

Put on the Whole Armour of God (Part 2)

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[0 : 0 0] Our reading today is from the New Testament, from Paul's letter to the Ephesians, and this is! Ephesians chapter 6, verses 14 to 24. And this is God's holy word. 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. In all circumstances, take up the shield of faith with which you can exhaust 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, praying at all times in the Spirit with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly as I ought to speak, so that you also may know how I am doing and what

I am doing. Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will tell you everything. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts. Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with you all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible. Let us pray. Lord, we ask now that you would give us eyes and ears to see and to hear what your Word has to say. We ask for the help of the Spirit to read it well and to receive it, and we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. We are in the very last look at the book of Ephesians, and last week we started talking about the command Paul gives here to put on the armor of God and to stand firm in that armor, against, ultimately, the schemes of the devil. So, he said the greatest enemy we face for Christians is Satan, and that's what we looked at last week. Thomas Brooks, I said Boston last week, it's Brooks.

Thomas Brooks, 1652, wrote a book called Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices, and one of the most famous quotes in it is he says, a Christian must spend the whole of their lives studying the greatness of Jesus, the inherent emptiness of our hearts, and the schemes of the devil. Now, Paul is writing this because he's addressing a problem that we all face, and that's that when we wake up every day, our natural instinct is not to think about and study the greatness of Jesus, the emptiness of our hearts, and the schemes of the devil. And so, what we naturally do is, as Christians, we tend to drift and coast because we don't put on the armor of God every single morning like Paul's talking to us here. If you think about your instincts, your natural instinctive life, the first step you take, the first move you make in different situations, do you tend to, think about your heart, do you tend to rest in God's plan for your life in hard circumstances, or immediately go straight to anxiety? Or if you think about your instincts, is it your instinct to go to God in prayer at all times whenever things are arising in your life that are really difficult, or is it your instinct to naturally drift towards prayerlessness? If you think about your instinct, is it your instinct to rest in your identity about in what God says about you, or more instinctive to you to care far more about what everybody else says? And Paul is saying here that it is the natural instinct of the human heart, the flesh, and when Satan gets involved, boy, it gets far worse to not rest, to not be settled in your identity in Jesus, and instead to just sort of slowly coast and drift away from the shoreline all the time until you wake up and you think, I haven't put on the armor of God for months, for years, for days. And that's what he's talking to us about here. There's a very famous quote. Nobody knows who said it originally, but it's about what a Christian ultimately wants to be and wants to become, and the old quote is this, what a person is on their knees before God is who they are, and they are no more. Whatever you are, the quote says, on your knees before the Lord is who you really are. And you hear a quote like that, and you read a passage like this, and it says, put on the armor of God, stand firm, fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil that's always trying to pull you away, and you think, that is who I want to be. Does anybody here think, that is who I want to be? A person

who thinks, I can say that who I am on my knees before the Lord is who I really am. And Paul is coming to us here in this passage and saying, that is who you can be, and you can grow into that person. And the way to get there is to put on the full armor of the Lord every day. Do you want that? Do you want that? Do you want to be that? Do you want to grow? And here's how we can. Number one, we need a better warrior. Number two, we need readiness for our feet. Number three, we need great defense. Fourth, we need to go to the armory.

And fifth, we need our fellow soldiers. Five things, all brief. Number one, this passage tells us that in order to become that person, we need a better warrior. This is a review of last week. If you look at verse 14, verse 14 says, having fastened on the belt of truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness. And when you take those two pieces of armor together, Paul here is talking about having put on already an alien righteousness that is not your righteousness. He's talking here about justification. And justification means that though you're guilty, in Christ, God has said you're not guilty. That's justification. You've been pronounced clean, even though it's not actually true of your heart. Earlier in Ephesians, Paul put it like this. Ephesians 2, 8 and 9, you can say, I was once walking in the deadness of my trespasses and sins, but God made me alive, for by grace I have been saved through faith. I'm not who I once was, and it's all because of Christ.

