

The Armour Of God

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[0 : 0 0] The Armour of God, Ephesians chapter 6, a passage that probably many of us have read time and time again. A passage that many of us have heard preached on and I don't profess to have any further words of wisdom, but I do have what God has given me to say to you this morning and that's what I have been given in reading this passage. It says in the introduction to the book of Ephesians that Paul wrote this to the Ephesian church and in it he displays the scope of God's eternal plan for all humanity, Jews and Gentiles alike. The mystery of God hidden for ages but now made known in Jesus Christ. He is going to say that the first three chapters focus on what Christians should believe and it unfolds the glorious riches of God's grace in Christ, that dead sinners are made alive and gain eternal salvation by grace through faith. And then the last three chapters explain the implications of God's grace for the church, for individuals and for families. And the second section comes to the climax with a command to stand with the Armour of God against the devil. And it then states that Paul wrote this letter while in prison, probably in Rome about AD 60. Sixty years after Jesus was born, Paul was in prison for his faith and he rewrites to the church in Ephesus that we had first heard of in Acts. I don't want to read through the whole book of Ephesians, I would encourage you to do that when you go home. But just before we come to the text, let's have a quick look at what brought Paul to finish this letter in the way that he does. At the start of chapter one it states that Paul writes as an apostle of Christ Jesus. He then writes to the saints at Ephesus who are fruitful in Christ Jesus and then he wishes the grace and peace from God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul knew the importance of being in Christ and that everything came, sorry, Paul knew the importance of being of Christ, he knew the importance of being in Christ and he recognised that everything came from God and Christ. Paul laid out where his identity was. His identity was in Christ.

If you and I write a letter, you might write a letter saying dear sir, dear madam, by way of introduction my name is Gordon MacLeod. I'm the Youth and Discipleship Support Worker for the Free Church and I write to you about such and such. Paul makes it clear right from the start that he is an apostle of Christ. Question for each and every one of us this morning, who or what is our identity in? Is our identity in Christ or is it in our job?

Is it in MacArthur we drive? Is it in something other than Christ? What is your identity in this morning? And just think, if that was taken away from you, what would your identity then be in? What would be the foundation of what you stand on today? Paul's identity was in Christ and even though through all the trouble that he had been in when he had been whipped and beaten and put in prison, he was still prepared to say that his identity was in Christ. Christ was his sure and solid foundation. Where is your identity today?

Moving on into the chapter 1, nobody in the letter who heard the letter being read was in any doubt as to who Christ was and why Christ had come. Ephesians 1, 7 to 10, in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace. Christ died, he shared his blood that through his grace all our trespasses would be forgiven. The grace which he has lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. God had a plan to reconcile the world to himself. After

Adam and Eve fell in the garden, God had a plan to reconcile man to him and how was that done? It was done through him sending his son and Paul lays that out for us here at the beginning of chapter 1. And then in Ephesians 2 we have the well-known verses, for grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God. God sent his son as a gift for each and every one of us and we know that in John 3.16 it tells us that if we receive that gift and believe in

that gift we will not perish but have eternal life. And in chapter 3 for this reason I bow my knees before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with the power through his spirit in your inner body so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith that you being rooted and grounded in love may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. What a prayer for Paul to give and have for the people. Do we pray for one another in such a way that those that we meet those that we come into contact with would know what it is to be rooted and grounded in the love of God and be filled with the fullness of God. [7 : 21] And in chapter 4 and he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and the teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ until we all attained the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood to the minute measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by waves carried about by every wind of doctrine by human cunning by craftiness and defeatful schemes rather speaking the truth in love we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head into Christ from whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint which is equipped when each part is working properly makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

We saw in Sam one and we spoke with the children about the importance of walking with God not turning to the left or to the right.

Again, what should experience this morning? Are you confused with the rhetoric of the world just now? What the world has to offer?

Are you wondering who you should follow? Where you should be going? Are you feeling tossed about as it says there in what we read?

Not knowing what the real truth is? Paul warns us about human cunning, craftiness, deceitful schemes and we see it all the time.

[9 : 06] Scams created to draw people in. Elaborate scams that play in the emotions of people or promises of riches and so often we hear the sad stories of those that are taken in with them.

