

Sunday, October 4, 2026

The Whole Armor Of God (Part 1)

This is the seventeenth in a series of sermons through the book of Ephesians. This week, I would like to continue going through Ephesians 6:10-20, which contains Paul's final exhortations. We are the children of God. We are united to Christ as His body. And we are to live lives that match that reality – that is, to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” (Eph 4:1). Satan knows that, and so at every step of the way, he will be there to hinder us in any way he can. Every command that Paul has given in this epistle is an attack point for Satan. Did he tell you to avoid covetousness, for example? (Eph 5:3). Then Satan will be there to provoke you to covet. The life of a child of God is a constant war against an unseen host. But with the whole armor of God, He has provided everything we need to be strong in the Lord, stand against the wiles of the devil, and withstand in the evil day. We went over that general reality last time. Today, we will begin to get into the details of what this armor is and how it protects us. Six pieces of armor are mentioned in the passage (seven if you include prayer). I would like to spend today considering the first three.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. **Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;** Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

(Ephesians 6:10-20)

As I mentioned last time, the main verb in this passage is “stand.” Stand firm. Stand strong. Stand ready. Stand against Satan. Stand in Christ. Stand together. Stand with one another. (The admonitions to “stand” are addressed to us in the plural. We each must do it individually, but also collectively). Today's passage starts off with “Stand therefore.” The emphasis is on continuing to stand. Once you've done all in withstanding Satan, keep standing! Don't back down. Don't give up. Don't desert the army. Don't think it's over. Don't allow Satan to gain a single inch or to steer you off course. And we do that by donning each piece of the armor of

God. Each piece is essential and they are all interconnected. If you lack one piece, you may as well not have any armor at all. If any of you are living lives of depression, misery, joylessness, despair – examine yourselves and see if you are deficient in at least one of these pieces of armor. “Yeah, but I can’t see how this or that part of the armor is going to protect me from Satan.” So what? God didn’t ask you to analyze it to death, and a soldier doesn’t get to pick and choose which part of his battle dress he’s going to put on. God told you to take the whole thing and put it on. It **will** help you. And it will help you in ways that you never could have imagined or anticipated. Another way to look at it is that it is the same as the command to “put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 13:14) – that is, the **whole** Christ, not just part.

For each piece of the armor, I will give a brief explanation of the physical armor that it alludes to and then show how that translates over into the spiritual realm. Remember that there is a war raging around us at the spiritual level, and we are very much part of that war, every day in every circumstance – we wrestle not against flesh and blood. But let me remind you that one of Satan’s favorite tactics is to drive us to extremes, and that can happen on this very subject. Martin Luther colorfully said: *“Human reason is like a drunken man on horseback; set it up on one side, and it tumbles over on the other.”* One extreme is that we deny or ignore or forget the spiritual realm altogether. We might say, “well, I can’t see it, so I’m not going to worry about it.” The other extreme is that we become so obsessed with it that we spend all our brain cycles on endless, fruitless speculation about it, or end up with false conclusions like denying our own responsibility for our sins by saying “the devil made me do it.” So be careful.

Loins Girt About With Truth

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth...(Ephesians 6:14a)

The image is of a belt or a girdle strapped around the waist of the body. Soldiers would wear loose-fitting clothing under their armor which would need to be gathered up and tied tightly so it wouldn’t be an encumbrance. That was one of the main purposes of the belt. As John Arrowsmith put it, *“It is a nasty business to go about with your clothes improperly secured.”* Having loose garments would wreak havoc in a battle – it’s difficult to be mobile and to use your sword and shield if you have clothes getting in the way. The belt would tie everything together to free the soldier up. The other main purpose of the belt was to hold weapons (like the sword) and other personal items. Secondly, being made of thick leather, it would also serve as some level of protection to the abdomen.

Here, we are to gird up our loins with truth. It is “truth” that ties everything else together. It is absolutely essential and is the foundation of the rest of the armor. The idea is that we have the truth bound closely to us, tightly connected to the rest of the armor. It references Isaiah

11:5 where the Messiah is described: “And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.” The word “faithfulness” there can also be translated as “truth.” Being joined to our Messiah, those traits that characterize Him also characterize us.