[6 : 38] Now, that's justification. That's the first two pieces of armor. And we could summarize it like this. Paul is saying, you put on the first two pieces of armor because Jesus Christ has already fought the fight for you. He's already won the victory for you. That's the first two pieces of armor. And so, he's telling us the first thing to know is Jesus is doing the primary fighting here.

And you're being called not to be the primary warrior, but to stand firm in what he has already done for you and what he's already gifted you. When you have the breastplate of his righteousness, that the enemy cannot kill you. The victory is already won. That's the first thing. Secondly, then we turn to fresh material today. And that's then he says in verse 15, now you've got to put on the readiness on your feet, shoes, the readiness of the gospel of peace. Now, what are these shoes that he's talking about? And he says the shoes themselves are the readiness that the gospel of peace brings to your feet. Feet are very important. We live in a walking city.

And if you're, when you first move to a place like Edinburgh, when you've not lived in a place where you walk a lot, you realize how quickly shoes really do matter. I used to walk the Appalachian Trail every year when I was in uni, bit by bit. And one year, the second year I went, after having a great first year, the second year I went, I made one of the dumbest mistakes a hiker I can ever make. And that's I bought a new pair of shoes the day before we started. And by day three, my feet were bleeding.

And I ended up having to take my shoes off and go barefoot through North Georgia into Tennessee in the Appalachian Trail until I could hitchhike out of the deep woods. And boy, I felt like a real hobbit, you know, for the first time in my life. You think about an ancient soldier, a Roman soldier, that's who he's talking about here. And one of the main things when you're a soldier is that an army has to be able to move swiftly across the empire. And their feet were so important. And we've all seen images in movies and films of the trenches in World War II when people had problems with their feet and how much that could literally destroy an army. And you think also about how important feet are because you also have an image here of a warrior, a fighter. So you think about a boxer. And I hear that when people coach boxing, one of the most important things is their feet work, their footwork, right? And so the first step you take in boxing or in fighting is instinctive.

And he's doing both things. He's saying you've got to have the right shoes on your feet in order to instinctively take the first step when the time comes. In other words, what he's saying is that when you arrive at the battle every single day against the world, the flesh, and the devil, if you did not go to the shoemaker already the day before, and you didn't already prepare your feet with the gospel of peace, if you did not go to the shoemaker yesterday, you will not be prepared for the battle today. If you did not get ready in the gospel of peace, days and days, weeks and weeks, ingesting the gospel of peace, your feet won't be ready when today comes, when the battle actually confronts you. We mentioned last week Martin Luther's A Mighty Fortress is Our God, that famous Reformation hymn. One of the lines is, Prince of Darkness Grim, But his rage we can endure, for lo, his doom, his sure. And then Luther said this very famously,

[10 : 12] One little word shall fell him, shall strike him down. And commentators have always asked, what is that one little word that Luther was thinking of? He doesn't tell you. And lots of people will say it's the word liar, that when the Prince of Darkness Grim comes for you, the one little

word you have to be ready to say is, you are a liar. When he accuses you and says, God could not love you if, boy, nobody would love you if they knew what you were thinking right now.

And you have to say, you are a liar. But what we're being told here is your feet have to already be trained in the gospel of peace, so that when that moment comes, you're ready to say liar to Satan. And what brand of shoes are these? This is the longest one, by the way, we're going to look at. Feet. Very important feet. What brand of shoes are these? These, remember, these, this is the armor of God.

It's shoes that God gives you. I was talking to somebody recently about how the Reebok pumps are back. I don't know if you remember the Reebok pumps, but they're back. And I remember in the 90s when the Reebok pumps came out, I was a kid and everybody wanted them so badly. And you would be 10 years old, 12 years old, and you're four foot four, you know. But if you got those Reebok pumps and you pumped, pumped, pumped, you knew that you could dunk a basketball, right? And you would get the pumps and they'd come in and you would pump the pump on that tongue and the air would fill up in the shoe and you'd go for it and you'd be 30 centimeters under the net. You know, you wouldn't even. Now, that never happened to me. I heard about that. I heard other people never could touch the net, but that wasn't a problem for me as much. But look, that's a silly example. These, these shoes are shoes that only God can give. And they are the shoes of peace that the gospel brings into your life. And Thomas Brooks, what did he say? Three things every Christian has to study their whole life. Number one, the greatness of Jesus every day. Do you come and look at the greatness of Jesus every day in order to prepare your feet with the gospel of peace, the shoes that only God can give you? How do you know? Here's the evidence. Remember that fighter. When a punch is thrown, when a sword is swung in battle, the first step is so important. If you're going forward or backward, you think about it, maybe you don't like the soldiering metaphor. Think about a dancer. The very first step a dancer takes is so critical, so important. And in the same way, the way you know that you've got the gospel of peace covering your heart, that's where the shoes really are, your heart, you're ready, is the instinctive question.

