

The Armour of God – Ephesians 6:10-20

Introduction:

- **(Final Instruction – Roman Armour – Visual Aid – Today’s Protective Clothing)**

We have just read Paul’s final instruction to the Ephesian Church – i.e., to put on the Armour of God. Even though this is Paul’s last instruction it is by no means less important than others in this letter. Paul wrote to the Ephesians while under house arrest/imprisonment in Rome (AD60 -62). As a prisoner, he sees soldiers guarding him every day and has become familiar with their armour. If he were alive today he may have chosen something we are more familiar with. In everyday life people put on protective clothing depending on the environment they are in – i.e., a fireman, a fighter pilot, an astronaut, a lab technician, a surgeon, a beekeeper, etc. They wear appropriate clothing either to protect them from a hostile environment (or to protect the environment from them).

- **(Our Battlefield Environment – Need for Armour – 3 Enemies – Their Purpose)**

The Bible tells us that the Christian life is continually played out on a battlefield and therefore the Lord instructs us to wear protection in a hostile environment. Paul uses the analogy of a Roman soldier’s armour because all Christians are soldiers in Christ’s army according to 2 Tim. 2:1-4; he wants to impart a very important truth and uses a visual aid to do so. The Apostle John tells us that we have three enemies – Satan, the world (system) and our own flesh (old nature) – and these enemies are out to separate us from God and to destroy our lives. Jesus said that the thief (speaking of Satan) comes to **‘kill, steal and destroy’**.

- **(How to Stand Strong in Temptations/Against Adversaries – Wear the God-given Armour)**

We all face temptations and opportunities to sin that are put in our way by these enemies. We face onslaughts from Satan – discouragement, fear, dread, lies, evil and deceiving thoughts, unkind, lying or warring words from others. How do we make the right choices when faced in such circumstances? By putting on the armour that God has appointed every Christian to wear because it is the only armour that will protect you.

- **(What a Fool Wears to Battle – Whole Armour)**

Only a foolish soldier would go to battle not fully kitted out – twice here Paul tells us to put on the **'whole armour'** (v11 & 13). This instruction is vital for every Christian to hear and more importantly to obey.

Armour:

- The Christian armour ('the armour of God') we will look at are made up of seven parts:
 1. The belt/girdle of truth
 2. The breastplate of righteousness
 3. The shoes symbolising the readiness/preparedness given by the gospel of peace
 4. The shield of faith
 5. The helmet of salvation
 6. The sword of the Spirit (weapon) – the Word of God
 7. Prayer (weapon)

Purpose of the Armour: - that we may **'stand'** against our enemy

- **(To Be Found Standing After the Battle – His Strength Not Ours)**

The Lord wants you to be always **'strong'** especially when facing the enemy (v10). It's not in our own **'might'** that we will defeat the world, the flesh and the devil (self-reliance will surely fail) but only in **'the strength of his might'**. Only God's armour will give you his strength, the necessary strength for battle. With this armour you will succeed in whatever battles you face. Don't rely on your own - wisdom or ingenuity – it's like David facing Goliath wearing Saul's ill-fitting armour. David took it off and relied on God's armour instead. Listen to David's own words - **"You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶ This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, ⁴⁷ and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand."** – 1 Samuel 17

The Battle:

- (Spiritual Battle Against Invisible Forces – Do We Take Them Seriously?)**
 St Paul says (v11 -read) that our battle is a spiritual battle (it's very real against invisible forces – how we dismiss/don't take serious what we cannot see! Don't be fooled, this battle is real. Satan is out to destroy you, the Church and Christian witness. He hates anything that God does or puts his hand to which includes you and me.
- (Stand, Withstand and Still be Found Standing)**
 In this fight (the good fight of faith as Paul calls it) God's purpose/instruction is for us to 'stand against the schemes (premediated/preordained plans for your downfall) of the devil' (v11). Furthermore, we are to 'withstand' the attack of the enemy in the 'evil day' (today or in those days he pursues you; some days in our lives seem more evil than others) (v13). In four verses (11-14) we are instructed three times to 'stand' in battle, i.e., not to retreat or runaway and not to fall or be defeated. In v13 we are told to 'withstand' the enemy in the 'evil day' – that simply means that when Satan and his evil forces hurl all they can at you that at the end of the battle you are still found 'standing' and not defeated.
- (Fully Wear the Armour to be Victorious)**
 When you fully wear the armour of God, only then, will you be victorious in battle and receive the crown of righteousness. Listen to what Paul said at the end of his life again in prison - 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.' 2 Tim. 4:7-8.
- (Wrestling)**
 Paul describes this warfare as personal – we 'wrestle' i.e., the closest form of combat against invisible evil forces. How do we 'wrestle'? We wrestle with temptation, with fear, dread, discouragement, disappointment. We wrestle with bitterness, cynicism, jealousy and a bad attitude. The enemy are not people who trouble us but the invisible forces that often operate through them. St Peter's First Epistle deals with this subject – suffering as a Christian.

The Armour in Particular: Let's look at each individual part.

