of a pandemic, divisive polarities and a spirit that is more harsh than kind, more angry than peaceful, more mouth than ears, more tumultuous than content, more into canceling people than loving them? Please dress these graduates in your armor.

Help them tighten the belt of truth around their waist lest it fall to their ankles and they be tripped up by the many lies of the enemy.

Help them secure the breastplate of righteousness to protect them from the natural deceitfulness of their hearts and give them strength to live in right relationship with You and with others.

Give them a firm grip on the shield of faith so that when the enemy flings his fiery darts of doubt and discouragement, temptation and conflict, they may catch them there and be refined by flames meant for evil that You transform to some good.

Help them buckle on the helmet of salvation on their head that they may take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ.

Stir them to un-sheath the sword of the Spirit, which is Your Word, and hide it in their hearts that they might not sin against You, wield it so that it lights their paths in the way You want them to go. And may Your Word be ever their delight.

May they strap on shoes fit with the Gospel of peace, giving them the footing they need to bear witness to Jesus wherever their feet may take them.

And please clothe them all in prayer, that they might pray at all times in the Spirit, persevere in faith, stay alert to what You're up to and intercede for all the saints.

And give them wisdom to wear this armor not alone but in the company of Your church.

Every day as they strap on Your armor, please give them a deep sense that You love them, that You are with them, that You are for them, that nothing can separate them from Your love and that You send them into the world to serve You, glorify You and enjoy You forever.

Walk with them into the future, Lord Jesus. Go before them as leader and guide, behind them as redeemer and love, above them as provider and guard, below them as supporter and strength, beside them as companion and friend and within them as Savior and Lord.

In Your good name, Amen.

Lead photo by Andy Henderson.