Paul taught that we needed to know the importance of God's word and walking close with God. And then in the closing chapters he goes on to give advice on how we should live with one another and how we should behave in our relationships as husbands and wives, parents and children in areas of employment.

And then he brings us to this final part of the letter which we have before us today. Paul had given all this advice on how we should live, how we should be guided, how we should grow in Christ.

We fully recognised that the Christian life was by no means easy and is by no means easy.

Remember he was writing this letter from a prison cell.

[10 : 17] He had been persecuted for his faith. He had been arrested previously and released but now he was again in prison.

And he says to us, finally, be strong in the Lord and the strength of his might, put on the whole armour of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

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, against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against spiritual forces.

What a battle each and every one of us face on a daily basis. Are we equipped for it? Are we prepared for it?

The key thing that Paul says to us is, it's not to be strong in our own strength, it's to be strong in the Lord and in the might of his power.

[11 : 43] He then tells us to put on the gospel armour as it has become known. One commentator suggests that Paul spent so much time in prison chained to Roman soldiers the area plenty of time to study what the armour of a soldier looked like.

But what we're not engaged in is a physical battle. It's a battle of the heart, a battle of the mind, and as we can see just now, it's a battle for truth.

What is the truth? What does the truth mean for us? Are we prepared to stand on the truth? So show to the armour.

The first part of the armour that we're given is in Ephesians 14. It tells us to have fastened on the belt of truth.

It's not just about having the belt of truth, it's about having it fastened. Fastened around our waist, right in the middle, holding everything together.

[13:01] I said to the children, if we have a Bible, it's not about having a Bible sat on a shelf. It's not about having a Bible in our case because we've left home and it's been given to us.

It's about having it and knowing it and reading it. How many of us were given a Bible when we left home or given a Bible for a significant birthday when we actually picked it up and read it?

Or is it nice to see it sitting on the shelf as a reminder that it was given to us? How can we know the truth if we don't actually read it?

In a previous life I wore a uniform and part of that uniform was a belt that you wore around your waist.

And on that belt hung various different pieces of equipment that I needed to be able to undertake my job.

[14:11] If I left my belt in the locker room and went out to do my job, it was no use to me. I was helpless in terms of trying to do something.

I might decide I was going to take it, but if I left it in the boot of the car on the back seat of the car, it was no good to me. I had no access to a notebook, I had no access to handcuffs if I needed them, no handcuffs, no access to a key for the handcuffs.

I needed to have my belt fitted around my waist. I had each and every one of you knowing what it is to have the belt of truth fastened around your waist.

So that when you're challenged about what is the truth that you have it to hand, not just thinking, oh, I don't really know.

Do you know what it is to have the belt of truth fastened around your waist? The next piece of armour is the breastplate of righteousness.

[15:30] What is a breastplate? It's exactly what it says it is. It sits on the breast to protect the heart from any arrows or any jab of a sword or a spear that is there to cover the front.

Spurgeon warns that it is a breastplate. It is not body armour, it is a breastplate. Why?

Because we have to face the battle. Because if we turn away from the battle that we're in, we have no protection for our back.

We have to face the battle that we're in. Are you in the battle with Christ? Are you in the battle for Christ? Are you facing that temptation each and every day, recognizing that it's not in your own strength that you face that battle, but it is with Christ?

Are we filled with the righteousness of God? So in illustration the other night, somebody was speaking to the children, or the young folks down in Harris, and they had a glass vase.

[16:53] And into the glass vase, they started dropping table tennis balls. And each table tennis ball was maybe a doubt, a sin, a challenge that young folks face.

And eventually the glass vase was full of doubts and sins and challenges. Pride, anger, swearing, was all dropped in to this glass vase.

And the person that was speaking then picked up a jug of water and said, the only way that we can empty that glass vase with all these doubts is to fill it with water.

And as the water went in, it pushed all the table tennis balls out. And that's exactly the same way it is for our heart.

To get rid of the sin that's within our heart, it has to be filled with the righteousness that comes only from God. Is your heart full of sin this morning?

[18:03] Is your thoughts this morning drifting to the sins, or drifting away to what you're going to be doing the rest of this week?

My prayer would be is that it's filled with the righteousness that only comes from God. The next piece of the armour is the shoes.

Shoes fitted with readiness of the Gospel. I'm assuming that most of you came here this morning with shoes on.

