

Our Armor

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[0 : 00] Would you turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 6? I'm going to start in v. 10 and read through v. 17.

God, would you bless your people as we read your Word. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Therefore, take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day. And having done all, to stand firm.

Stand, therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

[1 : 09] In all circumstances, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Amen. Tomorrow morning, you wake up. And you wake up to sounds of skirmishing going on outside your house or your apartment.

So as you get out of bed, you reach on your nightstand for your binoculars. You're not a peeping Tom! These binoculars have scriptural lenses that enable you to see the unseen spiritual world. And as you bring these binoculars up to your eyes and you're gazing out at your neighborhood, what captures your attention is something flipping down on the ground.

The rest of this thing is behind a building, so you can't see it. But as you focus in, it's the flipping of a lion tail. And you call to your mind 1 Peter 5.8.

[2 : 19] Our enemy, the devil, prowls around like a lion seeking for someone to devour. And you wonder, does anybody else know what lurks?

Does anybody else know of this lion? Sobered up, you put your binoculars down. As you turn away from your window to get ready for your day, there in front of you is a seven foot chest.

It's got two five foot doors that will open towards you. Inlaid on each door, there's a word. Stand firm.

Stand firm. Stand firm. Stand firm. This arm wore. It takes up your whole room.

As you run your hand across the wood of that chest, your spirit rises. This is no ordinary wood.

[3 : 30] This is wood that has come from a tree called Calvary. Simply touching the wood invigorates your inner man.

The armor is not elaborate, but the craftsmanship is unrivaled. The top molding of this chest takes the form of a crown.

And like a crown, the outer wings of the molding, they expand beyond the armor itself. And the tips of this crown from the tops, it tapers down and into the centerpiece.

And the centerpiece itself is a cross that is a foot high. A replica. A replica of the cross from which this wood was harvested.

The contents of this chest, of this armor, you know, are from another country.

[4 : 43] From a distant land. Your homeland. This chest was given to you the day you became a citizen of heaven.

You used to follow the course of the world. The prince of the power there. The evil one. Living for your passions of your flesh. But that all changed when God gave you ears to ears here in eyes to

see.

Three years ago, your king came for you. He delivered you. He delivered you from the domain of darkness. And brought you into the kingdom of the beloved son Jesus in whom you have redemption.

The forgiveness of your sins. And oh, you long to see him. Face to face. Face to face. Face to face. Face to face. Inlaid below the cross that is the centerpiece of the crown on top of this armor. Inlaid right below that, but above those two doors, is the word armor.

[5 : 49] It's a kind of inlaid brass. With a red hue. A hue that reminds you of blood.

Your king's blood. Shed for you. On the cross. That has already won the victory. He triumphed over the devil and his demonic hosts.

Through the cross. His cross work disarmed the rulers and authorities. Of this present darkness.

Victory is assured. Victory is won.

And so before you even open up these doors, you know that Christ has won the victory. Though your enemy is already defeated. He is for a time on the run.

And seeking to wreak havoc. The armor in this chest. This armor. This armor was forged and formed with you in mind by God.

[6 : 55] In fact, we read in Isaiah that this armor was worn by God himself. This armor will come to you, has come to you as a complete set.

Each piece works as part of the whole to protect you. The armor is designed to equip you from head to toe in order to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

By and large, this armor is defensive. You know what's in there. But you stand back to look at these five foot doors.

Again, you look at the inlaid bronze words. Stand firm. And as you reach to grab hold of the bronze knobs, you know what happens?

Those words become ablaze. With heavenly delight. Your king delights in you opening this chest.

[8 : 03] He wants you to put this armor on. You're reminded of Ephesians 6.13.

Take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day. And having done all, to stand firm. As you open up the doors, you are met with a heavenly fragrance.

It's the smell of crab apples in full bloom in spring. But sweeter.

It's the eternal bloom of heaven meeting you. And instantly, it invigorates you. Strength, as you open those doors, are met by that fragrance.

Inside the doors are inlaid more words. The strength of his might. This armor is for you.

[9 : 11] To strengthen you. To give you what you need. And there laid out, in the order you will put them on, is the belt.