There are several facets of the “truth” here. In praying to His Father, Jesus said, “thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Earlier in Ephesians, Paul referred to the “word of truth” as “the gospel of your salvation” (1:13) and said, “the truth is in Jesus” (4:21). Jesus said, “I am...the truth” (John 14:6). So, we have the truth of God’s Word, the truth of the gospel, and ultimately the truth as it is in our Lord Jesus Christ. Truth is not just a list of disconnected facts – it is something that finds its fullness in Christ. And that reality is to shape how we live our lives. Remember the truth of who you are in Christ – we are the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works (Eph 2:10). Therefore, we are to live truthful lives - honest lives of integrity and sincerity. But sincerity is absolutely worthless if you sincerely believe the wrong thing – it doesn’t matter how nice, caring, kind, helpful, selfless, etc. you are...if you don’t know and believe the truth as it is in Christ, you are doomed. Further, we are to speak truth (Eph 4:15, 25), and exhibit the fruit of the Spirit, which includes truth (Eph 5:9). Truth is something that is to be **done**, not just known: “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” (1 Jn 1:6). If you are ignorant of the truth or are pursuing some false doctrine, sinful behavior will follow closely behind. “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.” (1 Cor 15:33). Truth matters! Just as the belt is worn at the center of the body, truth must be central to you.

Contrary to the truth, Satan is a liar. Our first introduction to him in Scripture has him lying, and his first lies involve an attack on God’s Word (“Ye shall not surely die.” – Gen 3:4). Jesus said, “He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” (Jn 8:44). In fact, one of Satan’s primary weapons is to lie. And he’s very subtle about it. Sometimes he offers up bald-faced lies, but often, he takes the truth and adds just a little bit of error. He wants to confuse you and make you uncertain about what you believe. Remember that you are going to battle with a liar, and the greatest defense against a liar is knowing the truth. You must know and understand what you claim to believe. You must know the One in whom you say you have faith. If you don’t know what the truth is, if you don’t have your loins girt with the truth, Satan will easily deceive you – you are low-hanging fruit for him! You will be “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.” (Eph 4:14).

There is a certain type of person who delights in wearing ignorance as a badge of honor. Don’t be that person. Don’t think that you can delegate your duty to know the truth to another person. You have a duty to arrange your life so that you are reading the Bible daily. You must put on the belt of truth every single day, because we so easily forget. The very act of putting

on the belt puts you in a proper mental state. Girded with the truth, you can feel secure and ready, knowing that you are safe from deadly entanglements. But don't just read the Bible – meditate on it. The blessed man is described in Psalm 1:2: “in his law doth he meditate day and night.” 1 John 2:14 says, “the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.” Modern technology and social media platforms are known to promote shallow and distracted thinking. You have a duty to guard your mind against that influence. Don't let it rob you from meditating on the word of God. And don't let AI do the thinking for you.

Every spiritual truth must be measured against the standard of the Scripture. That is what God has given us as the final authority on truth. The world says otherwise. Worldly wisdom denies the Fall of mankind. It denies that we are all totally depraved. It denies the existence of Satan. It teaches that everyone is basically good – nobody's perfect, but we do the best we can. So, it makes fallen, sinful human beings the final authority on truth – whether through reason, feelings, culture, philosophy, or science (falsely so called). It teaches that truth is relative – my truth might be different than your truth, and what is right for me might not be right for you. It teaches that there is no Creator who has standards, so every man does that which is right in his own eyes. (Judges 17:6, 21:25). It teaches that the Bible is just another book. One of the reasons there is so much confusion and chaos in this world is that the world has abandoned the absolute truth of the Word of God. Even in our church, where we labor to be faithful to the Scripture, remember that we are sinful and finite men. I pray that when I preach, I'm preaching under the guidance and the direction of the Holy Spirit, but everything I say must be measured against the Scripture. We aren't a bunch of little popes speaking “*ex cathedra*.” If nonsense comes from the pulpit, it's the body's job to identify that. I'm not suggesting that you flyspeck every misplaced word or uncharitably put the worst possible spin on something that is said. But I am suggesting that you not be lazy listeners and blindly accept everything that you hear. Be Bereans, who “were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” (Ac 17:11).

