

Put On the Armour of God

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[0 : 0 0] We're going to read from Ephesians chapter 6, verses 10 to 20. 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. 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, 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 the opening of my mouth, 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. Amen. This is God's word.

Please be seated. All right. If you are a regular attender here or have been around for a while, you'll know that we're working through the second half of the book of Ephesians, Ephesians, and over the next two weeks, we'll look at Ephesians 6, 10 to 24 across two times.

I hope someday to do a series on spiritual warfare and on the armor of God from this passage, but that might be a good while from now. So, in the meantime, if you are wanting more on this subject, this is one of the most important passages in the New Testament. If you're wanting more on this subject, I would highly recommend reading, picking up a copy of Thomas Boston's precious remedies against Satan's devices. So, he was a Puritan in England in 1652. He wrote this wonderful book, and it's readable, even though it's very old, and it's really worth a committed read if you're going to follow Jesus all of your life, and I hope you will. This is one of the greatest moments in the New Testament, and it's about the Christian life and what it means and what to expect every day, what to expect and what to think about, how to set your heart as you wake up every single morning. And if you've been with us in the second half of the book of Ephesians, you'll know that one of the really common themes in the book has been that God, through Christ, by the Holy Spirit, has made us Christians, but there's a gap between who we are and what we are. There's a big gap for all of us in different ways between who God has said we are, found in Christ, a jewel in His sight, and what we are, what we think, what we do, what we feel, our emotional lives, our hopes and our dreams and our greatest loves, and the idols that we continue to chase after. There's a big gap in all of our lives between our justification and our sanctification, as a more theological way to say it.

And here, Paul reminds you, God reminds you, it's a big reminder of the fact that we are in a war.

We're in a war. There's an enemy. And then he tells us about the armor we need to fight. So there's three things. First, the war. Paul is addressing here the problem we have in that gap between the fact that Christ has redeemed us and made us new, brand new, and yet there's a gap with who we are in our day-to-day lives, our hopes, our dreams, the way we think, the way we feel.

[4 : 07] And Paul is coming here today to address that mindset. And the mindset, the problem of the mindset is that for all of us, we struggle as Christians with drifting and coasting. So our day-to-day, we wake up every day, we wake up every day, and our natural tendency will be just to coast, to treat every single day of our lives just like everybody else treats every single day of their lives, to think that the world we live in is normal, and it's the way it should be. And so we have a tendency to coast and to drift. And if you've been here again, if you've been here the last few weeks, you'll remember that Paul's been saying that the gospel has got to change our relationships, and it's got to change the way husbands and wives relate to each other in marriage. It's got to change how we approach dating if we're single and pursuing a marriage relationship. It's got to change the relationship between children and parents, parents and children, employers and employees.

In other words, if you think about it, that's, he's saying the gospel should reorder your life at home and your life at work, and that's just pretty much everything. That's all I can do is home and work, and that's it. I don't know about you. You may have other spaces. In other words, he's coming and turning in chapter 6 verse 10 and saying, now put on the strength of the Lord. Where? At home, at work.

You've got to live in the strength of his might in all the spaces you occupy from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed every night. In other words, he's saying that the mindset we need is an everyday mindset at home, at work, wherever we are, and that mindset is we are at war.

So that's what he tells us in chapter 6 verse 10 and 11, that every day you wake up and you're at war, and the degree to which we forget that, the degree to which we fail to put on that disposition day in and day out will be the degree, the proportion to which we tend to just coast and drift like a boat on the ocean without a rudder, without a sail, and we'll realize that over time, without waking up and having the mindset, having the heart set, if I can make up a word, having the heart set that I'm at war today, we will drift further and further and further away and find ourselves eventually in a state of spiritual depression. And spiritual depression has symptoms, and the symptoms are things like lacking assurance, not really believing that I could be forgiven. Spiritual depression sometimes looks like doubt. Spiritual depression looks like having everything Christ has promised you, yet not really having joy in your life and having a perpetual state of unhappiness. These are symptoms of spiritual depression, and Paul is saying if you don't wake up every day and put on the mindset, I am at war today, then what will happen is you'll coast and drift further and further away from the shore, and eventually you'll realize that you're in a state of spiritual depression, struggling, really struggling. I think probably in our modern world, our greatest issue we face with coasting, with not having this mindset, is just the simple problem of busyness. And so we're so busy, and so we're waking up and hustling from the first moment of the day till the very end of the day that we forget who we are in the battle that we're really a part of.