Before you left the house today, you put your shoes on. When we go anywhere, we put shoes on.

The places that we are going to, are they allowing us to learn more about Jesus?

Are our shoes fitted with readiness of the Gospel? Or are we putting our shoes on to go places that are going to take us away from God? Or are we putting on our shoes going out thinking, I wonder if

I'll get the opportunity to share Christ with somebody this morning, or this afternoon, or this evening?

[19 : 20] Or are we putting on our shoes thinking, I've only got 10 minutes to get there, I better go? So the next time that you're putting on your shoes to go out, whether it be to the shop, to school, to work, stop and think, am I going to get the opportunity to share Christ today?

Am I putting on my shoes and am I equipped and ready with the Gospel? If somebody asks me a question, I'm going to be able to answer it and sow a seed into their lives.

Not for my glory, but for theirs, and for the furtherance of God's Kingdom. Because if you're a Christian here today, every single one of us has been given a commission to go into all the world and to make disciples.

So when we go out, are we fitted with our shoes on, with the readiness of the Gospel?

I don't know where you spend your time, but God does. And are the places that we are going to, with our shoes fitted, the right kind of places for us to be going to?

[20 : 41] Are they taking us closer to God, or are they taking us further away? Are they places that give us the opportunity to share the Gospel? Or are they not?

Now each and every one of you will be aware, probably in the last week, there has been more opportunity to open up a conversation about the Gospel, just about talking about what's happening in the news.

More so than there has ever been probably, as many of us can remember, because the fact of the matter is that our newspapers are actually teaching the truth of the Scriptures are based on the testimony of one woman.

And people want to know what your opinion is. Are you ready and prepared to speak about it, or are you going to shy away from it, thinking I don't have an opinion on it, I don't want to get involved, I'm not political?

That's not what it's about. This is about using the opportunity that arises for each and every one of us, of what's on our news screens, what's in our newspapers.

[21 : 55] There are opportunities for us to witness for Christ. Are our shoes fitted? Are our feet fitted with our shoes, with the readiness of the Gospel?

Shield of faith. You carry a shield to hide behind. Whether you like it or not, you're hiding behind that shield.

Why? Because you don't want to get hit by an arrow, you don't want to get hit by a sword, you don't want to get hit by a spear. What are you hiding behind this morning?

Are you putting your faith in a shield that is made of paper? Or are you standing behind a shield of faith in a God that is full of power and full of might?

We can see many different things that we put our faith in that don't last.

[22 : 58] Even things that we build, we see them taken down, thinking that they were going to last for years. There is only one person that we can put our trust in that will never let us down, that will never fail us, will never forsake us.

And that is God. My question to you this morning is, is God your shield? Is God the one that you are hiding in, that you are trusting in this morning?

I said to the children that when Joshua was given his commission to lead the people of Israel, that he had to obey what Moses had given in the law.

He didn't have the old and the New Testament then, but we do. It has been given to us to guide us and direct us on how we may glorify God and enjoy him forever.

Do we think of our Bibles in that way when we pick them up to read them? Or do we just say, I have to read this morning, so I will just quickly read. Or are we actually thinking when we pick up our Bibles to read them, what is God going to say to me today that is going to protect me as I go out into the world?

[24 : 29] And as I stand for him, what is he giving me to stand upon today? What truths are we finding in Scripture as we go out in the morning?

Some of you might be sitting here this morning think, I don't read the Bible. I'm only here for another purpose, I'm not really here to read the Bible, but I'm here just to listen because I've got to be here. God is speaking to each and every one of us. And God has sent us here this morning for a purpose. And as you go out from here today, you might not give us a second thought.

But I'm going to use a phrase that I heard from somebody else. My prayer would be that God's word would be like a itchy jumper. That when you put it on, it starts scratching.

And it only maybe scratches the surface first of all. But until you actually get to the root of it, you're not prepared to put it down. That this word will work on you, and this word will challenge you, and that you will really examine what is your shield and what is your faith this morning.

[25 : 51] And then we come to the sword of the Spirit. Sword of the Spirit. Sorry, the Helmet of Salvation.

When I went to work, I had to put on a hat and identify who I was. There were certain times, depending on what you were doing, you would maybe take the hat off.

But if you were going to somebody's door, sadly with bad news, you put on your hat to identify that you were there for official purposes.

