

Ephesians Series

19. Put on the Whole Armour of God (Ephesians 6:10-20)

We saw last week how we have found ourselves in a war. You may find that very worrying. Our enemies, the world, the flesh and the devil seem like strong foes.

- the world - everything about it tries to drag us into the world's mould - its way of thinking, selfishness
- the flesh - those desires that seek to draw us back from those things we know honour God. We have a new nature but the old man tries to creep in to drag us back to the kinds of lifestyles we were in when we were without Christ.
- the devil We read *11 Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.* How can we protect ourselves and fight enemies we know little about and try to undermine us. The wonderful truth is that we have armour - and God's armour protects us from all attacks. This morning we are going to look at our defences. Defences protect us both against a frontal assault and if our enemy creeps up on us. That's the whole reason for all our armour. If we've got lots of it and it's in good order, then our enemy can't get us because he does not have the ability to.

If you are worried about Satan this morning and are worried that he will somehow creep up on you, then remember this. God has given us armour. How is it described?

*11 Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes
13 put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand*

The armour, if it has been put on fully protects us entirely from Satan, it enables us to stand as Christians.

This is important - if we are tooled up properly, Satan won't get us from behind and he won't get us from a frontal assault as we can see him and cut him down - yes, you heard right; cut him down - at the end of the battle we will still be standing.

So why do so many Christians live in defeat? Because they were not wearing their armour and they were not using their weapon. Remember the story from last week of the policewoman who was stabbed to death because she didn't think much of her body armour so didn't wear it.

This is a message for today. The Lord is going to bring renewal and revival I believe and we have to be prepared. If we aren't then we are going to be in retreat or defeat. But if we are kitted up correctly, then we stand.

What is our armour like?

Diagrams of Roman Soldier armour

14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God

BELT OF TRUTH

Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

What does the belt do - it holds your trousers up! Kept up the soldier's girdle. Kept him from embarrassment! The belt also was where you hung your sword from. Truth? We need to be people that understand two things about truth. First of all Jesus is the truth of God. In a world where people will say to us that there is more than one way of reaching God we have this truth Jesus said "I am the way, the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father except through me". That's the truth of God. We are called to be people who know what truth is, because satan wants to sow lies. And where do we find truth - in God's word.

BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The breastplate protected the heart. It's one of the most sensitive areas. A cut through the heart was fatal. We need to be righteous. In one sense our heart is protected by the righteousness we received having trusted Jesus as our Saviour. But now we need to walk in righteousness. Be a righteous people so that people can see that we are people of integrity.

On the other hand, if we don't live righteously, then our witness and our credibility is compromised. Oh how true it is that so many Christians have been compromised by their behaviour - usually just one indiscretion. How they have been destroyed. How they have been destroyed. We all know stories of how ministers have fallen. But the same can happen to any of us. Lives, witness, our walk in Christ destroyed because we have not walked righteously and the enemy has got in and we are ruined. In defeat, finished.

FEET SHOD WITH READINESS

Boots are a very important part of the modern soldier's life. A good set of boots last years and are very comfortable. Soldiers are encouraged to look after them and make sure they are polished properly. Why? With bad feet a soldier can't move when the commanders call them to. We need to be ready to move, ready to follow Christ. God has not provided us with a comfy chair as part of our military equipment. He's given us boots. Why? Because we are called to march to take the land; to extend His kingdom. All soldiers in God's army are called to combat. We are all called to move. All called to be witnesses. All called to extend the kingdom. But it's so much better isn't it to be in barracks - even if our barracks are a bit run down.

We are called to be shod with readiness to do God's will, to fight in His army. Are we ready to serve Him? Are we ready to go forward? Or are we comfy?

SHIELD OF FAITH

Roman shields were large. They protect the body from frontal assault and were designed to be linked together. You see, Roman soldiers never fought alone, they always fought together. They linked shields and moved forward. The great news is that we are not called to face satan alone but as part of God's army. Our shields are linked.

Are we fighting satan alone? We come to church, we know about the armour. But we've never really been part of the fellowship. Or maybe we once were but our faith has waned. Maybe someone has upset us and so we don't want to get close to other Christians again.

I'll say this: if your shields aren't linked, then satan has a route to get in and wound you and prevent your walk with Christ. We are called as a people to act in unity because when we do, satan can't breach our shields.