And in that, we don't realize that there are hundreds of little skirmishes, little battles that we're up against every day. So those little moments where you choose impatience rather than patience, the little moments where you don't listen to the person that's talking to you and sort of tune out even, the little moments where you have false shame arise in your heart even though you've been fully forgiven by somebody, the little moments of revenge, the little moments of gossip, the moment where you think I could have taken some time to pray just then, but I chose prayerlessness, the lack of self-control in a particular moment. These are literally, we literally have hundreds of skirmishes every day where we are going to battle, but if we're not waking up and realizing I'm at battle in these moments, then we're losing tiny little battles all the time. And that's causing us to drift further and further away in our hearts and our minds, the way we think, feel, and do related to the things of God, to our spiritual lives. I think that one of the best things C.S. Lewis ever wrote is this quote, and I've given it here I think two times in the past year, but it's a quote that's always worth coming back to, and it's about exactly this, and this is what he says, good and evil, good and evil both increase at compound interest. He says, that is why the decisions you and I make every day are of such infinite importance. The smallest good act today is the capture of a strategic point from which a few months later you may be able to go on to victories that you had never imagined. And apparently trivial indulgence today though, in that moment of lust, that moment of anger, that moment of a lack of self-control, that moment of impatience, is the loss, he says, of a ridge or a railway line or a bridgehead from which the enemy may launch an attack that would have been otherwise impossible.

[9 : 42] Good and evil increase at compound interest. We're at war every single day. We have a battle to fight. We're in conflict. And Martin Lloyd-Jones says it like this. He says, the degree to which we're not aware that we're at war every day means we're already defeated. We're at war. There's a conflict.

That's the mindset. Secondly, who are we fighting? The enemy. All right, so in verse 11 and 12, Paul turns to this, and he tells us, you see it in verse 11 and 12, he says, put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. And then he says, we don't wrestle against flesh and blood, but against rulers, authorities, the cosmic powers over the present darkness, spiritual forces in the heavenly places. Now, he's giving you a list of the same exact enemy over and over again there. So he's just saying the same exact thing over and over. Satan, the spiritual powers, the cosmic forces, the present powers of darkness. And he's intensifying that list just to try to nail it home to you that the enemy that you face every single day really is Satan and really is the cosmic evil powers that stand against you. And that means that Paul's telling us when he says, we're not battling against flesh and blood, that the enemy of the Christian, the enemy of the local church is not human beings. Very nuanced here, very important. The enemy of the local church and the enemy of the Christian is not human beings in themselves. It is not society in itself. It is not our beautiful city in itself. No, this is the nuance of Christianity. Christianity does not come to battle against humans or the city. It comes to battle against the thing that breaks and corrupts human beings in the city, and that's Satan and sin. We do not come to do battle against people out there.

We come to do battle against sin and Satan that wants to destroy people. And so Paul tells us that our great enemy here is Satan. And that means today, if you are a converted Christian following Jesus Christ and wanting to serve Him in any way, there is a cosmic battle afoot, and you are the daily target of Satan. That's what Paul is saying here. He's saying something that big, that extreme. And back to point one, one of our big problems is that we tend to forget that, and we drift away from that, and we struggle to even believe that there are things like spirits and spiritual warfare. So we typically operate as practical materialists on a day-to-day basis and don't really remember that there is spiritual warfare and that Satan is real and he's against us all the time. And so we look out in a culture like we have today, looking back at the history of Western thought, and you could ask a question like, what have people suggested is the great problems that face humanity in the world? Plato said the great problem was ignorance, and what we really needed was more education. And then others came along like