The breastplate. A pair of ankle-high boots that are open-toed. A large shield. And behind these, a platform with a helmet.

And you can see the hilt of a sword. A sword that is living. A sword that is lethal. A sword that is legendary. All given to you.

A sword that is evil. A sword that is evil. A sword that is evil. A sword that is evil. A sword that is evil.

All given to you. So that you would be strengthened. To stand firm against the devil.

With the doors open, you reach in and you pull out this belt. You take hold of it. Verse 14.

[10 : 11] This belt of truth is the belt which is truth. It represents truth. Truth is reality.

The truth of a matter is the reality of a matter. The way things really are. And in the book of Ephesians, we've already encountered this word truth.

In Ephesians 4.21, we read that the truth is in Jesus. And we all know what Jesus said in John 14.6, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the Father but through me. When you became a Christian, you were brought into the true reality of life.

The way things really are. And this is essential and fundamental to our living now. It's the first thing that we put on.

[11 : 14] A Roman legionnaire or a Roman soldier would put on this belt, which was more like a leather apron. It would be the first thing that he would put on. It would protect his waist and upper thighs.

And it would be the thing that he would attach his sword to on the right side. We'll come back to the sword. But as he would buckle his belt, this belt around his waist, he would feel the leather tighten

around him.

Giving him a sense of strength. Of confidence. You know that phrase, gird up your loins? That's a great phrase for what's happening here.

Gird up your loins. Strengthen yourself with the belt of truth. The first thing that we must do as Christians is to strengthen ourselves with the truth that is found in Christ Jesus.

Gird up your loins. So here it is. Here's the truth that you must tighten around your waist as the first thing every day.

[12 : 26] Here it is. Jesus Christ is of first importance. That's the truth of the matter. Jesus Christ is of first importance.

It's all about him. Jesus really is God incarnate. Born of a virgin. He really lived a sinless life.

He really died as a substitute for sinners. He was really raised from the dead. Triumphant over sin, death, and the devil. It's true. It's true that he's at the right hand of God now.

Interceding for all of us at this moment. It's also true that he's waiting for a word from his father. The word go. And when he hears that word go, he's coming back.

And he will make all things right. It will be a final and very public judgment for justice to be made known. It's all true.

[13 : 36] God really does have a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in Christ. It's of first importance. And that's why Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15, For I deliver to you as of first importance what I also receive.

That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. That Christ was buried. That Christ was raised from the dead on the third day in accordance with Scriptures.

You see, in the Apostle Paul's mind, it's all about Christ. He is of first importance.

Which makes us realize this. Eternity is real. Hell is real. Heaven is real. The judgment to come is real.

And so we tighten this belt of truth around our waist. It's all about Christ. It's the first thing that we put on. It steals you for the fight.

[14 : 40] It reminds you over and over again of why we must stand firm. Because it's all about Jesus. It's about His fame. His glory.

By putting on this belt of truth, you guard yourself from the subtle lies of the enemy that seek to distract you from that which is of first importance.

If you're not reminding yourself regularly that Christ is first, it's all about Him. It's just a matter of time before something other than Christ becomes that for which you live for.

Have you lost sight of Jesus? Have you forgot that He's first importance? That it's all about Him?

Well, how do you put this belt of truth on? Well, what you do is you regularly renew your mind with God's Word. The Bible reveals truth.

[15 : 49] It's all about Christ. He's of first importance. Him we proclaim, Paul says. For me to live is Christ, Paul says. And He died for all that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who for their sake was raised, Paul says.

So the truth of the matter is that it's all about Christ. That's the belt we put on first. Buckle that on every day. Having buckled on the belt, we reach back in and our hands grab hold of a breastplate. Armor. It's the breastplate which is righteousness. For a Roman soldier, the breastplate was an essential piece of armor.

It protected his vital organs. Lungs, kidneys, liver. Of course, his heart. A soldier would be foolish not to wear the breastplate into battle.

And what Paul is saying here is that there is a righteousness that Christians put on that functions like a protective breastplate against the schemes of the devil.

