

The Armor of God

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[0 : 00] Thank you so much to those leading us in worship, through music and song. We're going to read from the Word now, from Ephesians chapter 6, verse 10.

And a bit like Gordon there, and as I'm sure a lot of you, I've been thinking lots about Ukraine and what's going on. And it's actually guided me to preach a little differently today from what I was originally intending to preach on.

So let's read from Ephesians chapter 6, verse 10. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground. And after you have done everything to stand, stand firm then with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

[1 : 52] In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions, with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert, and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given, so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains.

Pray that I may declare it fearlessly as I should. Amen. And let's pray. Let's pray for a moment. Lord, your word is a lamp unto our feet.

It's what guides us day by day. And as the world harrows on, Lord, in the way it's going, we turn to the Bible. We turn to your word to receive guidance and wisdom.

[3 : 10] So talk to us now. Guide us now. Settle our hearts now. In your lovely name, Jesus. Thank you. Amen. War, war, war.

Threats of war, rumours of war, trade wars, political wars, and active military action.

Just so much war. Well, the wars of the world have always existed. And as Christians, we know from Scripture that they always will.

They will exist until the end. God, God still calls us to pray for peace, to work for peace, pursue it.

But even more importantly, we learn that mankind's wars are simply just that. Mankind is empty with no eternal focus beyond this life.

[4 : 24] And so continuing in, we learn the truth that as Christians, our fight is not and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil that are mentioned.

about ten years ago, a group of UK Christians were saved in an airport in the USA. And as they walked through security, one of the group pecked out some suspicions about them.

So this particular one, being the smart one, called me. A word of advice. in the 21st century, in an airport, in a American army, in the same sentence.

Don't put any religious word with any military word. These guys were security room ready for deep searches after an investigation as they were proven to be Christians on a love mission.

The security room that perhaps this group of people were religious warriors. And actually, yes, they sort of were.

[5 : 34] They were warriors of the Christian faith, as are all Christians. Christians. That's what this verse, verse 12, is telling us. And if you are a Christian here today, then you are called by Jesus to

be a warrior of the Christian faith.

But very importantly, at this point, we must ask, what exactly does that mean? What exactly does that mean?

Well, as with everything, everything in life and in faith, let's look to Jesus for the answer. And the perfect example to explain this is in Luke's Gospel towards the end.

It's the Last Supper, chapter 22. And Jesus is with his disciples. And he is talking with his disciples about the events which are about to happen.

His crucifixion, his resurrection, and so on. He is teaching the disciples about the spiritual battles they themselves will soon be in.

[6 : 48] He is preparing them for spiritual warfare. And as he teaches them, he tells them to have a spiritual sword ready for the spiritual fight.

Now, a little later, they are getting ready to go to the garden. And as they are getting ready to go, verse 38 tells us, the disciples said, see Lord, here are two swords.

That's enough. Jesus replies. Now, very, very, very important to understand here. Jesus does not reply, brilliant guys, that's enough indeed, bring them here.

here. But Jesus' response here is, I cannot believe this. I have been teaching you guys about spiritual fighting all this time.

And at times like this, you still respond with two physical swords. That's enough of your nonsense, Jesus basically says. now let's go with no swords.

[7 : 56] And here is how we can confirm this. Because soon, Jesus has the opportunity to show the disciples what he really meant.

He puts his teaching to action. As later that night, when the time of his arrest comes, Peter, it's always poor Peter, isn't it? Peter takes out a physical sword, and physically attacks the high priest servant.

Cuts off his ear. And how does Jesus respond? How does Jesus respond? He says, Peter, put down the sword.

Because that's not our fight. Put down the sword. He then restores the injured man back to full health. Jesus fought the spiritual fight with love.

And it was an outrageous love. It was a love that seen him actually heal the very soldiers sent to kill him.

[9 : 06] And that, and that alone is what spiritual warfare is all about. and that, and that alone is the warrior that we Christians are called to be.

Warriors who are called to take a stand against the world's evil with an outrageous godly love. Now, today's key phrase is spiritual battles.

And we have just learned how Jesus fought his spiritual battles. And we have seen the example Jesus left us to follow in fighting our own spiritual battles.