Thomas Hobbes, and Thomas Hobbes famously said that when you're born into this world, life is solitary, very poor, and brutish. And he said, so we're all simply from the very moment of our birth fighting against each other for the scarce resources that there are. And he said, that's the great problem we face. Karl Marx said the great problem we face is the class struggle, and what we need is economic justice, and then we could really fix the problems that we have. And the famous French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre and Walt Disney said the same thing. And they both said this, what we all need is the courage to be ourselves. And friends, listen, we tried all of it, and there is still so much hurt, so much pain, so much brutality, so much sin. And the Bible came, the Bible comes into the world and says the real problem is that you were made by God, made for God. You do not belong to yourself, you belong to Him. And there is a supernatural cosmic power called Satan and his demonic forces that rebelled against the God who made them, and then tempted humanity to do the same. And that is the reason the world is so broken. That is where all of our problems actually come from. And I know that there will definitely be folks here today who struggle with the concept that there is something like a supernatural cosmic evil called Satan. And all I can say, I can't touch on that today, but just say that I spent about 15, we addressed that for about 15 minutes on our sermon on Genesis 3, 1-7. So you can go back and check that out. But I will say this to you, just something to think about. If you're struggling with the idea of cosmic supernatural evil today, to suggest, to reject supernatural evil, as silly as mythology, is to suggest that every single culture and ethnicity across the majority of human history was fundamentally wrong about the problem of the world. And that's something to really think about, that there's been very few cultures in history that have not believed, that have disbelieved in supernatural cosmic evil. And I would love for you to think about that. But the second thing is just this, could it be that when Paul says here that Satan loves to work with schemes, schemes, that that is one of Satan's favorite schemes, to try to get an entire culture to be materialist, to say, surely there's not such a thing as supernatural evil. What silly mythology.

And back to C.S. Lewis, C.S. Lewis at the beginning of the Screwtape Letters says that there's two great mistakes you can make here. On the one hand, you can be superstitious. You can think everything that goes wrong in life is just the devil. You know, it's just the devil all the time. So you can think a little bit too much about the power of Satan. But the far greater problem I think that we have is to disbelieve, to have unbelief. So superstition on the one hand, materialism on the other. And Satan loves both of them. Those are two of his favorite schemes to use. And Paul says here, beware Christians of the schemes of the devil. So number one, you're at war every day. You're in a battle. You're in skirmishes.

[15 : 59] But that battle is not against people. It's not against our city. It's not against society in itself. It's against Satan and sin. That's the two things that Christianity comes to deal with. But he wants to get specific with you, and he wants to say to you today, beware of the schemes of Satan in your life. And let me just, so Precious Remedies Against Satan Devices, Thomas Brooks, he lists 80 schemes. So you can open that book and work through all 80 of the schemes of the devil that he identifies. Let me just mention one or two of them to you.

What is Satan's primary scheme against you? He wants to destroy your faith. And he wants to aggravate what is already in your flesh, your natural proclivity to some sin.

And he wants to try to use that, poke that to provoke you away from God. He wants to capture you by your tendency to some addiction. He wants to capture you by your tendency to some personal issue like anger or impatience or anxiety. And he wants to take that, and as Thomas Boston put it, he loves to sail with the wind. He simply wants to provide the wind that's already in your sail, to the sail you already have. In other words, the proclivity to some sin you already have, Satan wants to take that and squeeze it. And if you don't go to war every day against it, if you're not waking up saying, I'm in a battle, then he's just going to blow a gentle breeze and push your boat farther out away and away from the things of the Lord, from God himself.

Think about Peter, the apostle Peter. Peter was a very fearful man, we read in the gospels, by disposition. And so Satan tempted him to save his own skin. He was a scaredy cat, Peter was. And so the very particular temptation that he received was, you better save your skin, or they'll do the same thing to you they're doing to Jesus. Think about Judas. Judas, we learn in the gospels, was by natural instinct a very greedy person. And so the Bible says Satan entered his heart and told him, boy, if you will betray Christ, you can get a lot of money. Satan loves to sail with the wind. And so basically what he does is he does two things. He tempts and he accuses in that. And in his temptations, he, as Thomas Brooks puts it, he says, Thomas Boston puts it, he says, Thomas Brooks, I should say, Thomas Brooks puts it, he loves to show you the bait but hide the hook, show you something and say, this is so sweet for you, but he never shows you the bitter side of it. And so he loves to say things like, this sin would be actually really good for you. And so when you're tempted, what do you do? What can you do in those moments of temptation? You've got to say, in the moment of temptation, it took the death of the Son of God to show me that this is not good for me. It took the death of Jesus Christ, my Savior, to show me this is not good for me. I need to run from this. Now, if you are able to stand up against temptation, what he loves to do on the flip side is accuse. So for those of you that are growing and those of you that are fighting temptation, Satan's next thing is he is going to turn to you and he's going to accuse you. And this is what he's going to say. He's going to try to get you to look more and more at your sin all the time than looking at Jesus, looking at your Savior. And he's going to say things like this. Have you heard this before? If you were a real Christian, that kind of a thought would not come into your mind. If you were a good Christian, you've had a good week, but boy, you wouldn't have said that word. If you were a real Christian, you wouldn't have a dream like that. If you were a real

