

THE BELIEVER'S SPIRITUAL ARMOR – PART I

Ephesians 6:4-17, Part I (No. 48)

Treasuring Christ Church – Pastor Boyd Johnson

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INTRODUCTION

Turn with me to Ephesians 6. Last week, we began the last major section of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Beginning in Eph 6:10, Paul tells us that Christians are in a battle against powerful enemies. The enemies are not other people—the enemies are Satan and his demons—dark spiritual forces who oppose God and God's people. And because we have such powerful enemies that oppose us, we need to be strong in order to stand against them. But the strength we need doesn't come from ourselves. We aren't strong enough to face our enemies in our own strength. We need the strength of God. So we are commanded in 6:10: "be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might." We need the strength of the might of God to face our enemies. And thankfully, God has not left his people defenseless in the face of the onslaught. God has provided us spiritual armor in order to stand firm.

- To keep us from stumbling
- To keep us from giving in to temptation
- To keep us from despair
- To keep us from sin
- To keep us from dishonoring our Savior

God has given us spiritual armor that we must put on. Read Ephesians 6:10-17.

Eph 6:10-17 ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

This morning, we pick back up this passage in v. 14 which begins:

v. 14: Stand therefore. . .

Because we face the assaults of spiritual enemies, we must stand. This is God's will for you: We are to stand. To stand pictures the stance of a soldier in combat who is resolutely holding the line and opposing the enemy. This must be the posture of Christians. The reason God gives us strength is so that we can stand. So *how* do we stand? How is it that we hold the line against the enemy? And the answer, as we've already seen, is by putting on the armor that God has provided:

v. 11: Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

Now, beginning in v. 14, Paul begins to describe the whole armor of God that we must put on. In order to stand against our enemy's assaults, we must put the six pieces of spiritual armor described in this passage. The six pieces of armor are:

1. The belt of truth
2. The breastplate of righteousness
3. The shoes of the gospel
4. The shield of faith
5. The helmet of salvation
6. The sword of the Spirit

The picture is of a Roman soldier, which is used to illustrate the armor believers must put on. We'll study the first three this week and the last three next week. So let's jump in to the first piece of armor that we must put on:

I. WE MUST PUT ON THE BELT OF TRUTH

v. 14: Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth

The first piece of armor that a Christian puts on is the belt of truth. Roman soldiers wore a tunic—a loose-fitting, outer garment that flowed down like a gown. But when it was time for battle, that long, loose tunic could become a hindrance and therefore become dangerous. So they used a belt or an apron-like piece that they could tuck their tunic into and cinch it up.

So some English translations translate this verse with the somewhat antiquated expression: "having girded your loins with truth." Girding means to encircle. Loins is your waist. So the idea is to encircle your waist. Which is why the ESV and other translations shortened the idea to 'fastening on your belt' because that's what goes around your waist.

So with the idea of gathering and cinching up your garment, your belt became a kind of metaphor meaning 'to prepare for action.' For example: Jesus tells his disciples that they should be prepared for his return in Luke 12:35. He says 'stay dressed for action [= same words] and keep your lamps burning' as they wait. We should be always at the ready for Jesus' return.

Peter used the same idea in 1 Peter 1:13 to describe our perspective in a world that is hostile to Christians: "Therefore, preparing your minds for action, [girding up the loins of your mind] and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." So the idea here is that you should get prepared for battle. That's what 'fastening on the belt' means. And the way you get ready for the battle is by strapping on truth. Truth is the way you prepare for the battle.

In light of what we learned last week, this makes sense. Satan is the father of lies and a liar from the beginning. And one of Satan's principle means of fighting God's people is by spreading lies. Satan uses lies in many ways against God's people and people in general:

A. Lies About Who God Is

The worst of Satan's lies is lies about who God is. I mentioned last week Satan's lies in the Garden of Eden in Gen 3. You'll recall that God told Adam that he could "eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, for in that day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (3:17). And then Satan in the form of a serpent craftily comes and says to the Eve, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" (3:1) And, of course, the answer is, "No, God didn't say that. He said we *could* eat of any and every tree in the garden except for one" (3:5).

