

I Bid You Stand in the Whole Armor of God!

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[0:00] So you guys are all used to it, I'm sure. Join me as we pray before we enter into God's Word. Lord God, Heavenly Father, we gather here once again to hear Your Word.

I pray, Lord, that You will speak through me and despite me, that Your people may hear Your Word preached this morning faithfully, and that You will give all of us listening ears and willing hearts to listen, to obey, and the power of the Holy Spirit to perform that which You've called us to do.

We pray this in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Since chapter 5 of Ephesians, starting in verse 15, Paul has been showing us what it means to be filled with the Spirit, especially in the context of our Christian walk.

We are to walk, he says, as those who are wise, making the best use of the time, knowing that the days are evil. Essentially, we are to be Spirit-filled Christians.

Paul goes on to show that Spirit-filled Christians live in a counter-cultural way in every area of their lives. We are to be a people who, out of reverence for our Lord Jesus Christ, consider others better than ourselves.

[1:29] That means submitting to one another in humility and self-sacrificial love. This Spirit-filled counter-cultural way of living is borne out even in marital relationships between husbands and wives, between parents and children, between slaves and masters, employee and employers in our context.

So that our life, both in the home and in the workplace, is to showcase the effect of a Spirit-filled and transformed life.

And now, in this closing exhortation, in verse 10 to 20 of chapter 6, in this closing exhortation to the Ephesian church, Paul's imperative is for them to walk.

To walk now changes to a command to stand, in these verses, to stand firm. It is a command to be ready for the constant onslaught of the enemy that is against us.

I think it might be helpful for our frame of mind to see these verses as a general's rousing call to his soldiers to be ready to meet the enemy in battle.

[2:51] Think of those rousing war speeches. William Wallace, before the Battle of Stirling Bridge. Or Henry V. in his St. Christmas Day speech.

Rousing words to give courage to men as they go to war. Well, I want us to see Paul's words here in the same manner. And it is fitting that it should be his last exhortation to the Ephesian church and to us.

In our case, if you are in Christ, if you are in Christ, man or woman, adult or child, you are necessarily a soldier in Christ's victorious army.

So Paul tells us we need to be ready to stand, to put on the armor which God himself provides. But he also tells us as a battle-worn veteran himself, the nature of the war that we're in and the nature of the enemy that we face.

First, he tells us that we ought to know the setting and location of the warfare that we're in. It is not accidental that Paul goes from the household codes, the domestic settings of our everyday life, now to talk about warfare in these verses.

[4:18] I think we're mistaken when we think that war, the spiritual war that Paul speaks of here against the dark forces only happens at extraordinary times or situations.

I think Paul's aim is actually to show us that the setting of this ongoing battle is in your homes, in your families, at your workplace.

You see that once you entrust yourself to Jesus Christ, you become an enemy combatant to the world and to the devil.

You've transferred your allegiance and you're now in enemy territory. This is what William Gurnall, the famed writer of *The Christian in complete armor*, in its exposition of these verses.

It says that in heaven we all shall appear not in armor but in robes of glory. That is in heaven. But here we are to wear our armor night and day.

[5 : 28] We must walk in it. We must work in it. We must sleep in them. Or else we are not true soldiers of Christ. The warfare that we're in is not an off-and-on warfare.

It is constant. It is never ending on this side of eternity. So we must know the setting in which we're waging this war.

We also must know our enemy. Paul tells us. 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.

Now, it's easy sometimes to confuse who our enemy is. And believe me, the devil is happy when we do that. that is one of his tactics actually.

He's able to walk about like a roaring lion and prey on us when we lose sight of him, the true enemy, and focus our aim on the wrong targets.

[6 : 44] The battle is lost if we fail to know who the real enemy is. what I mean to say is this. That unbelieving spouse, that unbelieving co-worker, that neighbor, that relative that is making your life miserable is not the real enemy.

Underlying and controlling them is Satan. He's the real enemy. He has been the real enemy since the war began. As far back as Genesis 3.15 at the onset of the war, God himself declares, I will put enmity between you that is Satan and the woman and between your seed and her seed.

He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. This is the declaration of war and this is the enemy that we face. So how do you treat that neighbor, that relative, or those people on the other side of the political or cultural divide, those people advancing a godless agenda in our society?

How do we treat them? We treat them as people trapped in the clutches of the great enemy. we pray for them that they will be set free as God in his mercy has set us free.

Brothers and sisters, if we are to be effective in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, we will have to really see and know who the enemy is.

[8 : 41] our weapons must be aimed at him and our compassion and our prayer must be aimed at the lost.

We must not confuse the two. We will not, we will need, we will need to follow the example of our Lord himself, the great shepherd.

Who left the ninety-nine in search of the one lost sheep? the father will run to meet the prodigal while he is yet far off. We will have to resemble our father in that regard when we see the lost around us.

Thirdly, Paul goes on in these verses and tells us that we ought to know, not only should we know the setting and location of the warfare, not only should we know the enemy, who it really is, but we also ought to know the weapons at our disposal.

Christ himself, Christ himself is our armor. Paul says this in Romans 13, 14, he says, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.