The Belt of Truth:

- **(Necessity to Know the Truth)**

Firstly, knowing God's truth as laid down in the Bible is essential for every Christian. If you know the truth Satan cannot undermine your faith by lying to you as you will recognise his lies when compared to the truth.

- **(A Belt Holds Things Together – The Truth in Every Area of Life)**

A belt holds clothing up – it holds things together, i.e., keeps your shirt inside your trousers. The belt of God's truth will hold together every area of your life because God's Word has something to say about every area of life. His Word instructs us how to live the Christian life, how to live a life pleasing to God. It shows us the pitfalls of life so we can avoid them. His truth, if heeded, will deliver us from painful/costly consequences. Read Proverbs for further study of this truth.

- **(Protection of Being Truthful)**

Secondly, because God is truth, he commands us to be truthful with him and each other and particularly with ourselves – it is called living a life of integrity. Look at the fruit of dishonesty, lying and unaccountability – guilt, shame, condemnation, distrust, trouble, separating of friends etc., By living in an upfront transparent and accountable manner we take hold of this armour, the 'belt of truth'. Truthfulness, honesty and integrity protect us from Satan's false accusations or insinuations. They protect our conscience from guilt, shame and condemnation. What a liberating world to live in, nothing to hide.

The Breastplate of Righteousness:

- **(His Unearned Righteousness – Defence Against Accusation)**

Thank God that he gives us a righteousness that is not our own; he gives us Christ's perfect righteousness; it's a righteousness that we do not merit. From time to time we sin and fail; Satan accuses – he rehearses past failures. Thank God, we have an advocate (defence lawyer), Jesus Christ who represents us before the Father. He has taken care of all our unrighteousness when he died for us at Mt Calvary.

- **(Practical Reason for Breastplate – Your Heart – What we Allow/Disallow)**

A breastplate protects the vital organs of your chest especially your heart. The Lord's breastplate is to protect your heart. It is who you are – your will, your emotions, your desires; simply put it is who you are on the inside. Solomon writes in Proverbs, 'Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it *spring* the issues of life' (Pr.4:23). We have to be careful what and who we allow into our lives because what we allow in will certainly affect us for better or worse. We have to guard the eye-gate (what we see and read), the ear-gate (what we hear -gossip); we have to guard where our feet take us; we have to guard our hands (what we do with them). Don't allow bitterness, envy, jealousy, bitterness, cynicism or unforgiveness a foothold in your life. Allowing anything and everything into your heart will lead finally to a life destroyed by sin. See what Jesus said, 'If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell' (Matt.5:29-30).

- **(Breastplate of RIGHTEOUSNESS – Righteous Actions Protect Us)**

Note that the Lord's breastplate is a 'breastplate of righteousness' – by doing what is right, making right choices, having a right attitude towards others – these are the ways we protect our heart. The 'Accuser of the Brethren' will have no ammunition to fire at us in order to condemn us. Paul puts it another way and says that there is no law against such things (righteousness); ^rBut the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law' (Gal.5:22).

The Shoes symbolising the readiness/preparedness given by the gospel of peace

- **(Practical Benefit of Shoes – Distance & Grip)**

A Roman soldier wore shoes/sandals which allowed him to travel further over rough/uneven ground than if he had been barefooted. Soldiers could be moved to anywhere at any time and therefore the need of good footwear. Furthermore, sandals gave the soldier an effective grip when battling an enemy.

- **(A Readiness/Willingness to Go)**

Can I ask you if your commanding officer (the Lord) were to call you somewhere else or to do something else would you be willing to go or do; would you obey without question like a Roman soldier. Would you leave the familiar and that with which you are comfortable with? Would you go if it cost you? Would you emulate Abraham who left the familiarity of Uz in Mesopotamia to go to where he knew not where (Hebrews 11).

- **(Pliable in The Lord's Hands)**

Sandals symbolise a willingness/readiness to do the Lord's bidding when and wherever that may be. Sandals symbolising the readiness given by the gospel of peace speak of being pliable in the Lord's hands. Am I pliable? Having received the 'gospel of peace' we must be willing to go where the Lord will lead us; just look at the early disciples as an example.

- **(Ready for Heaven)**

Finally, the sandals symbolise that we are 'ready' for heaven because of the 'gospel of peace'. Jesus, through his death on the Cross and his resurrection from death has made 'peace' between us and his Father.

The Shield of Faith

- **(The Purpose of the Shield - Who Lights Your Fire)**

A shield is to protect the soldier from being struck or injured by an enemy's weapon. In this case, the Scriptures tell us that weapon is Satan's fiery darts. It's funny that both the Lord and Satan want to set you on fire; the Lord with the zeal of his Spirit (to build you up and send you out) and Satan with fiery darts (to destroy you).

- **(Definition of Fiery Darts – Continues to Burn)**

What are fiery darts? Firstly, when they are thrown/fired at you they come without warning; they blindsides us. A fiery dart can be anything (word, thought or action) that causes your mind/heart to be disturbed whether by fear, anger, doubt, hurt, discouragement, etc. It's something you cannot of yourself shake off. Naturally speaking, when you get burnt, even having extinguished the flame the burning continues in your skin.

