

The armour of God

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[0 : 00] Let us hear God's word in the whistle of Paul to the Ephesians. And we can read the sixth chapter. Ephesians chapter 6.

We read these words. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. On your father and mother, which is the first commandment, with promise that it may be well with thee, that thou mayest live long on the earth.

And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters, according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart as unto Christ.

Not with eye service as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will doing service as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

And ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing, threatening, knowing that your master also is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him. Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

[1 : 19] Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, against the spiritual wickedness in high places.

Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins geared about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Above all, taking the shield of faith, whether you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the sword, which is the word of God. Praying always, with all prayer, and supplication in the spirit, and watching where thereunto, with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bondage, that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak, but that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do.

[2 : 35] Titus, our beloved brother, and faithful minister of the Lord, shall make known to you all things, whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that you might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.

Peace be to the brethren, love the faith, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love, our Lord Jesus Christ, in sincerity.

Amen. May the Lord have his blessing to that passage of his... I'd like to look with you at this portion of scripture, from verse 10 right down to verse 18.

I mean, it's a big chunk, but I'm not going to go through the whole album piece by piece. But what I want to do tonight, is to encourage you, and to challenge you from God's word. We are living in hard days.

There's no doubt about it. I mean, as you read the papers, and as you watch the television, and as you listen to the news, we realize that we are really being persecuted, for standing up for the Lord Jesus Christ.

[3 : 43] Not as other people, perhaps, in other parts of the world, but who knows what might happen. And we need to be strong in our faith. That's the words we find, especially in this verse 10, where he says, Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his mind.

These verses, my friends, are full of significance for us. This is a theme that is urgently important to us as Christians, in this present time.

I'm, of course, referring to just the state of this nation of ours. I mean, we would have thought, 15 years ago, that the laws that our government have imposed upon us, especially regarding sexuality, and various other laws, wouldn't be on the statute books.

We wouldn't have thought of that. But that's what we find, and they're increasingly, putting more and more laws that are wholly against God's law. And Isaiah tells us clearly, that righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to the people.

And as we look at our nation tonight, we are reaping what we're sowing. Just look at that last general election. And look at what's happening in other parts of the world. The confusion.

[5 : 05] We are living in confused times. times of great uncertainty. And we need to be realistic about what we see out there.

We cannot hide from it. And as we look at the state of the world, and also the many difficulties facing the church, especially the national churches in England and in Scotland, many who are capitulated, there are many difficulties facing the Christian in these confused times.

And you could probably say that it's more difficult to live as a Christian today than it's ever been before. That's not true. It's always difficult to live as a Christian. But in these days, there are certainly greater trials than we've experienced for a long time.

I remember growing up on the island of Bernburg. In my grandfather's home, we'd go on a holiday. And I'm sure you remember it well. When you went into the house, there was nothing there to hinder us.

There was no television. There was no internet. There was no newspaper. There was no radio. Except when the Gaelic radio came on maybe once a week on a Friday night. But that was about it. So the world did not encroach into our homes.

[6 : 15] But you go to your home tonight and you'll find all of that there. And that, of course, makes the fight of faith that much more difficult and strenuous. In our way.

There are so many temptations out there to hinder us and to keep us from the Bible and from prayer. And that is what is hindering us so much in our church in these days. Most of our difficulties, of course, can be traced back to a personal devil.

And he has set himself against us. Very often we're unaware that it's the devil himself. Who is attacking us and who is trying to hinder us.

And I'm certainly conscious of that. As many of you know, I spent 35 years in the military. 30 of them as a Christian. And then I spent 5 years loving Parliament with Day 1 Ministries.

And then for the past 10 years I've been working with the Soldiers and Airmen Scrib to Readers Association. Supporting evangelists to our army and air force.

[7 : 22] It's been a tremendous privilege to go around most of the churches and to be able to preach and speak in most of the churches to encourage prayer for the work that we're involved in. But I'm grateful tonight for the victory that is ours as Christians in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us not forget these words that are in Scripture and are given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ. Greater is He that is in me than He who is in the world.

And my friend, at the end of the day the victory is in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are victors in Jesus Christ. When Christ went to the cross He was not a victim, my friends.

Jesus Christ was a victor with a capital V. He gave Himself unto death. And we need to remind ourselves of these great truths. But although all of these truths are true we are not to be naive as to the wiles of the devil.

We need to be strong in our faith. And that is the message that is presented to us by the Apostle in God's Word tonight. You see, the Christian life is not a playground.

[8 : 45] The Christian life is a battlefield. And we know also as Christians the more time we spend in fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ studying His Word and in prayer the greater the fight is even within our own soul.