[17 : 14] The righteousness that we are to put on is not our own righteousness. But the righteousness of Christ.

Now, I know that the word righteousness is a church word. Think of righteousness as being in right standing with God.

being fully accepted by God. When a sinner believes in Christ, God makes that sinner righteous in His sight.

He justifies them. And so what Paul is telling us here is this. We are to regularly renew our minds with the truth of our own justification.

that God has made us righteous in His sight. When a sinner believes in Christ for the very first time, God does two amazing things simultaneously.

[18 : 24] So a sinner hears the gospel, they respond by faith, and then God responds to their saving faith. And here's what God does. God takes the sinner's sin, the guilt and condemnation for it, and He takes it and places it on Christ.

The fancy word is to impute. He imputes our sin on Christ. And then, God pours out all of His wrath for our sin on Christ.

pours it out till there is no more. Until it's all paid for. Do you know what the result of this is? Here's the result.

Full and complete forgiveness of all sin, past, present, and future. That's the result. That's why Paul writes in Romans 1, there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, those who have been justified.

Why? Because Christ was condemned and bore the wrath for them. But this is only half of justification that we've been forgiven.

[19 : 50] Here's the other half. As our sin was imputed to Christ, and God poured out His wrath on it, Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, and God pours out His affection on us forever.

Jesus lived a sinless life fully pleasing to God His Father. Remember at His baptism, the words, Oh, this is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.

What God does the moment a sinner believes is He takes the 33 years of Christ's perfect obedience. Something we could never do.

And He imputes that obedience, that rightness to us. So not only does God pour out His wrath on Christ for our sin, for giving us everything, He imputes Christ's righteousness to us, making us pleasing in His sight because we're in Christ and then in Ephesians 2, He's able to pour out on us for the ages to come the immeasurable riches that are ours in Christ Jesus.

It's amazing, isn't it? That's your breastplate. Justification is your breastplate. One of the tactics of the devil is to assault Christians by causing them, tempting them to doubt their justification.

[21 : 24] To doubt God's Word that they are in fact completely forgiven and fully accepted in God's sight because of what Christ has done for them. The devil wants to undermine our confidence in the peace that Christ purchased for us through His blood.

The devil really doesn't want us thinking about Romans 5.1. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The devil really doesn't want us thinking about Romans 8.1.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, those who have been justified by God. You see, believing God's Word that we are justified by His grace, believing that is vital.

It's vital to our spiritual health. It's essential to our spiritual well-being as a Christian and it is critical in the spiritual fight at hand.

It's a prime target of the enemy. One of His tactics as well is to keep us focused on our sin, rather focused on our Savior. The Savior who died for our sin.

[22 : 44] The Savior whose righteousness we received was imputed to us. You know what? Maybe you're one of these Christians.

There are a lot of Christians who, though justified by grace, they are completely forgiven and fully accepted. That's true of them.

So even that being the case, they still live in fear of a condemnation that will never happen.

Because Christ already bore it all. The devil is playing a game.

He's trying to keep you from living in the fullness of what Christ has done for you. So what you do is you put on the breastplate which is the righteousness of Christ and you stand against the schemes of the devil.

So, when the accuser whispers in your ear, sinner, or he raises something like this, I haven't forgotten what you did 10 years ago.

[24 : 00] You call yourself Christian. only if your church needs guilty. You're guilty.

Anybody know that line of lies? Here's how you respond with the breastplate of Christ's righteousness. You know, there's no denying.

No denying what I did 10 years ago was sin. I'm not denying that. But that sin, along with all my other sin, was paid in full by my Savior on the cross.

And He crushed your head too. His righteousness has been imputed to me and that will never, ever be revoked.

Though some of your accusations may be true, they no longer stick because I'm no longer condemned. That's the breastplate of Christ's righteousness.

[25 : 13] Strap that on. Walk through your day. With that on, you reach back into the Gospel armor. And the next piece of armor is actually footwear.

Verse 15. Sandals. Which provide a kind of readiness. Footwear that makes you ready to stand firm against demonic assaults.