Let me put it in the words of Peter. 1 Peter 3:15, always be ready to give a defense and answer for the hope that is within you when anybody asks. So that's when you know. When somebody gives you an opportunity to talk about the gospel, you'll know if your feet are shod in the preparation of peace.

[13:20] If your first instinct is not quietism, not retreat, not anger, not debate. Why? Because what does Peter say, always be ready to give a defense and answer for the hope that's within you with gentleness and respect. Meaning you've got the gospel of peace so covering your inner life, you're at peace, and peace within is producing then peace without. And you're able to talk to somebody about the gospel without fear, because peace within has so soaked over you that you can grant peace without.

And that's how you know you've really got the shoes in your life, the gospel of peace in your life. Third, not only do you need a far better warrior than you will ever be, and ready feet, you need a great defense. Verses 16 and 17, if you look at that, you'll see three pieces of armor there in verses 16 and 17.

In every single circumstance, take up the shield of faith, and then the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is God's word. And all three of these pieces are about defense, ultimately. Why? Because in this context, he says, take up the shield of faith, and then there's a clause, and then the helmet of salvation, helmet of salvation. And in between is the reason. The reason is because the fiery darts of Satan are always being lobbed at you. All right, so what's this image? What is a fiery dart? It's a funny translation. All he means is arrows, and a fiery arrow is one in the first century that's been dipped in a chemical combustion substance that would be used a very long time ago. And so when the Roman soldiers came in a siege against a castle, the opposing army would dip their arrows in a substance and light it on fire in a way that it would explode when it hit the Roman army. That's the exact thing he's talking about here. And so what's this image? This image is that the soldier, which way are you going, Christian?

Which way is the soldier going? Not away from the battle, but into the siege wall. You're not leaving the world. You're not running from the world. You're not becoming a monk or a nun. No, you're going straight at the firing line, straight into the battle, into the siege. And Satan is lobbing those arrows over the castle wall and trying to explode the army. And so he says defensively, you need three things. First, you need the shield. And in a Roman soldier's armor, the shield is not circular.

The shield, you'll have seen it in film, the shield is oblong. It's about a two meter tall rectangular shield. It covers nose or above all the way down to the ground. And you remember in the films how the Roman soldiers will take the shields and they'll put them together, right? And they'll form this impenetrable wall as they siege a castle. That's the image here. In other words, your very first line of defense, the first thing that gets attacked is a shield. What's the shield? It's the shield of faith. What is Paul referring to? He's saying that the first line, not the most important line, but the first line of defense in a Christian life is your faith, the shield of faith. He's talking here about assurance of faith and certainty of faith. And when the fiery darts of Satan, the accusations and the temptations come your way, the first thing that you go to battle with is saying, credo, I believe. Lord, I believe. [16:46] You think about Hebrews 11 is a great example, the roll call of faith in Hebrews 11, where the author walks through all these saints from the Old Testament and says, look at Abraham. What did he bring to the battle? Faith. Look at David. Look at Noah. Look at Rahab. Look at Ruth. They brought faith.

Here's one example. Genesis 22. Abraham had been following the Lord and wondering, when are you going to give me that promised son that you had said? And then Isaac comes, and then the next thing, Genesis 22, God says, take your son, your only son, take him up the mountain, and take his life as a sacrifice.