Because the devil is constantly there trying to hinder us. There are three great enemies that confront us today as Christians. There is the world, there is the flesh, and there is the devil.

These are our three enemies. The world is that evil system that surrounds us that is so opposed to God. And as Christians we were once of the world but now as Christians we are to be in the world as witnesses of the cross since we've been converted.

We're no longer of this world but we are in the world. And we're confronted with the world day by day and this world is trying to squeeze us into its own mold.

The world is that evil system that is anti-truth, that is anti-God, and that is anti-Christ. The second great enemy of course is the flesh.

[10:10] And as we read in the Bible and we know this from our own experience as Christians there is this constant warfare in our breast where the devil is doing his level best to try and hinder us and so often the things of the flesh appeal so much to us.

There is a warfare there. And then the third enemy of course is the devil. The devil is a fallen angel who presides over the kingdom of darkness and of course the strategy of the devil is to use the world and the flesh against us to hinder us in our Christian lives to our devastation.

My friends, we cannot be naive about these truths. We are living in wartime conditions as believers in Christ.

My friends, the moment we were converted to Christ you began to meet opposition. Is that not true? The moment we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ you began to see and it's important that we are informed about the strategy and the tactics of the devil.

Now I was a tactician in the ministry. Most of my life in the ministry was in command from the smallest command until I commanded laterally a company. And it was important that I knew who my enemy was so that I could make a plan in my approach to the attack.

[11:44] My friends, we need to be warned about this enemy. The Bible tells us that he is like a roaring lion and he is seeking whom he may devour.

My friends, our faith is constantly under threat. And Paul brings this letter to the Ephesians to its conclusion here in chapter 6.

And he is reminding us that we will not be effective Christians in our service, in our growth and grace unless we understand the importance of resistance against this devil.

Now we know that Paul was in prison when he wrote this epistle. He was chained to a Roman soldier and that's probably why he is using the metaphor or the analogy to communicate this truth of the soldier and the pieces of equipment that the Roman soldier had.

My friends, these verses are so, so rich in theology and in doctrine. These are strong truths for our lives as Christians.

[12:58] Years ago, a great Puritan, his name was William Gurnall who died in 1679 and he wrote a great book of 12,000, sorry, 1,200 pages just on these verses, verses 10 to 18.

The name of the book was The Christian in Complete Armour. And years ago, in the homes of many of the brethren in this island, you would find that book.

And this is what Spurgeon said regarding that book. It's so prolific, he said, that the great Spurgeon said that apart from the Bible, this was the greatest book in his library as it gave him insight into, on how to be strong in the Christian faith.

And as many of you know, Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, he preached 52 sermons just on these verses. Now we're not going down that way tonight. You'll be pleased to know.

But he preached 52 sermons that are now in two volumes. And my friends, I would encourage you, if you haven't gotten to read them, they are fantastic sermons on this subject. Now, the apostle reminds us here that we are called to battle.

[14:18] The Christian life is not a life that is easy, it's not a life of ease. The language Paul uses is that of a soldier. It's wrestling, it's struggling, it's hard.

In the earlier part of the chapter he gives a picture of the type of enemy that we're facing. And you know, it's vitally important that we have an understanding of who our enemy is.

Because to be forewarned is certainly half the battle. It's not the full battle. But I as a soldier, I need the information. to enable to plan the battle run.

And that's true of the Christian, the spiritual warfare. We need to have information. But let us remember that it's only half the battle. And if we left it at half the battle we'd soon get depressed. We are fighting against what the Bible here tells us, terrible powers and principalities. And at the end of the day, who is sufficient for these things?

[15:19] But my friends, let us thank God that this Bible is always realistic. The Bible never gives you a false impression.

The Bible does not tell lies. The Bible is the truth. And we need to realize that and reaffirm that daily. We're not promised a life of ease.

but the Lord shows us that we will be conquerors. No, he doesn't. He shows us that we will be more than conquerors through him who loved us.

So the apostle shows us the other half. And he does that in his own characteristic manner. And it's important that we realize the pattern material.

He doesn't tell us to put the armor on before we're strong in the Lord. That's putting the cart before the horse. What we must do is be strong in the Lord and then we put the whole of the armor on.

[16:28] And Christian people can triumph and rejoice in the midst of all these troubles if we do as we are commanded to do here in his word.

And I want to look at firstly here. We need to look what it means for us to be strong in the Lord.

Secondly, we need to look at what it means to put on the whole armor of God.