What Paul is referring to is the half boot of a Roman soldier that was open-toed, but that would have had leather straps that soldiers would wrap around their ankles and tie tightly just below the calf. For us, it would be basically first century high tops. That's what they would be. With open toes so you can get a pedicure if you wanted to. That kind of a thing. I don't think Roman soldiers got pedicures, but I don't know.

Furthermore, these sandals had studded soles for traction.

[26 : 25] They could dig in. They were like first century high top cleats. It's a picture of stability.

Being able to hold one's ground when opposed. The idea is to have your feet firmly planted to be unmovable. And notice, it's the gospel of peace that makes us unmovable.

In verse 15, we stand our ground against the devil because we are at peace with God. That's the rationale. We are firmly grounded by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So here's how it works. let me put it in the form of a question. If I'm at peace with God, a peace that He purchased through the blood of His Son, if I'm at peace with God, what can anyone or anything do to me?

Nothing can undercut me. Nothing can undercut that peace. peace. It was acquired by my Savior. Romans 8, 30-32, and those whom God predestined, God also called.

[27 : 43] And those whom God called, God also justified, made peace with them. And those whom God justified, He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things?

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also along with Him graciously give us all things?

There is nothing, nothing that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, which means there's nothing that the devil can throw at us that is able to undercut our peace with God.

our footing is sure. We've got gospel traction. We stand firm. We're unmovable in Christ. Now, I think it's a bit ironic, don't you, that what makes us ready for war against the devil is being at peace with God.

Don't you find that a bit ironic? But being at peace with God means no human or superhuman being can undermine it. this peace was secured by Christ Himself.

[28 : 56] Dig in. Well, we've strapped on our sandals. We reach into the chest once more and our hands feel a big old, big old shield.

The shield of faith. Verse 16. We're to take up this shield of faith in all circumstances. It's the shield which is faith.

It's our exercising of faith in God and in His Word. Now, when you hear the word shield, don't think Captain America. Don't think circular shield that he throws.

That one, it's cool, but that's what Paul has in mind. The shield Paul is writing about was a large rectangular shield that was four feet tall, two and a half feet wide.

It would have two layers of wood glued together. Over that would be laid a layer of canvas. Over that would be layered a layer of calf skin. And then it would be bound by iron on the top and iron on the bottom.

[30 : 02] So it weighed something. It was big. You might be asking, why was it so big? Why did it have canvas and calf skin on it? It was that big in order to protect the whole body of a Roman soldier.

And it had canvas and calf skin on it in order to extinguish flaming arrows being launched in. You see, at that time in history, people, enemies, would shoot in flaming arrows into legions of armies.

And so what these soldiers would do, they dip their shield in water before a battle and pull it out.

And so that shield would not only intercept an arrow, it would extinguish an arrow.

And in verse 16, we read that our enemy is launching fiery arrows into us. The evil one is not only seeking to pierce us, but to start fires among us.

Now there are a lot of applications for the shield of faith. We can go a lot of different ways with it. I want to go one way in particular. The shield, which is faith in God and His Word, is not only for our personal well-being as individual Christians, it's for our well-being as a church.

[31 : 30] The evil one is seeking to distract and divide us by starting fires among us. You see, what would happen back in the day is volleys of firing arrows would be launched in, and now, the army on the other side of that would have to extinguish fires.

It would send armies into a fright. And it would provide vulnerabilities and opportunities for further devastation. The evil one is seeking to distract and divide us by starting fires among us.

I don't have particular fires in mind, but I know it's a tactic. Our faith in God and His Word intercepts and extinguishes the devil's flaming arrows that are intended to divide us.

One of the greatest temptations the devil will use to divide us is by inflaming our bruised pride, taking advantage of hurt feelings when your ideas or suggestions are not taken seriously or not acted upon.

The devil is seeking to exploit disagreements among us. He's looking to exploit perceived wrongs or even exploit when we really do sin against each other. The evil one is aiming his flaming arrows of division into gaps among us formed when we hurt each other.

[33 : 03] these gaps are real and they are prime targets. That's why in Ephesians 4 26-27 Paul says don't sin in your anger.