Obeys me. Now, can you imagine the fiery darts coming from the castle wall at that moment from Satan? And where, but God is, that's immoral, Abraham. And how could God give you a son and then tell you to give that son back? And don't do it, Abraham. Don't do it. And what does the text tell us? It says, but by faith, Abraham stood. So Abraham only needed his shield, and the darts hit the shield and bounced off. By faith, he stood not knowing what God was up to. See, in other words, you need the shield in circumstances where you say, what is God doing in my life right now? I don't know. And he says, you've got to put up the shield of faith and say, I believe, I believe in the promises of God.

I don't know what's happening right now. I don't know why. Why me? Why now? Why him? Why her? But you got the shield of faith. Now, but if it gets through the shield of faith, if your faith is really weak, and it will be at some points, what's next? The helmet of salvation. So when those fiery darts are being, those arrows are being lobbed, of course, some of them get over the shield, right? And you've got to have a good helmet. And the helmet of salvation is the helmet of salvation. In other words, what he's pointing to is that salvation and Christian thought and Christian theology in the Bible is far bigger than the forgiveness of sins. Salvation is the holistic hope of embodied resurrection. And you need not just your faith, but then you need, what, hope of something beyond the grave. That's the helmet of salvation. Now, think about Abraham again. Take your son, your only son, and by faith he stood and he trusted the Lord. But then Hebrews 11, what does it say? It says, by faith Abraham believed that God might bring resurrection to his son, might raise his son up from the dead. What did Abraham do? He said, even if this happens, even if I lose my son, I hope in the God who can raise the dead. So you see the two pieces of armor, the first two things. First, your faith,

[19:37] I believe in the promises. Secondly, if it gets past my weak faith, at least I've got hope. I've got hope that God will raise me from the dead. Here's a fiery dart that that could happen in your life.

When that time finally comes, the terminal diagnosis finally comes, and it's coming for us all. And you think, I can't get past this circumstance. I can't beat this one. What do you need? Well, probably the arrows are going to get past your shield, but you've got the helmet of salvation because you've got hope. You see, I can't beat this with my shield, but boy, the helmet of salvation, the hope I have in the resurrection can beat this. My hope is in the Lord. My hope is in the resurrection. And then thirdly, if your faith is weak and if your hope is very little, then he says, pull out the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. And it's, I can't give any of these enough time. It's certainly not the sword of the Spirit. But he tells us the sword of the Spirit is the Bible, the Word of God. That's your third line of defense. And the reason I'm suggesting to you that it's defensive more than offensive is because think about Matthew 4 when Jesus was in the wilderness and he was there starving for 40 days and nights. And Satan came to him three times and did what?

Lobbed those arrows straight at Jesus's heart and said, give up. If you will bow down before me, if you'll turn these stones into bread, if you'll jump off the top of the temple, I will give you the whole world. And what did Jesus do? He said, it is written.

It is written. What did he do? He said, he pulled out the sword and he said, he knocked the arrows away by saying the Word of the Lord has already come. It's already spoken. The Bible has already told me.

In other words, this is an invitation to be very basic and that's to memorize the Bible, memorize Scripture. That's what he's talking about here is you got to say, I believe in the promises.

[21 : 32] I know that because my Redeemer lives, the helmet of salvation will bring me into resurrection life. And thirdly, I've got the memorized Word of God in my heart. It's just a simple plea for Scripture memory, the sword of the Spirit. Back to basics. Now, fourthly and fifthly, very briefly, if you think about the whole picture of the soldier, the first place that Satan will attack is your faith and then he'll come and you've got hope and then he'll come and you've got the Word of God. But if, look, if your faith is weak on Monday and your hope is weak on Tuesday and you forgot what you memorized from Scripture on Wednesday, what's at the back of all that? It's the breastplate of righteousness. You see, those three are your defensive posture. It's subjective. But when you get to the breastplate of righteousness, righteousness, it's the impenetrable armor of Christ's justification that has been given to you.