Finally, you must have that belt cinched tight. The truth needs to be near and dear to you, so you're not ashamed of it. Sometimes there's a temptation to change, hide, trim, compromise, or otherwise manipulate it. It's an easy and common thing to do. But don't do it.

So, gird your loins with truth. Know it. Believe it. Do it. Speak it. And hold fast to it.

Breastplate Of Righteousness

...and having on the breastplate of righteousness; (Ephesians 6:14b)

The breastplate of a soldier was made up of segmented pieces of iron or steel bands, bound to underlying leather straps. They would wrap around the torso area, from about the neck down to the hips. In fact, the Greek word for “breastplate” is “thorax.” The armor was constructed in such a way that the soldier would have flexibility in movement, giving them agility and the ability to use a sword. The purpose of the breastplate was to protect the internal organs, like the heart and lungs.

Spiritually, the heart is the core of our being – our inner man. It is the seat of our desires, affections, conscience, feelings, motivations, and wills. It is where we feel yearning, emotional pain, anxiety, worry, stress, doubt, fear, refreshment, joy, peace, and comfort. It is the place where we hide the word of God (Ps 119:11). It is also the place where we hide sins like pride, covetousness, and envy. As Proverbs 4:23 says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” Satan knows what’s going on there, and he knows exactly where your weaknesses lie. And where he finds a vulnerability, he will attack. The only defense here is the breastplate of righteousness. You have a duty to put it on. Don’t just stare at it. Put it on! If you leave your heart exposed, he will wound you.

For simplicity’s sake, we can define “righteousness” as “being right in the sight of God.” And this verse refers primarily to the righteousness of Christ. This is not your own righteousness. The last thing you want to use as a defense is your own righteousness. Satan will take your so-called righteousness, lay it out on the dissection table and proceed to slice it up and examine it, putting it under the microscope and showing you in excruciating detail where you come up wanting. Where sin, hypocrisy, or ulterior motives were involved. And he’ll be right. “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” (Isa 64:6). You don’t stand a chance under that scrutiny. You will lose every time if you rely on your own righteousness.

But we have the righteousness of another. The Messiah “put on righteousness as a breastplate.” (Isa 59:17). He has now given that to us as a defense. In a most lopsided exchange, He took our sins and gave us His righteousness. “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” (2 Cor 5:21). Paul’s desire was to “be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” (Phil 3:9). I haven’t lived a sinless life, but Christ did. He lived a perfect life, and He charged that to my account. This is what imputed righteousness is. When God looks at me, He sees me clothed in the righteousness of Christ. This is the doctrine of justification by faith (Rom 3:28) – He has declared me to be just (right, not guilty) in the sight of God, and I grab ahold of that through faith. Even the weakest faith. The curse of the law can’t touch me now (Gal 3:13). Satan can’t defeat me now. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit...Who shall lay any thing to the

charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom 8:1, 33-34). Robert Haldane: *"To that righteousness is the eye of the believer ever to be directed; on that righteousness must he rest; on that righteousness must he live; on that righteousness must he die; in that righteousness must he appear before the judgment-seat; in that righteousness must he stand for ever in the presence of a righteous God."* As Isaiah said, "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness..." (Isa 61:10). This is not a doctrine to file away in some dusty cabinet somewhere to pull out every once in awhile for a game of Bible Trivia. Keeping this doctrine always near is your defense against the wiles of Satan! And when you're on your deathbed, you'll be happy you have it.

That there is a righteousness from God that comes by faith is a most precious truth of the gospel and is therefore a favorite attack point of Satan. His fundamental goal is to get us to look away from Christ and at ourselves. Maybe you're in a spiritual depression. You don't feel as close to God now as you once did, or you once had some spiritual experience that has never been duplicated and that worries you. He'll exploit that and try to discourage you, convincing you that you've never actually been close to God; you're a fraud. But if you have the breastplate of righteousness, you'll know that you're clothed in Christ – your wavering and treacherous feelings and experiences are irrelevant to that. That is, you may not feel particularly strong now spiritually, but your feelings of weakness have no impact on Christ's strength and power to do what He promised to do.