Don't let the sun go down on it. Don't give the devil an opportunity. Don't give him a gap to shoot into. So here's what we must do. We must exercise faith in God's Word when we've been wronged or when we've wronged another or when we become aware of strain between brothers or sisters. When there's hurt among us not only do we help the one hurting we must protect the rest of us from that hurt becoming exploited by our enemy. Do you get it? Do you get it? So here's how we wield the shield of faith from a divisive attack from the evil one.

Remember Ephesians 4 1-6 remember Philippians chapter 2 3-5 remember Psalm 1-33 remember call to mind John 17 all these passages about unity about unity about this unity that Jesus has purchased us with his blood he's made us one body and we are to work hard at preserving the peace work hard at being unified flaming arrows have the potential of igniting people's pride and so these passages shield us from our own pride they help us to walk humbly to die to ourselves and look to others best in order to preserve the unity purchased by Christ there's one other application with the shield of faith that I want to call your attention to it's this did you notice that we're to take up the shield of faith in all circumstances that means we're to be ready with the shield of faith on our day off during vacations during our downtime watching tv surfing the internet we must be vigilant at all times in all circumstances exercising faith well we got the shield of faith on let's reach back in verse 17 the helmet of salvation the helmet which is salvation okay in a battle your head is a prime target yes yes and the devil would love to get in your head not literally but like to mess with your head and what he'd really like to mess with is your identity who you are what you believe about yourself is critical in this fight what you are to put on your head is the helmet which is salvation in other words you are to regularly call the mind who you are that you are saved you've been rescued from the domain of darkness transferred to the kingdom of light you were dead now you're alive you are a saint of the living

God the enemy doesn't want you to remember your true identity a sinner saved by grace he doesn't want you to recall that not only did God save you from something sin he saved you for something himself you're a holy one a saint saved when you put this helmet on it speaks to you it says you are mine and you know what we want to say back Psalm 119 94 I am yours I am yours you put that helmet on and you say I am yours I am yours it's a tremendous sense of assurance we've seen now the helmet and now we reach into this chest for the last piece of armor which is the sword the word of God the last piece of armor is the sword of the spirit it's an 18 inch blade that Roman legioniers would wear on the right side and it was specifically designed for close hand to hand combat did you notice it's the sword of the spirit it originates in the mind of God it's the bible the word of God every word of this book originated in the mind of God the Holy Spirit moved men in such a way that they penned what God intended not one word more not one word less this is his book of life for us it's the sword of the spirit and it's living

[38 : 31] Hebrews 4 12 it's lethal 2nd Corinthians 10 it destroys strongholds and it's legendary we see it operating in Matthew 4 Jesus swinging the sword of the spirit when he was tempted by the devil himself three times three times Jesus responds with God's word and in the final temptation the

devil makes an attempt offers Jesus the kingdoms of the world only if Jesus would fall down at his feet and Jesus is like I've had enough of this Jesus says be gone Satan be gone you shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve and you remember what the devil did he left Jesus exercised his authority to which the devil obeyed we share in Christ's authority we can say be gone Satan and he leaves in Martin Luther's a mighty fortress is our God he says one little word shall fell him you know that Martin Luther was asked what is that little word you know what he said one might think Jesus but that's not how Martin Luther responded he said liar as in John 8 44 liar be gone liar be gone when you feel tempted you are free and authorized by God's word to say liar be gone it's Christ's authority so here we are in front of now an empty chest we've been outfitted from head to toe in order to stand firm against the schemes of a devil these six pieces of armor were given to you by God so that you could stand firm there's still the smell of blossoming crab apples in the air you look at the doors the strength of his might and you've been strengthened you've taken to heart each piece it's all about Christ that's your belt you've been imputed with the righteousness of Christ that is your breastplate you're immovable with the peace of God your sandals God's word repels every flaming missile that's your shield of faith I am yours is the helmet on your head and God's word living lethal legendary that sends the devil fleeing as you close the doors those two words are still blazing stand firm God's given you what you need for in a little while and it's just a little while you will see him face to face let me pray God I do pray that you would strengthen us revive us tomorrow morning God I pray when we wake our first thoughts will be it's all about Christ in Jesus name Amen