But then Satan says about eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." What makes Satan's lie to Eve so sinister is that he casts doubt on who God is. He makes God out to be a liar: You won't die if you eat it. And he casts doubt on God's goodness, as if God were stingily holding back the best for himself: "for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened."

And Satan is still at work attacking God's character: He works to cast doubt on God's love, God's justice, God's sovereign control, God's forgiveness, and so on. And Satan is at work attacking the truthfulness of God's word:

- that you can't really believe what's in the Bible;
- that we know better today;
- that the Scriptures are ancient documents that aren't relevant today
- that we can't really know for certain whether we have God's actual words or not.

B. Lies about Who You Are

Another strategy of Satan is to spread lies about who you are. To the world, the whole concept of sin is unpalatable. So to call anyone a sinner cannot be tolerated. Christians haven't been immune to believing lies about ourselves. For instance, so many Christians have believed the lie that their problems in life really come down to that they don't love themselves enough. If I could just love myself more, my esteem and confidence would rise and life would be happier for me. But then you read that Paul said things like:

- Acts 20:24: But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself. . ."
- Romans 7:24: Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?
- 2 Cor 12:11: "I am nothing"
- 1 Corinthians 15:9: For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle. . ."
- Ephesians 3:8: To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,
- 1 Timothy 1:15: The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

Either Paul had the worst self-esteem in all of Scripture and he needed a good dose of positive-affirmation self-talk, or he was a man who knew the truth about himself and was on to something.

Our problems are not that we've thought too little of ourselves. No, our problem is that we've thought too little of God and too much of ourselves. Our problem is that we spend too much time looking within, when the answers to our problems are without—we are to look to God and consider him. So we believe lies about ourselves.

C. Lies of False Doctrine and Confusion

Another strategy of Satan is **to spread false doctrine and confusion**. Paul is concerned enough about this that he writes in Ephesians 4:14: that we “may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.” Throughout history, God's people have been attacked from within by the spread of false doctrine.

D. Influence on God's People to Live Lies

And then there is the influence of Satan on God's people to *live* lies. We know well that unbelievers frequently accuse Christians of being hypocritical. And, sadly, many times they're right. Many Christians act pious when others are around and live secret lies of sin when alone. It damages the credibility of Christianity in the eyes of the world when yet another pastor has an affair. And the same is true when any Christian scandalizes his marriage or is addicted to pornography or is caught stealing at work.

We can live a lie by being people-pleasers. We can be just like Peter who in the courtyard outside from Jesus' trial denied him three times: “I don't know the man.” We may not deny Christ with our lips, but because of social pressure we conceal our identity in Christ or fail to speak up for what is right.

So to combat all of this, we are to put on truth. Some have wondered whether truth here means the truth of the Scriptures or to walk in truthfulness. Paul uses the word truth in both ways in Ephesians and I don't think he intends for us to make a choice between them. We are to immerse ourselves in the truth of the Scriptures. We are to keep learning about what the Scriptures say about God and his character and his work and what the Scriptures say about who we are, and what the Scriptures say about sin and what thoughts and actions *are* sin.

And we are to put on truthfulness, so that we live out those truths—so that we live a life of honesty and integrity about our identity as Christ-followers. If Satan's primary strategy is lies, then certainly we must start with truth as our defense. You know, in a courtroom, the best defense to defamation of character is truth. You can't defame someone if you told the truth. And truth is our best defense to stand against the enemies lies. So commit yourself to studying the Scriptures and commit yourself to living out the truths you learn.

Paul gives a second piece of armor in the second half of v. 14 and that's the breastplate of righteousness.

II. WE MUST PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

v. 14: Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

The second piece of armor is the breastplate of righteousness. Breastplates in Paul's day were made a variety of ways: Some were simply metal plates worn over jackets. Other breastplates were bits of animal horns or hooves sown into a leather sleeveless jacket and wrapped around the torso to protect the organs. Others were more complicated with metal strips joined at the back with hinges and with buckles in the front covering all sides and even the shoulders. But regardless of how they were made, the design of them all was to protect the chest and the back, in order to protect the heart and other vital organs.

Here, Paul says that the breastplate in the Christian's armor is righteousness. We are to put on righteousness in order to protect our heart—to protect our vitality in Christ. Now for Christians, there are two kinds of righteousness.