[9 : 59] Essentially, Christ himself is our armor. You will see that each armor that's listed here in Ephesians, represent Jesus Christ in different ways. Represent what he's done, what he's given to us, the blessings he's given us by his atonement for us on the cross, by his redemption of us, by his paying the price and covering us with his righteousness.

All of these things represent Jesus Christ in one way or the other. And the weapons we are to put on, again, see it there, the weapons are not ours.

notice that throughout this passage, Paul makes it crystal clear. These weapons are God's. He provides them for us for the battle.

And it's only the weapons he provides that are effective against the enemy. We dare not face the devil on our own strength or in earthly weapons.

we will fail. Christian history is both, in both ancient past and more recent past, is full of those who have taken it upon themselves to fight for God in human strength.

[11 : 16] And it's a foolish way to go. And such people that do that do far more damage by compromising the gospel. people. So our call, as we sang in our opening hymn, is this.

Our call to war is to love the captive soul, but to rage against the captor. I wonder sometimes if we don't do the opposite.

And here's what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10. So the question for us is really, do we trust that we are on the winning side?

Do we have confidence in the weapons God has given his church to stand victorious against the attacks of the enemy? Because here's the truth.

The battle is already won, brothers and sisters. Not by us, not by us, but by our risen and victorious Lord and King, Jesus Christ.

[12 : 39] Remember Paul's word to us in the first chapter of Ephesians. Christ himself is raised from the dead and seated in authority and power right at the right hand of God in the heavenly place.

Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but in the one to come.

And God has placed all things, all things under his feet and gave him his head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

This is the declaration of God's supremacy and victory and power and dominion over every facet of the world. We are on the winning side.

We serve the victorious king. Therefore, the strength, the strength is not yours, but the Lord's. The weapons are not yours, but his.

[13 : 43] Do you trust him to keep you? Again, the words of our opening song, we know the outcome is secure. Even as trials come on every side, we know the outcome is secure.

Can we say that boldly? We know this because Christ, our champion, has gone through the trial and emerged victorious. So our task is to stand in victory.

He's secured for us a panoply of armor. Paul says it twice, both in verse 11 and 13, that we should put on or take up the panoplia, that's the Greek word there, of God.

But the ESV rightly interprets it. He says it's the whole armor. It doesn't just say armor, it keeps repeating, the whole armor of God we should take up. The word itself, this word in historical and technical terms, actually means, the word panoply means a complete suit of armor.

Think of a knight, think of when people used to wear armor going to work. And even now, soldiers still wear armor, it's just different. It's a complete, complete suit of armor.

[15 : 10] Not leaving any of it behind. That is what we're called to take up. I wish we have more time to go in depth about each one of them, but time isn't on our side.

So a general overview will do. Paul says, 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.

armor. I found the book *The Christian In Complete Armor* insightful in my preparation. The author raised this question, that some might find it wearisome to have to constantly wear a whole armor and always be at the ready.

It seems it sounds wearisome, but he says this about the armor that we're to pull down. It says, in truth, the armor we are to put on is an exercise of grace.

And he's right. The armor we are putting on are gifts from our king. There are gifts given to us at our disposal.

[16 : 29] Paul's admonition is then that we exercise the grace that is already ours as part of every spiritual blessing God has given us in Christ Jesus.

Remember Ephesians 1.3? Blessed be God who has given us all these spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. Paul's enjoyment for us now is to take up and exercise these grace that has been given to us.

So it is only when we allow ourselves to think with carnal minds, with lustful minds rather, rather than having the eyes of our hearts enlightened as Paul had prayed earlier, that we would think that this command is worrisome, that we would think it's a chore and it's a task to put on this armor. But if we have our spirit, the minds of our hearts enlightened and open, we will realize, we will know that this is a grace that has been given by God, to fight, to stand in the midst of the battle against Satan and his demons.

It is in the putting on and exercising of every part of the armor that has been given to us, it is in the putting it on and in the exercising of those graces that we are able to withstand in the evil day.

[17:57] And having done all to stand as Paul says to us. Let's go through a brief statement about the complete suit of armor. He first starts fastened on the belt of truth.

A belt holds everything in place and keeps it from getting loose. I appreciate belts. I don't know about you.

But it's even more significant for a soldier. It allows the soldier to go forward into battle unencumbered with loose clothing getting in the way during combat.

The belt holds it all in place that he knows where to reach for it when he needs it. Such is the truth of God's word when it has come to take root among believers.

The truth of God's word is an anchor. Our lives must be anchored in and securely tied to God's revealed truth as he reveals it in scripture.

[19:09] As Paul says in Ephesians 4 that's the only way that's the only way that we are not tossed toe and fro by waves and carried about by wind of every doctrine.

It's when we are anchored to the truth of God's word. This is the truth of heart and doctrine. It's not one against the other. It is both.

This truth that Paul is talking about has an ethical dimension. William Gunnell again in Christian Incomplete Armor says this some by truth mean a truth of doctrine.

Be able to say all the creeds all the doctrinal statements. Some by truth might mean that. Others will have it to be a truth of heart.