What's in your head this morning? What are you thinking about?

Are you thinking about God's word and what God is teaching you through His word? Or is your head miles away? Thinking about what you're going to be doing tomorrow? Thinking about how quickly you can get out of here and go and do something else?

[26 : 59] This is what comes out of your mouth, which is on your head. Identify you as being a Christian.

Or does it identify you as being of the devil? Hard to say it, but if you're not with God, you're against God.

And again, that's what we're seeing played out in our news screens over these past days. Do you really believe what it says in the Bible?

Are you really prepared to stand on the truth of God's word? If you were challenged this morning about where you were, what would the words say?

The helmet of salvation is put on your head. Are you going to speak the truth of salvation? Or are you going to take the opportunity to ignore it?

[28 : 10] God is a plan and a purpose for each and every one of us. But it's for each and every one of us if we put our trust in Him.

And we walk with Him, not walking for ourselves. And finally, a sword of the Spirit.

A sword of the Spirit is described elsewhere as a two-edged sword. You can use it to defend or you can use it to attack.

Jesus gave us an example when He was challenged by the devil. When He was tempted by the devil, He was offered the whole world if He would bow down.

He turned a stone into a piece of bread. And we see how Jesus defended the truth of God's word.

[29 : 18] God, man cannot live by bread alone. He didn't attack the devil, but He used God's word to defend.

But then we hear Him say, get ye behind me Satan. It's a double-edged sword. We can defend with it. We can attack with it.

Do we know God's word well enough to be able to use it as that two-edged sword? And we can defend the truth of God's word.

And we can actually speak truth into the hearts of others. In defence of God and attack of the devil.

Do we have that two-edged sword?

Sam 1 has so much to teach us about the importance of walking close with God. When each and every one of you go home today, I would encourage you just to sit and meditate on Sam 1.

[30 : 26] Just to think about what it says to us and ask yourself the question, am I walking close with God each and every day? Am I meditating on His word in the way that I should?

And as I said right at the start, I don't just say this to yourselves. I say it to myself as well. I've had to think about this as I prepared for it.

And God's word challenges us. And we can take the challenge or we can walk away from the challenge. My prayer would be that each and every one of us would accept the challenge that there is within God's word about how we live our lives.

And finally, we have to pray. We have to think about putting on a gospel armour and thinking that once we've got it on, we're fit to stand.

We have to fully depend on God. And we have to trust in God and we have to pray to God each and every step of the way. He knows what's before us.

[31 : 39] He knows what's behind us. He knows what we're going through. And as a body of people that are gathered here this morning, each and every one of us are going through different challenges.

We're not facing the same challenges. People on your left, the people on your right. And don't sit there and think that, well that word's for Him or that word's for her.

God's word speaks to each and every one of us. But pray for one another. Pray that the opportunities that God gives you to share His word as you go out, because I'm sure that we want the two of you the next time you put your shoes on, will think about what opportunity am I going to get to share God's word and am I ready for it.

Pray for your neighbour when you see them going out, that they may have an opportunity and that they would use that opportunity. Because our opportunities may get less and less as time goes on. Use the opportunities that we're given to share God's word. But pray for one another. Pray for those that carry the name of Christ.

[32 : 56] Pray for your ministers. We're told to pray for our rulers. We are, each and every one of us, engaged in a battle.

And each and every one of us may be at different stages and at different points in the battle. There are some that are at the forefront of it. There are some that are at the edges of it. Some might be protected because they're in the middle with so many people around about them.

But there is a battle going on and we have to pray. Pray that those that are in the battle will know what it is to wear God's armour.

And that they will know that while they are in that battle they are not in it on their own. But there are other Christian brothers and sisters that are praying for them.

If you're not a Christian here this morning, my question would be is how are you facing the world? Are you letting the world direct you?

[33 : 59] Are you letting the world guide you? Are you taking the toying and toying and frowning of the world and thinking that this is for me? Because there's a day coming while you prepare to face the battle here.

There's a day coming when you will face a judge that will ask, what did you do with Christ? Did you take Him as your Lordness's Savior?

Or did you just decide to leave the book closed and not find out more about Him and walk with Him?

As I say, my prayer would be that each and every one of us would know what it is to walk with Christ, to walk in Christ and be in recognition that every good and perfect gift that we get comes from Christ.

That's prayer.