The **first** kind of righteousness is what we call imputed righteousness. That means that Jesus lived a perfect life and by trusting in Christ we are counted righteous in him. God treats us as if we lived the perfect life of Christ. Christ's perfect life gets counted to us.

Philippians 3:8-9: Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith

So when we are saved, God sees us as he sees his perfect Son: righteous.

The **second** kind of righteousness of a Christian is what we might call practical righteousness. We are counted righteous, but God also expects us to be doers of righteousness. We don't just get saved and then live like the world. We are to live righteously. That means we are to do what is right in God's sight. It's this practical righteousness that Paul is talking about here in v. 14. The breastplate that protects your heart from Satan's attacks is day-to-day, lived out righteousness. We are to be people who do what God requires. We are to wrap ourselves with righteousness. This is the way to protect our heart from the attacks of Satan. This theme is found all over the NT.

2 Corinthians 7:1: Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

Romans 13:12: The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Romans 6:1-2, 11-13: What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? . . . So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

1 Peter 2:11: Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

Matthew 5:6: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Ephesians 4:22-24: [we are] to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

How much despair and sadness has been caused in the lives of Christians because they didn't seek righteousness? We need to be people who are motivated to live rightly in the sight of God. That this would be our burning passion! We need an army of Christians who have put on the breastplate of righteousness. We need churches full of people who desire to do God's will. Satan will tempt you to worldliness and will tempt you to disobey God's will. But the protection for your heart is to live as God would have you.

The third piece of armor, and the last one we'll look at this morning is the shoes of the gospel.

III. WE MUST PUT ON THE SHOES OF THE GOSPEL

v. 15: and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

The Roman soldier wore heavy sandals with soles made of several layers of leather and studded with hollow-headed nails. These nails could provide a firm grip on the soil when engaged in hand-to-hand combat or when entrenched in a position. A soldier needed good footwear in order to keep from stumbling and to be ready to hold his ground.

In the same way, Christians are to put on spiritual footwear to keep us from stumbling. And what kind of spiritual shoes are we to put on? Shoes of readiness (“as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness”). So the kind of spiritual shoes we need are shoes of readiness. A readiness to do whatever God calls us to do. And where does this readiness come from? It is ‘given by the gospel of peace.’ The gospel of peace makes Christians ready for the battle.

How does that work? How does the gospel make us ready to face the devil? The clue is that Paul doesn't simply call it the gospel, he calls it the gospel of peace. The gospel brings peace. The gospel is the good news that Jesus died on the cross for sinners and that all who trust in him will be saved from the wrath of God. So the gospel brings peace between man and God because Jesus died in our place. So in the gospel we stand ready for the assaults of the enemy because we know that we stand at peace with God. We have assurance in the gospel that God loves us. So whatever happens to us, is God's love for us, not God hating us. We have assurance in the gospel that God is for us. So whatever happens to us, we know that God is not against us. We have assurance in the gospel that we have already won because God has the victory. So whatever happens to us, we know is not defeat. We have assurance in the gospel that we can fight against temptation because the gospel brings the Spirit of God to live inside us.

So whatever temptation we face, we know that God has provided a way out. We have assurance that our sins are really forgiven and that the accusers accusations will not prevail. So when we fall, we know that the fall isn't fatal, but forgiven. So in the face of the enemy, we need not be discouraged. We don't serve God to become loved and accepted, we serve God from a place of

already being loved and accepted. So as we meditate on the truths of the gospel, our defenses are built up because we know that our spiritual shoes are firmly in place.

CONCLUSION

Recap: So here are the first of the six pieces of armor:

1. The belt of truth, which prepares us to face the devil's lies.
2. The breastplate of righteousness, which protects our heart.
3. The shoes of the gospel, which holds us firmly in place against assaults of discouragement.

What will you do with this armor offered to you from God? Will you put the armor on? God is calling you to put on the armor. What will you do to better learn the truths of Scripture so that you can defeat the lies of Satan?

What areas of your life do you need to do right in God's sight? Where is God calling you to righteousness?

And how will you deepen your understanding and your love for the gospel and how it impacts your life today?

God is offering you the armor—he has provided for you. But will you be a good soldier of God and put it on?