But, just what exactly are we particularly fighting? I mean, like, in this passage it says our spiritual battle is against the spiritual forces of evil.

So the next very important question rightly is, well, what exactly are they, these spiritual forces of evil? It's great to know Jesus' example and how he left them to fight them, but we need to know what they are.

[10 : 25] The spiritual forces of evil is everything that keeps the world from God. Everything that keeps people from Jesus hatred, evilness, bitterness, pridefulness, anger, division, war, oppression, all the things of Satan, all the sin.

Satan's battle is keeping us from God. The world is a battlefield between two armies, God and his angels against Satan and his demons. From the beginning, Satan has wanted God's place.

He tried to take it, which is why he was cast from heaven. And ever since then, ever since Satan was cast from heaven, he has continuously fought God for the throne of heaven.

And that is all he uses the people of this world to do for him. Satan doesn't care about anyone. In fact, he hates everyone.

He only wants to overthrow God. And the people who now refuse to follow Jesus are sadly left on Satan's side, which God does not want for anyone.

[11 : 41] And Satan knows this. Therefore, to get at God, he works hard at keeping people from God. In his thinking, it's the perfect war strategy. And there is two battle paths Satan pursues in this war.

And to do this, he uses his biggest weapon, lies. Jesus called him the father of lies for a reason. He is always trying to destroy our relationship with God by telling us lies, such as you were not good enough for God and you should give up.

And when we mess up, he lies again and tells us we cannot be a Christian anymore, not after doing that. And if he can't get us to fall for those two lies, he then uses another very popular lie.

He says, hey, it's okay, God loves you, you can go and do whatever you want. No need for a repentant lifestyle, you're saved, live like the world. He's full of lies.

And that is what we Christians are up against. The truth is, Satan loves to see people hurt and upset. He loves it when families break up, when a young person gets hooked on drugs and turns to crime.

[12:56] And put simply, he loves it when people do not become Christians. He loves it because as I say, it's the opposite of what God has planned for their lives and he knows it so he encourages it.

And their own cue is the other very important side of this. When the enemy is busy destroying lives, causing families to break up, or putting people on a path to prison, or even when people are suffering from bereavement or all such things, the last thing Satan wants is a Christian spending time with them.

So we must make sure that we go to such people and spend time with them. So that's two fights that we as Christian warriors are facing in our walk of faith.

One, fighting against the devil's lies and our own lies, and two, taking a stand for people whose lives are being destroyed by the enemy. So recap, we have now seen what the spiritual battles are, what these spiritual forces of evil are.

Before that, we've seen the example Jesus left us to follow in fighting. Lastly, mainly, we now look at what we are given from God.

[14:19] We are taught by the Apostle Paul in today's reading to fully and effectively fight these battles. We put on the belt of as said, Satan fights with lies, and sometimes his lies sound like truth, which is enough to defeat Satan's lies.

And that truth should be firm belt. So to apply the belt, we need to know our Bibles. we need to study good Christian books, listen to good Christian teachers, engage prayerfully for knowledge to tell you the truth, allow Holy Spirit access to your heart and mind.

Because only when you and I are fully and completely assured in Jesus' words are the truth, only then will you be able to indefinitely ignore Satan's life.

And then the breastplate. We put on the breastplate of Tim will often attack our hearts. Now that's dangerous, very, very, very, very dangerous, because our hearts, the very seats of our self-worth, they are the very seats of our trust.

well-protected. And only God's righteousness can be a powerful enough breastplate attacks.

Attacks that tell us we're useless, we've failed, God's righteousness, but with God's righteousness via his words in the Bible, that's then and only then are we always assured of God's then and only then, when we know the words in the Bible, can we always be assured that he's good.

[16:11] And so to apply the breastplate, seek out good Christian friends who will look out for you, Bible-teaching evangelical church, which you are of course. Be aware of your own temptations to them.

Seek a path that leads away from wrong and journey towards right and righteousness and Holy Spirit fulfillment. And keep God's promises to always love you to all close by.

Have them written down. Because that is the breastplate of righteousness. The footwear that enables us to spread the good news. Now this one, specifically, I mentioned.