And what is a shield of faith. Faith - *Heb 11:1 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.* Being sure. This is what Ephesians has been about. What are satan's darts - his lies. Let me read the verse I gave you last week. *John 8: 44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to*

the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. He's a liar. How does he get in - by undermining your faith by lies. How does God do this or that? Why didn't God heal me? Why am I in this mess? God has let me down! Lies - all lies of satan. What is the only protection - faith. When Paul was faced with this one himself - as he suffered for his faith he said these words *2 Tim 1: 11 And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. 12 That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.* Why did he know. Because faith is about trust (picture from SJ with man jumping off a cliff). It isn't about a loose belief, but the sure knowledge that we are in God's hands. The question is are you sure of your situation before God?

And that's why shields link - because we are there to encourage one another, so that when one shield flags, there are others to stand with it.

Are you in crisis this morning? Then remember who your Saviour is and put up your shield. Seek the help of others to pray and minister to you.

HELMET OF SALVATION

The helmet protects the head. What's in your head. Sawdust my family would say! It's your brain. Your mind. Why do our minds need to be protected by salvation. This is quite an easy one. Satan wants to plant doubts into our minds. He says - are you really saved? Do I really have eternal life. For the soldier fighting, morale is one of the most essential parts of the battle. If he doesn't think he will win then he's lost. Hitting our mind means that satan can put us out of action. So why is salvation so important as our helmet?

Salvation is a thing we understand, not what we feel. And salvation is something we understand with our mind. We look at God's word and we see verses like 1 John 5:13 - we can know we have eternal life. Assurance is something of the mind, not of the emotions. It's based on FACT - the promises of God as revealed in His word. Why do we want to fight God's battle? Because with our minds we can see that the gospel is the greatest thing we can possibly offer people in this world. It really can save them. It really can save them from a lost eternity. That's why we spent weeks on understanding who we are in Christ. We are the people of God and we have the means by which others can be too! What an amazing message.

Are you sure you are saved? If you were to die tonight, would you be sure you are going to heaven? If you aren't sure, then I'd love to speak to you today and help you find that assurance. Many Christians today live in defeat because they think defeat. You think defeat and give up before you are ever defeated. We are on the victory's side - let's walk in it!!

SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

Our sword. Our only offensive weapon. Notice how our Commander has made us well equipped to repel the attacks of the enemy by making sure that if we put the armour on. We have a sword - let's see what the Bible says about it?

For a soldier to use his weapon, he requires to practice with it. Practice a lot. If you don't practice, you won't know how to use it properly in the situations you are faced with.

How well do you know how to use your sword? Do you practice every day? Do you seek to learn the finer moves, the cuts and the thrusts? How can we fight the battle if we don't know what our weapon can do for us; or if we don't know it well. Yet we go into God's battle, and we barely know the Word. And we struggle. Someone asks us a complicated question - and we don't know even what the bible says.

and

PRAY ON ALL OCCASIONS

This isn't a weapon or armour as such. But it's vitally important. An army fights because it has received orders. An enemy always tries to break our command and control ability. Because when an army is detached from its commanders, the soldiers don't know what to do. We are called to keep in communications. It's last because it is at the foundations of the battle. We have the armour, we have the weapon, but we need the Commander to tell us what to do with it all. It's so basic. We can't function unless we communicate with our Commander. Yet Christians and Churches are happy to go through life with little communication. How do they expect to win the war? If we don't have our orders, we can't do the job!

18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Pray in the Spirit - not any old prayer, but prayer that we have been led to, or we have sought, from the Holy Spirit. We are called to pray in the will of God - not in our will. So often we pray for what we want, not what God wants. Notice all the "alls" in verse 18

- ALL OCCASIONS
- ALL KINDS OF PRAYERS AND REQUESTS
- ALL THE SAINTS

What about us - pray when we feel like, with the same old boring prayers for some people we kind of like. No ALL. What about our prayers?

I realise we have been given lots of challenges this morning. Maybe you feel a little awed by it all.

If we've not got our armour on then we are in trouble. The enemy will get us. He may not be able to drive us from God's hand, but he may put us out of action, in retreat or in the field hospital.

God wants us to be victorious.