Christian, you wouldn't have desires like that still. And sometimes you might have had a really, really good week and you might have been praying and in the Bible and you feel like I'm finally growing spiritually and you look up and bam, Satan gives you that thought from 25 years ago of the thing you said, of the thing you didn't say, of the thing you did to that person 25 years ago that you've been forgiven for. But Satan takes that and he says, shame, shame, shame. See, Satan loves to tempt you and say, oh, this is so good for you. And if he can't get you there, he loves to turn and heap shame upon shame.

[20 : 26] In other words, he tries to get you to look at something else or to get you to look inward, introspection at your sin to keep you away from Jesus. And Robert Murray McShane, the great Scottish minister from Dundee, he said, that means that for every one look you take at your sin, you got to take 10 looks at your Savior. That's the only way to fight accusation. For every one look you take at yourself, you got to turn and take 10 looks at your Savior. Now, thirdly and finally, and I'll introduce the armor today and we'll stop. We won't get all the way through it.

Let me just say this though before I do. If there is spiritual encouragement in your life right now, if there is spiritual encouragement in this community of faith right now, if we are baptizing, seeing people come to faith here and baptizing folks like we've been able to recently, if anything is going well in your spiritual life right now, you need to know that that is the moment where Satan is probably most likely to attack you. So it's in this moment right now where we feel encouraged, where we bring on a new minister, new staff, where Satan is most probable to come for us and to attack us. And we need to be really aware of that. So what can we do this week and next week? The armor, the armor of God. So Paul says here, be strong in the Lord. It's a rousing action verbs all throughout. Take up the armor of the Lord. Be strong in the Lord all throughout.

In other words, he's saying when you enter the fight, putting on the armor of God, Satan's schemes can be defeated. And you can grow and grow and grow onto new victories that you never imagined.

What do you need for that? You need verse 18 to 20, you need prayer, yes, but that's not all you need. So he says you need prayer, but you also need the armor of God. And we'll come on to prayer next week.

Really, there's a way to summarize this and say the Bible and prayer, the Bible and prayer is what we need, but that's next week. But today he tells us we need the armor of God. So let me just mark out a few things before we finish. Number one, he says first, he says, notice it's the armor of God, meaning it is not your armor. It's not any kind of armor you make. It's only armor that God gives.

[22 : 38] Then secondly, he says it's the whole armor of God, meaning you can't just put on a piece of it. You've got to have the whole armor covering you all the time to really be protected from the schemes of the devil. So let me just highlight two pieces of that armor to you. The first, he says, is the belt of truth. So you got to wake up every day and say, I'm at war. I've got hundreds of battles to fight today. The first thing I need is the belt of truth. Now a Roman soldier in the first century wore a long robe as their day-to-day outfit, just their normal clothing. And so very literally, this says girdle of truth, but girdle is a little awkward for modern people. So they've translated it belt of truth. Because the long robe, when you went to battle, you couldn't wear a long robe, a long dress effectively, because you can't run. So what they would do is raise up a girdle and then go between the legs, wrap it around the waist, and that would lift the robe so that you could run.

That was the first. So Paul's working here through the normal outfit of a Roman soldier and giving you in order the pieces that a soldier would put on. The girdle's the first thing. It's the girdle of truth. Is Paul saying to all of us today, you got to wake up every day and you got to say, today I'm going to fasten on the belt of truth. I'm going to be an honest person.

You know, I'm going to be a person of truthfulness. I'm going to be a person who always tells the truth. And some commentators do suggest that, but I think with the majority of commentators here that this armor, what did he say? It's the armor of God, not your armor, not armor you make.