Or maybe Satan will throw some old sin in your face – a seemingly random memory will pop up, or it will vomit out of the mouth of someone, whether friend or foe. He'll say, "If you were really saved, you wouldn't have done that sin; how can someone like you ever stand in the presence of God?" The breastplate of righteousness is the answer – I never said I was there by my own merit. I'm there by the merit of Christ alone. My position before God does not rely on what I do or don't do – it never has and it never will.

Or perhaps Satan attacks from the opposite side. You've been very active in the church. He tempts you to become proud of yourself and rely on your works. It happens so gradually that you don't even realize it. Then just as soon as you are riding high, something happens, and things aren't the same (e.g., a pandemic, a sickness, a loss). You took his bait - you had defined your existence and your identity by your own works, but now the works have been taken away in part or in whole. You had relied on something other than Christ, and now that things have changed, Satan comes in and capitalizes on that. "Look at you now. Look how successful you thought you were. It was all a tragic charade." The breastplate of

righteousness testifies that your works do not make you right with God. Christ makes you right with God. It is His work, not yours, that is important here.

But you may say, “if my sins are forgiven, and I have Christ’s righteousness, and I’m right in God’s sight, doesn’t that mean that I can sin?” No, it does not. Have you forgotten who you are? You are God’s “workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Eph 2:10). And that’s why living a holy life is another essential part of the breastplate of righteousness. That’s what the whole second half of this book of Ephesians is about – what it looks like for a child of God to live a righteous and holy life. But such a life doesn’t spring from us – it springs from God. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Phil 2:13). “If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.” (1 Jn 2:29). And isn’t it self-evident that if you have backslidden into some proud, unconfessed sin, that you are inviting Satan through an open door to attack you? But, thank God, He always recovers His little ones from such backsliding and resecures the breastplate of righteousness.

So, the breastplate of righteousness protects us from looking at ourselves, and the two most common fallouts from that – despair on the one hand (“I’m not good enough”) and works-righteousness on the other (“Look how good I am.”). Instead, it directs us to look to Christ, “The Lord Our Righteousness.” (Jer 23:6).

Feet Shod With The Preparation Of The Gospel Of Peace

And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; (Ephesians 6:15)

A soldier’s footwear was one of his most important pieces of armor. They were typically sturdy sandals with hobnailed soles (like cleats). In combat, where slipping and falling could be deadly, they helped him maintain his surefootedness. They aided in agility and were indispensable for marching. They also provided protection from sharpened sticks and other dangerous snares that the enemy would hide in the ground. Because of the studs on the bottom, they could also be used as offensive weapons.

Spiritually, this is the one piece of armor most closely tied to the admonition to “stand.” If there’s something wrong with your footwear, you are not going to have solid footing, and you’re going to fall when Satan attacks you. You’ll slip, you’ll slide, and you’ll lose your balance. Don’t think of “standing” as having your feet embedded in concrete. Standing your ground can also include movement and agility. When it comes to the faith, you must be unmovable and not give up one inch. But when it comes to Satan’s attacks, when he changes his tactics, coming at you from the left side and then from the right, you must be ready to be

agile and mobile, moving to respond, perhaps even changing your own tactics. Don't sit back glorying in your past exploits – be ready to respond to the present danger. Be watchful and alert, not slothful and inattentive.

Your feet must be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. The metaphor of having your feet shod should show you how important this is. Every day, you wear shoes. It is a miserable experience to not have proper footwear. If you try to leave the house without shoes, you will notice immediately. This is not a “one and done” thing. It is something that must be done continually, and if you are lacking, it should be noticeable and vexatious to you.

What is the gospel of peace? And isn't it a beautiful irony that the “gospel of **peace**” equips us to fight a war? The word “gospel” means “good news” or “glad tidings.” It is glad tidings concerning peace. And it is a specific message. It is the message of reconciliation with God through Christ. By nature, human beings are rebels and are at enmity with God. But God has provided a way for us to be reconciled to Him. Namely, “by the death of His Son.” (Rom 5:10). Therefore, those who believe in Christ have peace with God. And thus we have Zacharias proclaiming that Jesus was coming “To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” (Lk 1:79). When the gospel breaks out to the Gentiles in Acts 10, Peter declares that God sent His word, “preaching peace by Jesus Christ.” (v. 36). Paul, in Romans 5, says that “being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 1) and then in chapter 10, “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (v. 15). Earlier in Ephesians Paul declares that Jesus “is our peace” and He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by joining them together as one man and He “reconcile[d] both unto God in one body by the cross...and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.” (2:14-17).