Satan wants me and you to think that telling others the good news is worth the size of it is too big. The negative response is too much to handle. we should just give up.

That God gives us. It's full of motivation and enthusiasm to continue of Jesus. News which everyone needs to hear. Because the truth is, people are desperate.

[17:17] And every single person at one point or another answers to the big questions. Why are we here? Who made the earth?

What an amazing fact is. We, the Christian church, we have the answers. All the question, it's summed up in two words, one name, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the answer question. So don't keep it to yourself. Tell everyone. And so to apply the footwear, know your story to faith.

Have a summary of it written on your phone or in your wallet. In words and in actions. Go in your day, purposely ready to do what you should revere Christ as Lord.

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you. But do this with gentleness and respect. Always be prepared and ready to share.

[18 : 16] And then the shield, the shield of faith. What we often see in a form of insults and setbacks and temptations, will be ours through God.

And so to apply the shield in the Holy Spirit. Remember the Holy Spirit will defend and tell you what to say. Always seek God's protection from the world over you.

Aspire life so that you always have God's presence around you. It's that Romans 12, 1 and 2 idea. Therefore, I urge you brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

This is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.

A life completely devoted to Jesus in every aspect of the way, a life devoted to Jesus' values is the shield. Is the shield.

[19 : 38] This is the shield. And then the helmet, the helmet of salvation. Satan wants to make us doubt. He wants us to doubt God, to doubt Jesus, to doubt our salvation.

That's what all his lies are all about. And the helmet that God gives us is enough to protect our minds from such doubts and keep us focused on God's truth instead.

The helmet will continue to remind us of all the scriptures that we need in order to fight off each of Satan's attacks, just like Jesus himself did.

And so to apply the helmet, you're going to need to know a wealth of Bible verses to know God's word. Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how to do this.

Know the temptations you have and seek the scripture that supports your fight against them. Know the scripture that gives you confidence in facing everyday life.

[20 : 48] And you probably noticed that the application for each part of the armor has included the Bible. The Bible, and rightly so, because it is our sword.

It is our sword. So finally, the sword, the word of God. This is powerful. The sword is the word of God. And there are times when we need to take the offensive against Satan.

When we are tempted, we need to trust in God's word and use the passages and guidance in the Bible to fight off Satan's temptations, just as Jesus himself did in the desert.

Every temptation that Satan threw at Jesus, Jesus fought back by quoting passages of scripture, which told the truth against Satan's lies.

And what did Satan do? He fled. He fled. He went away because when you start quoting God's word in the face of temptation, then temptation and Satan flee.

[21 : 57] God is strong and he helps and enables us to be strong. So take everything to him and take all that he gives you to help you fight the spiritual battle and put them to use so that you will be able to stand up against everything the enemy throws at you.

Apply the sword by always having a Bible on your phone by your bedside. Always reading it, devotions to understand it, always turning to the Bible when you're struggling, when you're feeling down, when you're vulnerable.

warning, this is not a Saturday afternoon push at the gym. This is a lifelong commitment.

Be prepared. We cannot handle it in our own. We are 100% dependent on God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit to succeed. So take all the armour that God gives you, learn how to apply them and use them.

Learn the word of God. Remember those fascinating little verses that speak to you personally. They are God's word and God's word is an indispensable weapon.

[23 : 14] It is essential to our walk of faith. Just as prayer is. We need to be in plenty of prayer as we fight the spiritual fight and we need to have plenty of prayer being done for us, which is of course the finishing lines of the reading.

Verse 18 read, pray in the spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

Pray also for me that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly as I should.

pray, pray and pray. Get a prayer partner, have others praying for you and be encouraged because Jesus himself has and does pray for us.

Remember John 17? Again as Jesus approaches crucifixion. As Christians we all know this one but let me just quickly remind us of it. Jesus is in prayer in the garden.

[24 : 23] he has been praying for his disciples. And then in verse 20 and it sort of blows me away when he then prays my prayer is not for them alone. Not for the disciples alone but I pray for all those who will believe in me through their message.

Amazing. Because that's me and you. He prayed for us way back then and still does today. He prayed that we would be protected by the Holy Spirit as we fight the spiritual fight.