And so what he's saying here is the armor is not the subjective condition of your ability to be an honest person today. What is the armor? What is the belt of truth? The belt of truth is to wake up every day and say, these are the facts, doctrine. The doctrines really do matter. And to wake up every day and say, the truth is, I am a big sinner in need of a bigger savior. I was dead walking in the trespasses of my sin and darkness, but God grabbed me and saved me. And today Satan wants to destroy me.

These are the facts. In other words, the belt of truth is to wake up every day and actually recapture the doctrines of the faith, the truth of the faith, what God has really shown us. It's not putting on your subjectivity, your ability to be an honest person. It's waking up every day and saying, God has redeemed me. I go to battle today. That's the belt of truth. Secondly, lastly, the breastplate of righteousness. The next thing that a Roman soldier would put on is the breastplate, and it's the heaviest piece that you wear, and it's covers from neck all the way down to your lower organs. And, you know, the easiest place to get killed is the heart, the vital organs. You got to protect those. Very important. And so the thing that goes over your heart to protect it, he says, is the breastplate of righteousness. Again, is that I got to wake up every day and I've got to say, I'm going to be a righteous person today. I'm going to do good things for the Lord today. I'm going to take up my good works today and be the best I can be. No, remember, it is not your armor.

[25 : 54] It is not armor that you wield and weld. It's not what you make. It's the breastplate of his righteousness. It's objective, not subjective. It's his gift. What is he talking about here? He's talking about justification. And he's saying, just like you got to wake up and say the doctrines really do matter today. Secondly, you got to wake up and say, I'm at a war, but justification is my armor over my heart, over my vital organs. That's what he's referring to here. And boy, that means if your main protection, if your main protection from Satan is saying, look at my righteousness, look at my good deeds, what will happen? What will happen is that you will fall on your face at some point along the way in your sin. And you won't be able to say that anymore. And then that's when Satan will come in with that accusation. And he's got military grade armor piercing weaponry. And if you make the armor, he's going to penetrate right through it. But if you wake up every day and say justification by faith, then he can't get through. He can't get through. And what is justification by faith as we finish?

Justification by faith is when you say, by the righteousness of God, I stand condemned. When I look at his righteousness, his character, I'm condemned. But by the righteousness of God, through Jesus, given to me as a free gift, I am made clean. You see, justification by faith is saying the just for the unjust, the righteous one for the unrighteous. Apart from him, I'm condemned. But when he was condemned, I was declared guilt-free. And that means that you got to wake up every day and say, my past sins, my present sins, and my future sins have all been dealt with forever.

Do you know that in Jesus Christ's cross, the sins that you will commit 10 years from now have already been forgiven? And he's saying that's the breastplate of righteousness. That's what you got to wake up and put on every single day. Augustine said it like this, we fell so he came down. We fell so he came down.

He ascended so we're lifted up. The marvelous exchange. That's the breastplate of righteousness every single day. And so this week, this summer, especially as you're traveling, as you're traveling, go to war. Wake up. Go to war. Go to battle. Put on the armor of God and say, this is not my armor.

It's not my subjectivity. It's God's objective reality. It's the truth, past, present, and future. Because my sins were condemned in him today, I am guilt-free. Satan has nothing against me.

[28 : 45] You can put it in the words. I'll give Martin Luther the last word. You can put it, you can sing it, maybe. You can put it in the words of a mighty fortress is our God. Luther wrote this, For still, for still, our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe. His craft and power are great and armed with cruel hate on earth is not his equal. Did we in our own strength confide? Did we think we could stand against him? Our striving would be losing. We're not the right man on our side.

The man of God's own choosing. And you ask, who may that be? Who may that be? Christ Jesus. It is he. So let us stand and put on the armor of God. Let us pray. Father, we pray now that you would help us to go in to the battle. Every day, Lord, we have been drifting and coasting. I struggle with that. We all struggle with that. Just waking up every day thinking today is normal. But no day is normal in a world where Satan and sin want to destroy us. And so we ask, Lord, that you would give us heart, spiritual desire to not stand against people but sin, not against society and the city but against Satan, Lord. And so see redemption and transformation happen. Lord, we thank you that you love humans and you long for them to come to redemption. And so we hear that so much in this passage that you want us to stand. And so we thank you for the armor of God. Lord, clothe us in your armor, we pray. As we sing this final hymn, clothe us in your armor. In Christ's name, amen.