

Each Piece Put on With Care

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Ephesians 6:10-20

Ephesians 6:10-12 ¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.
¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age¹, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

The medieval knight is a picture of strength and nobility, but what was the reality of being dressed from head to toe in metal armor?

We tend to idealize and romanticize the shining knight on his great war steed. The reality, however, was both more and less inconvenient than we might realize.

On the one hand we tend to assume that a full suit of armor was extremely heavy and inflexible. The reality was that the average weight of a full suit of armor was only between 30 and 60 lbs. It was also extremely flexible. It had to be if you were going to be effective in battle. There are accounts of knights showing off by doing cartwheels in their armor, and it is claimed that knights could and did swim in full armor.

However, there is no doubt that wearing armor would have been extremely hot. It was also not quick or easy to put all that armor on. Even with two squires working quickly it would take at least twenty-five minutes to get ready.

As much as we might romanticize the image of a knight on his gallant steed, few of us would have any inclination to take the time to put on such armor and wear it around all day.

Unfortunately, we tend to view our text much the same way we think of a knight in his armor. We really appreciate and enjoy the picture that Paul paints in our text. We even somewhat romanticize this armor of God. But few of us feel the need to take the time to put on and wear the armor that Paul speaks of here.

No matter how flexible, wearing armor was an inconvenience. The knights, however, took the time. They did this despite the inconvenience because they knew that it would protect their lives in the battles they had to face.

Paul impresses upon us in these first verses how important it is to take the time to put on this armor of God. However inconvenient you might think it, Paul warns against the very real threats we face every day.

Be strong (or rather be made strong) by the Lord and by the power of his might.

A man without any armor or shield had no chance against the arrows, swords, and spears of the enemy. Just so Paul warns us that by ourselves we have no chance against the temptations and threats of the spiritual enemies which press in around us on all sides. However, we can be made strong and ready for battle through the Lord's strength. Do not neglect to put on this whole armor of God so that you might stand strong in battle.

Ephesians 6:13-14 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.** ¹⁴ **Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,**

The breastplate of righteousness

The breastplate was probably the most important piece of armor. Even when fighters couldn't afford full armor to protect the whole body, they would still find something to protect their chest. A breastplate not only covered vital organs, but the chest is also the easiest target for an enemy.

To protect us in those areas where we are most vulnerable Christ has given to us his righteousness. As Paul reminds us there is no greater protection against our enemy than Jesus' proclamation of forgiveness through his death. Protected by Jesus' righteousness our enemies cannot win.

Romans 8:33-34 ³³ **Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.** ³⁴ **Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.**

There is actually a great deal of contention concerning this verse whether Paul is speaking about our own righteousness, or the righteousness of Christ. Our righteousness, however, is very flimsy protection.

Doing what is right can help to protect us. Doing wrong and sinful things can cause all kinds of problems in our lives. Sinful actions can destroy our relationships, even our marriages. It can lead to financial problems. It can cause us to lose our jobs and even mean we end up in jail. Doing what is right can help to protect our lives.

You remember how Daniel's enemies searched for some way to accuse him and bring him down, but they could not find anything. If there was anything Daniel had done wrong, they would have no doubt found it and used it against him. Because Daniel was honest and upright in all that he did, they could not attack him. Always doing what is right can protect us in this life

Romans 13:3 **For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.**

However, Paul started this section explaining that we fight against the rulers of darkness and the spiritual hosts of wickedness. Against Satan and his demons our own righteousness can never protect us. For that we need Christ's righteousness.

From the 13-15th century the French were forced to constantly make thicker and stronger armor to protect themselves against the English longbow. The knightly armor of earlier ages could not stand

against it. Just so our own good deeds can never stand against the temptations and accusations of Satan. We need something far stronger. We need the righteousness of Christ.

We must daily put on this breastplate through contrition and repentance. If we acknowledge our sins to God and receive from him forgiveness, there is nothing that Satan can do against us.

Ephesians 6:15¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

The gospel of peace

In Greek mythology Hermes was supposedly the messenger of the gods and had winged shoes allowing him to quickly carry the missives of the gods. In modern culture Red Bull is supposed to give you wings. Paul makes it clear that it is the gospel of peace which empowers the Christian to go and go quickly.