- **(Remedy for Fiery Darts is the Shield of Faith – Trust in Him - His Presence)**

Paul tells us the only protection/remedy for fiery darts is 'the shield of faith'. Simply trusting in God in these times. In those times do you believe God is greater than any fiery dart that may come your way. If/when a fiery dart is directed at you the first thing is to go to the Lord. Seek the help of other believers. Job is a man who had to deal with fiery darts and because of his faith in the Almighty he was not destroyed by Satan's darts. When you come to the Lord it is the sense of his presence that will extinguish the 'burning' caused by the fiery darts.

The helmet of Salvation

- **(Purpose of the Helmet – Protect the Mind – Subtle Attack to Doubt Salvation)**

Again, the Roman soldier's helmet protects his head from being harmed by an enemy's weapon. God's helmet of salvation is to protect our head – our mind from the enemy's attack. Satan's attacks usually come through the mind. His subtle attack on believers has always been to doubt their salvation in Jesus Christ; to doubt that their salvation was real, to cause them to doubt that they belong to the family of God; to doubt their eternal home (heaven) and eternal inheritance/reward is really for them. If the devil can bring you to that place he has made shipwreck of your faith.

- **(An Example of Subtle Attack – Jesus Attacked)**

When Jesus came out of the River Jordan after being baptised by John, his Heavenly Father said of him, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." Matt.3:17. Shortly later when Jesus was in the Wilderness Satan tried to cause Jesus to doubt who he really was when he said on three occasions, 'If/since you are the Son of God' Matt 4:3. Jesus wasn't moved by Satan's tactics – he knew who he was in the Father – the beloved Son whom I am well pleased. He simply took the Word of God as fact (and not feeling).

- **(Defence Against Attack – Belief in The Word of God Above All)**

John in his Gospel wrote, 'but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.' John 20: 31 - Simply put, the Word of God is our helmet of salvation.

The sword of the Spirit (weapon) – the Word of God

- **(Purpose of Sword – Attack Weapon – The Word of God)**

This is the first piece of armour that is actually a weapon to injure/ward off an enemy. Note, in the invisible spiritual realm when fighting/resisting invisible evil forces the Word of God (the Bible) is not just words, stories or historical accounts but a sword from the Holy Spirit to drive back the forces of evil. Satan's minions take very seriously God's Word – I hope we take it more seriously.

- **(Jesus Wielded the Sword of the Spirit in the Wilderness)**

Three times in the Wilderness, Jesus resisted Satan's temptations with the Word of God. He wielded the Holy Spirit's sword and Satan left him for a time. This a good reason to be knowledgeable of the Word of God.

- **(Jesus Will Wield the Sword Again)**

In the final world battle (the final rebellion against God and not the earlier battle of Armageddon) we read in Revelation 'And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Rev.19: 14-16

- **(Skilful Use of The Sword in Trial/Temptation - Believing It Above our Senses)**

When faced with temptation or trial we need to skilfully use the Word of God to defeat our spiritual foes. We need to believe the Word of God over and above and beyond what we see, experience or understand from a human viewpoint.

Prayer (2nd Weapon)

- **(Weapon of Prayer – Utter Dependence Upon Another – Calling a Greater Power to the Battlefield)**

Prayer, upon first thought, seems to be a funny weapon to choose. The very essence of prayer is a believer's utter dependence upon God and not himself.

- **(All Types of Prayer)**

Paul says that we should pray at all times in the Spirit (i.e. not just at special times we set aside) for prayer is a relationship with the Father. He says we should pray with all prayer – i.e. praise, confession, supplication (for our own needs but particularly those of **the saints** – other believers) and thanksgiving. These verses (18-19) make it clear the importance for praying for other believers.

- **(Prayer is Partnering in Gospel Ministry – Paul’s Insufficiency)**

Paul, while in prison, recognised that the prayers of others on his behalf were the believers’ partnership in his ministry in the Gospel. He knew he needed the prayers of others to succeed in preaching the Gospel (taking territory from the devil). Of ourselves, we are powerless to defeat a more powerful and invisible foe but by prayer and faith in the Lord we can resist Satan and push back the **‘gates of hell’**. Prayer is the means whereby we can call on someone greater than ourselves or Satan to open doors and act on our behalf.

Conclusion:

Paul is saying that living in a (spiritually) hostile world (contrary to God and his ways) we must put on the armour of God for our own protection/benefit that we may defeat our enemy and be found ‘standing’.

1. The belt/girdle of truth – His truth (Word) & we being truthful, honest etc.
2. The breastplate of righteousness – His righteousness, living righteously
3. The shoes symbolising the readiness/preparedness given by the gospel of peace – available, pliable in the Lord’s hands and ‘ready’ for heaven
4. The shield of faith – faith in God to overcome sudden fiery darts
5. The helmet of salvation – to counteract Satan’s attack on one’s mind. To believe the Word of God about your salvation instead of Satan casting doubt upon it.
6. The sword of the Spirit (weapon) – the Word of God – Powerful weapon that will defeat Satan. Jesus used it.
7. Prayer (weapon) – utter dependence upon God in our battles and he will come to our aid. Partnership in Gospel Ministry

Amen