And knowing that he prayed for us should give us much confidence as we work for his kingdom.

And much confidence of his protection as we fight the spiritual fight.

Perhaps all this talk of spiritual warfare can sound a little scary and maybe even off putting if you're not a Christian.

But what we all need to realise is that if you are not believing in Jesus, a Christian, then you have not escaped your spiritual battle but sadly all it means is that you are very badly losing your spiritual fight.

[25 : 44] Every single person, whether they are religious or a Christian or whatever else, they are still under the spiritual attacks of the enemy. He is telling them lies daily.

He has given them false hopes daily. And the devil has given them a sense that this is all there is to life. And because they do not have a belief in Jesus and because they do not know this, they have nothing to turn to, nothing to fight back with, no sword.

So they are losing. And that sadly means that when they pass from this life, they would also spend eternity in the devil's kingdom and not God's. It is when we believe everything that the Bible tells us about Jesus and when we allow ourselves to have faith in him and accept his forgiveness, that is when we win the spiritual fight.

And that is when we spend eternity with Jesus after this life. we started with Jesus going towards the cross.

And let's finish with Jesus' time on the cross. Because as Jesus hung there, two criminals were on either side and one mocked and one denied and wanted nothing to do with him.

[26 : 59] The other, the other believed. He very simply said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And Jesus then replied, I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.

At that point, the criminal not only won his spiritual battle, but he was now also guaranteed to have life in heaven with Jesus forever.

And how did he get it? How did he get it? He simply believed in Jesus. And it strikes me that he had spent his whole life on the wrong side.

And now here he is professing real and genuine faith in Jesus. Within those words, remember me when you come into your kingdom, he voices repentance and sorrow for sin.

He voices belief in Jesus. That's all caught up in those words. Jesus can see the heart. And so Jesus guarantees him heaven. Listen, he's never going to go and make up for his wrongs.

[28 : 06] He's never going to go and give back what he stole or apologise to those he hurt or go to a church service or do some good works to make up for his wrongs. He can't even lift his nailed hand and shake Jesus and say thank you.

Nothing. He can't do anything. It was only by believing in Jesus that he overcame his spiritual battle. Only by believing in Jesus had he been forgiven for his sins and was now gone to heaven.

Today, Jesus is alive in heaven and he still listens to us. And when we do what this criminal did, we get the very same thing. We get life in heaven with God.

We get forgiven for our sins. And until heaven, as we live here on earth, we get the mighty armour of God that we may fight the good fight, run the race, keep the faith.

And also until then, we, his church, are empowered by his Holy Spirit. So that together, as a church, as the world does what it's doing out there, we may share the faith, preach the word, baptise people from all nations, and build the kingdom.

[29 : 25] So, whatever the future is for, for Westerhills, get on the full armour of God. Keep praying, and get closer, and closer, and closer, and closer to Jesus, and go and tell the good news.

Fight the good fight, run the race, and keep the faith. Let's pray. Thank you, Lord, for the armour, and for every peace that it individually gives us.

And, Lord, as we've mentioned a couple of times this morning, as the world does what it does out there, and it aspires for its own ways, we choose to put the armour on, to fight the good fight, share the faith.

Send us out boldly and courageously to do so. Thank you for talking to us this morning. In the name of Jesus, Amen. Amen. And as we begin to approach communion, and turn our hearts to communion, very rightly on cue, there is our Redeemer.

Let's stand if you're able and sing, there is a Redeemer as we think about Jesus' time on the cross. In whichever way God guides you on Wednesday evening, we as a family want to say thank you.

[30 : 49] It's been brilliant from meeting these guys for coffee back in December through to today. We've loved getting to know you all, even in a little bit. It's been so appreciated.

And our hearts are definitely with you and in you, and we'll be praying for you on Wednesday evening. And so, let's go into the week ahead, equipped with his armour on, ready and willing to look for opportunities to make disciples and keep close to Jesus.

And so the blessing to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and of great joy.

To the only God, our Saviour, be glory, majesty, power and authority through Jesus Christ, our Lord, before all ages now and forevermore. Amen.

God bless you.

[32 : 28] God bless you.