Now, the verse doesn't say, “shod with the gospel of peace.” It says, “shod with **the preparation of** the gospel of peace.” The word simply means that you're in a state of readiness and preparedness. It is a form of the word that Peter uses in 1 Peter 3:15: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” It is significant in two ways. First, when you know that you're at peace with God, it stabilizes everything. “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Phil 4:7). When you're under a barrage from Satan, you need to know that you're at peace with God. The gospel of peace should always be at the ready. It's the foundation that you're standing on and must be used to defend yourself against all Satan's accusations and temptations to sin. You're walking through a host of very powerful and dangerous foes, and

you need to know that the Friend with whom you are at peace is walking alongside you. If you're on the front lines and don't know that, how are you going to fight?

Second, you must always be prepared to preach it. To preach it is to enter enemy territory with the message that Satan hates the most. It is this message, and no other, that will release people from the bondage that Satan has them in and bring them peace with God. William Gurnall: *"No doctrine but the gospel can save a soul; nor the gospel itself, except it be made known."* So, Satan will do what he can to pervert the message. He may tempt you to go to one extreme and change it to a hopeless message like "you can never have peace with God." Or the other extreme, "God reconciles everyone willy nilly – He wants you to be able to sin in peace." Or "all you have to do is live a good life and obey all God's laws, and you'll be at peace with Him." Or tempt you to not say it at all – knowing it, after all, is not the same as communicating it. He may make you embarrassed, ashamed, miserly, jaded, or angry at it, and you're tempted to keep quiet. All these are Satanic ploys, and there are myriad other counterfeit gospels that he's responsible for.

As I was preparing, my mind kept being drawn to two passages. The first is from Romans 10, where we find the only other instance of the phrase "gospel of peace" in the Bible:

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:13-17)

Paul references Isaiah 52:7 here: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" The image is of a messenger who is bringing good news. You can tell by the way he's running, with excitement and enthusiasm, that he's bringing good news. Very few things are more beautiful than to see a messenger with good news. One thing to notice here is that the message is all about Christ – "how then shall they call on **him**" and "how shall they believe in **him**"? Another thing to notice is, who are the recipients of this preaching? Clearly it is people who are outside of the church – people who have not made a profession of faith – people who don't know about Christ. Our job is to tell them, and to specifically tell them the gospel of peace. It is through faith in Christ that a soul is brought to have peace with God. They won't all believe it, but our job is to tell them.

The other passage is 2 Corinthians chapters 3-6. You can read it on your own. The topic is the ministry that has been entrusted to us. It is called variously:

- ministers of the new testament
- ministration of the spirit which giveth life
- ministration of righteousness
- our gospel
- the glorious gospel of Christ
- preaching Christ Jesus the Lord
- the ministry of reconciliation
- the word of reconciliation

And it is put up against things like:

- ministers of the letter which killeth
- ministration of death
- ministration of condemnation

My point is that a person can know the Bible very well, they can quote verses out of the Bible, but that doesn't mean they're preaching the gospel. It doesn't mean they're preaching Christ. The Pharisees, for example, knew the Old Testament better than most people here today. But they were unable to see Christ in it. "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." (Jn 5:39). Paul tells us that the Jews of his day read the Old Testament with a vail on their heart (2 Cor 3:13-16). They were all stuck under the law and their minds were blinded concerning the gospel. I'd like to offer up the warning that if your message to yourself and others is that you must keep God's law, and your message doesn't go any further than that, then you are not shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. You are shod with the preparation of the ministration of death and condemnation, and Satan is going to have his way with you.

So, when our feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, we know that we are at peace with God through Christ alone (not through our works; not through our obedience). Knowing that gives us firm footing. It makes us ready to withstand Satan's attacks from every quarter. And it makes us ready to tell that good news to others.

Lord willing, I will continue next time with the remaining pieces of the armor of God (namely, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit).

And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. (Romans 16:20)