Sincerity. A true sincere art. But he says they think it best that comprise both. One will not do without the other.

[20:10] The basis for the truth that we stand on is God's revealed word. So it can't just be truths that is jaded not. We can be sincere all day long. If the truth that we are anchored to is not what is revealed in the gospel, in the Bible, then our sincerity is useless.

But we can know all the truth in the Bible and without a sincere art, without affinity and a devotion and a trust and a giving ourselves to that truth, at the same time, it will be useless.

So it is both. Paul continues, it says, fasten on the belt of truth and put on the breastplate of righteousness. The breastplate protects the most critical organs of the body.

So in a way, it is in our spiritual walk, when Satan the accuser comes to condemn us, armed with Christ's righteousness as our breastplate, we can say to him, when he comes, there is therefore now no condemnation for me, for I am in Christ Jesus.

That is the righteousness, that's the breastplate of righteousness that we have. His righteousness, Christ's righteousness, covers us, protects us from the condemnation of the law of sin and death.

[21:40] So put it on. God, and then we are to have gospel shoes, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

We must always be ready to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, both to ourselves and to the world. We need it.

We need the shoring, beautiful notes of the gospel. It's a comfort and a joy to the redeemed of the Lord. And it is a beckoning call to the lost, to the wandering lost souls to come home to their Savior. We are to also have the shield of faith. I think Paul here has in mind a Roman shield, which is about four feet in length and two and a half feet in width.

It's a big shield. And it is an effective defense weapon against aerial attacks. And the one described here, the one Paul even talks about here, this kind of shield can even extinguish flaming arrows.

[22:56] But this is how this weapon is used in defense. It is used in tandem with other shields. When arrows, fiery arrows are raining down on the battlefield, the most effective way to use the shield of faith is to cover the soldier next to you.

Therefore, creating an effective shield wall. And in all circumstances, Paul tells us, we are to take up this shield of faith in defense of one another.

Faith in Jesus assures us of peace with God, signifying that we are no longer under his wrath, but under grace. grace. We are to take up the shield of faith and speak the words of the gospel to one another.

You are no longer under the wrath of God. You are under grace. We are to take up the element of salvation. Now, the knowledge of Christ's great salvation of us is a great comfort, right?

To know that we are saved, that we are redeemed, that God's wrath over us has been paid by Jesus Christ.

[24:11] It's a great comfort in the turbulence of the evil days that we live in. So, we are to fix our eyes on Jesus and the fixed hope of salvation that is yours and mine in him.

the salvation that we will fully partake of in the sweet by and by. This salvation, we've been redeemed, we've been saved, but we are looking for a short hope that even in the midst of the turbulence of this world, we will not be discouraged because we know our hope is fixed.

Our salvation is secure. And then he goes on and says we are to take the sword of the spirit, the word of God. Now, this is the great offensive weapon we have to hack the enemy and to dismantle his strongholds.

And it's also the weapon we wield as the soldiers of Christ to advance the kingdom of our God and King in the world. It is, after all, a two-edged sword.

The word of God, the sword of the spirit, is how God destroys his enemies and rules his church. God will take it up.

[25:31] I think of Revelations 1, when John sees Jesus Christ and he says, in his place of authority and dominion, he says, he has at his right hand seven stars, and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, the word of God, and his countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

This same word of God is ours, at our disposal. This weapon that God has given us, provided for us, we are to wield it. We are to wield this weapon in the atmosphere of constant prayer.

Praying at all times, Paul tells us, in the spirit, with all prayer and supplications, to that end, keeping alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.

In this one verse, Paul uses the word all, four times, to show the all encompassing nature of the way in which we wield the word.

It is in the context of prayer. This further proves that these weapons, these weapons are spiritual weapons, because they are employed in the atmosphere of prayer.

[26:45] Do you wonder why the early church was so effective? the book of Acts tells us that they devoted themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word.

In Acts 6, 4. What are we devoted to, Holy Trinity? If we are to grow spiritually into full maturity, as has been said early in Ephesians, into Christ himself, this is the only way that that is done.

a devotion to prayer and a devotion to the word must be the center of all that we do. It is in this spirit that Paul writes to these Ephesians.

And it is in this spirit that Paul then asks them to put the very thing he's teaching them, to put it into practice. In a clearly, he believes in what he says.

he says, now pray for me, church of Christ, pray for me, and pray for all the saints. And he says substantially, pray for me especially as I take a stand before the emperor.

[28:01] Because remember he's in jail while he's writing this. Pray for me as I take a stand before the emperor and proclaim the gospel in my defense. Paul knows the effectiveness of prayer.

And he knows the effectiveness of standing on the truth of God's word and proclaiming God's word. Finally, notice here that no weapons are given to protect the back.

Do you see it? We are to face the enemy add on. there's no turning back, brothers and sisters. No swerving to the side.

Our victory as the church of Christ is wrapped up in our perseverance in the face of all opposition. We are on the winning side.

Stand. Stand Christian soldier. Stand church of Christ. I bid you stand in the victory of your king and commander.

[29:15] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.