What other reason could we have "to go into all the world" other than to share the message of the forgiveness of sins. When we know the peace that is ours through Jesus Christ there is nothing that can stop us from going quickly throughout all the world.

Habakkuk 2:2,4 Write the vision And make it plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it. . . the just shall live by his faith.

The peace we find in Christ Jesus is such joyful news that when we truly appreciate and understand it, we cannot help but go and run quickly to share this message, as the shepherds did on that first Christmas after seeing the baby Jesus.

David reminds us that it is only when God fills us with the joy of his salvation that we are capable messengers of his grace.

Psalms 51:12-13 12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, . . . Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You.

And Isaiah reminds us that those feet which bring the gospel are beautiful.

Isaiah 52:7 How beautiful upon the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who proclaims peace,

It is hard to find footwear which is both stylish and comfortable. The shoes of the peace of God are both. They are beautiful because of the message of joy they bring, and they are also fast because the wearer is filled with the power and joy of knowing what Christ has done for him or her.

For this reason, Paul reminds us to "**always be ready to give a defense for the hope that is within you,**" to daily put on the joy of the gospel so that you will not hesitate to go and share his wonderful news.

Ephesians 6:16 ¹⁶ **above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.**

The Shield of Faith

The shield which Paul mentions here is not the small round shield that a fighter might use in the arena to deflect the sword of his opponent. The word in Greek is specific. It refers to the full long shields that the Greeks and Romans used in war. The word originally meant doorway. These shields were slabs of wood or metal almost as high as the soldiers themselves. You have probably seen movies or documentaries that show how the soldiers would put these shields together to create a wall which could not be penetrated even by flaming arrows.

All of Satan's temptations, every single one boils down to a lack of faith in God. They come down to a decision that God must be wrong, and that I will be better off or happier even if just for a moment if I do things my way. It was doubt of God's word that caused Eve to eat the fruit. It was doubt of God's promise which caused Abraham to agree with Sarah his wife and go into Hagar. Doubt of God's promises of eternal life cause us to seek happiness in this life rather than waiting for the blessed promise. Doubt in God's ability to provide causes us to be greedy and selfish with our earthly possessions.

On the other hand, faith is a great shield which no temptation of Satan can penetrate. Because they trusted God's promise, David did not give into temptation when facing Goliath. The three men did not give into temptation when facing the fiery furnace. Daniel did not give into temptation but continued to pray three times a day. Therefore, Paul urges us to daily pick up the shield of faith.

Faith, that is trust in God's promises, is strengthened and encouraged through the accounts of God's deliverance of his people in the past. Psalm 22 describes for us the agony Jesus endured on the cross and how he found comfort during that agony. In verses four and five Jesus himself looks back to the accounts of the Old Testament, knowing that God fulfilled his word and delivered his people in the past gave him confidence to trust the father in his current agony.

Psalm 22:4-5 **4 Our fathers trusted in You; They trusted, and You delivered them. 5 They cried to You, and were delivered; They trusted in You, and were not ashamed.**

God does not ask us to trust his word without proof. He has given countless examples of his faithfulness so that we might have faith in his promises. Trusting in his promises is proof against temptation.

Nevertheless, in our weakness we cry out with a certain father, "**Lord, I believe, help my unbelief.**"

Daily we ought to remind ourselves of God's faithfulness, so that we may not be tempted but by faith might stand.

Ephesians 6:17-20 ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; ¹⁸ praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints-- ¹⁹ and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

To these things we also add the helmet of salvation, which is to say we keep our eyes firmly fixed on the goal of eternal life so that we are not distracted and led astray by the things of this life.

We also add the sword of the spirit which is the word of God. God doesn't want us to be merely passive in this fight but to learn to use his word, so that we may strike out against the enemies of God.

All these things we are to put on daily.

Our sinful flesh would like us to believe that we don't have time to put on the full armor of God every day, but Paul reminds us that it is too important not to do.

A 12th century knight headed into battle would not hesitate to take the time to put on his full suit of armor. Paul reminds us that we daily do battle not with soldiers but with spiritual forces.

On our own we are not strong enough to stand against such enemies. In Christ we are empowered and strengthened for the day ahead. Therefore, put on the whole armor of God, that you might stand in battle and afterwards in victory, through him who died so that we might live. Amen