And so when you get there, it's saying, but my faith is weak, but Satan, he can't, he can't, he cannot separate me from the love of God. I've got justification. How do you, how do you really get this into your life as we close? And in verse 14, notice, he says, having fastened the belt of truth. In verse 15, 16, 17, he says, having put on the breastplate, having already taken up all these different pieces of armor. What is the nature of that participle having, having already done it? And you finally realize the answer to that in verse 17, when he says, praying continually. In other words, the way that you put the armor on every day, Paul is saying, is through prayer. Prayer is going to the armory every day and saying, my shield got blown up yesterday. I need a new shield. My helmet has a hole in it, and my sword broke in half. And every day you're going into the battle, and every day your equipment is breaking, and you're going back to the armory. And it's prayer that you redress in order not to go to the battle without your gear. Prayer is the real means for that. What do you need? You need the armor, and you need prayer. You need prayer, and you need the armor. You need the Bible, and prayer every day. It's back to basics for fighting in the Christian life. We need all kinds of prayer in our life. Intercessory prayer. We need kingdom prayer. We need prayers of grief. We need prayers of lament.

We need prayers of celebration. We need prayers of adoration. We need prayers of confession. But I've not yet. Maybe you can tell me afterwards. I've never seen anybody talk about armor prayer. And this is telling us you need armor prayer every day. You need to say, Lord, I've come back to get re-clothed in the armor of God. I need my sword. I need the Bible, and I need everything else to go out into battle today. Finally, the last thing you need, and we'll finish, is you need fellow soldiers. Now, at the very end, I can only do a flyover here on these things. At the very end of this passage, Paul turns and says, will you pray for me? And he sends his servant Tychicus or Tychicus. People say it both ways. And just notice, if you think about the whole passage again, boy, I wish we had more time to look at this. He says, pray for all the saints as you're praying every day, all the Christians. And then he says, and friends in Ephesus, pray for me as I try to go out every day with the armor on me. And then he turns and he says, and greet Tychicus, my beloved brother, as he comes. And then he tells us why Tychicus has come. He's come to deliver the letter.

[25 : 26] But then he says, he's come so that he may encourage your hearts. Now, this is not technically part of the armor, but I think there's a final thing here, and it's this. He's telling us, we need one another, the fellow soldiers, shoulder to shoulder, to really make it through the battle.

And notice what he says, greet Tychicus, my beloved brother. Do you have a beloved brother or sister in your life, a dear Christian friend who is a soldier who walks shoulder to shoulder with you and can put their shield next to your shield? And you think about it, sometimes I have trouble sending a text message to encourage some of you. Sometimes we struggle to send in, to make a phone call or send a text message to encourage somebody. But think about the links Paul goes to here to bring encouragement.

And I can imagine Paul read this letter in prison in Rome, and he called Tychicus, come, I've got a letter ready, come and get it, Tychicus. And he's there at his prison cell, and he says, I need you to go to Ephesus. And Tychicus probably said, Paul, this is the first century. You know, this is not 2025.

That is a long way. That is 60 to 90 days of sea travel across rough seas. And I don't know if I'll survive it. And he says, I mean, what is the big deal? What do you want me to travel from Rome to Ephesus for? And what did Paul say? He said, just so you can encourage them. And sometimes we struggle to send a text. And Paul is, what are we, we're being told here, the final piece of the armor is the brothers and sisters. This whole letter is really ultimately about the church. Who is the church?

What does the church do? And we end on this, encourage one another. Say, keep the fight, put on the armor every day, go back to battle. Make encouragement of somebody else in this church family a daily discipline. That's the command here. Is encouragement part of the armor? Listen to Hebrews 3.13, how similar it is to Ephesians 6. And this will be the final word.

[27 : 33] Lord, encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that you will not be hardened by sin's deceitful schemes. It's part of the armor. Let us pray. Father, we thank you for the better warrior, Jesus. We thank you for his justification. We thank you, Lord, for every piece of this armor, for the faith that you grant, for the hope that you provide, for the sword, the Bible, the revelation of your word, and Lord, for prayer, this gift, Lord. And we ask today in this prayer that you would indeed clothe us in the preparation of peace as we prepare to come to the table and then go back out into the battle of the Christian life. So we ask for that now in Jesus' name. Amen.