And then look at verse 18 because this is the key. And I believe prayer is the key. So let's start this evening by first of all looking at being strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

What does that mean? what does it mean to practice for us? Well, the first thing to realize is that out there is a very strong enemy.

And we're never to underestimate this enemy. He's a roaring liar. The Bible tells us he is full of guile. It also tells us that he can actually transform himself into an angel of light.

[17:41] Now, to enable us to stand in the evil day, we need his strength. We cannot do it in our own strength. Why? Can we be victims?

Because, my friends, the moment you were converted, something amazing happened. Yes, you became a new creation of Christ Jesus.

but, what happened as well, is that you became united to the Lord Jesus Christ. You are a Christian who is united to Jesus Christ.

And that's a doctrine that we need to remind ourselves of constantly, our union with the Lord Jesus Christ. And we need to remind ourselves that Jesus is not afraid to call us brethren.

or sisters. The alarming thought is that the reputation, and this is what concerns me many a day, the reputation of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit is in a way in our hands.

[18:56] And when we fall and fail and falter, it is God's name we bring into disrepute. my friends, let's remind ourselves that we are members of a mighty, mighty army.

We need to remind ourselves of that. Secondly, we need to realize our own weakness and our own need of help. I think that's the preposition behind what the apostle is saying here.

not only concerned because of the power of the enemy, but also concerned because of our own weakness and our own lack of strength.

And the best way of reminding ourselves of that is to look at the Bible. There is so much evidence in the Bible to show us how weak we really are.

Adam, Adam, just go back to the beginning. Adam was perfect in the garden, was he not? Though perfect, and in perfect communion with the Lord, how easily Adam fell.

[20:16] man. Now we're talking here, my friends, about perfect man in a perfect situation. My friend, what is man when the devil launches his attack?

Even perfect man in the image of God in that perfect state and how easily he fell. man. But then thirdly, the name of the Lord is also a strong tower.

And that's the message that the apostle is giving us tonight. He's giving us, he's giving it to the church. He is telling us tonight that the Lord is almighty.

I was preaching last weekend, just on, in fact, it was last Wednesday, on Psalm 93. on the importance of reminding ourselves who our God is.

We are bringing God down very often, even in our prayer life and in a Bible study to our own level. Our God is almighty. We must use and misappropriate these words.

[21:26] He is magnificent. He is all powerful. He is all glorious. There is none like him. In him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily in Christ.

And for us to be strong, my friends, is to get back to a word that we've lost in our Christian vocabulary, which is meditation. How much time do we spend meditating prayerfully over the word of God as we are ready?

Or do we just get up in the morning, read the Bible, clear our conscience, have a short prayer, off we go. I'm the same in the evening. I'm talking to myself before I talk to anybody else, and I've got to remind myself of my own responsibility in relation to this.

For us to be strong, my friend, is to meditate prayerfully, reminding ourselves of everything that is true in God's word. Reminding ourselves of the promises that are there that God has given to us, and we are commanded to pray the promises.

So the apostle, for these three reasons, mentions they're being strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, before he then bids us to put on the whole armour of God.

[22 : 47] Now you might ask a question, if we're strong in the Lord, why do we have to put on the armour? Now there are some people who will preach and say, well the armour is not really necessary.

But let me remind you, that that's not what Jesus says, the opposite. And the apostle here is saying, and he's re-emphasising it twice, put on the whole armour of God.

And the reason for that is straight clear. We need protection. You see, the strength alone is not sufficient. Wonderful all that strength is. We need protection, which is provided for us by God, and that's his armour.

Whilst we are in this world, my friend, it's something we neglect at our peril. The Bible is full of teaching to support that truth. 1 Corinthians 10-12 Therefore let anyone who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall.

Anyway, and as we read the Bible, we see that that is the downfall of many. We don't need to look at society, we see plenty in society, but then we see some of the great men of the Bible, who also fell, and very often it was sexual sin for the men.

[24 : 17] Look at David, look at Samson, look at there's a host of people. Then you can go to the New Testament and even look at the Apostle Paul after he had that great experience of being lifted up into the third heaven in 2 Corinthians 12.

It was then the messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him, and that was to keep him humble, to keep him perhaps from trusting in his experiences.

It's not our experiences we put our trust, it is in the word of God. We must never neglect our defence. That is why the whole armour is essential, my friends.

Notice the emphasis, it is the whole armour of God. That's the key to the whole situation, nothing but the whole armour will do. And notice who provides the armour for us.

It is the Lord himself. The Lord himself. Everything we need to live the Christian life is provided for us by our Lord.

[25 : 31] My friends, how that should comfort us here this evening. The fact that God has given us all the equipment we need. Whatever may come to meet us in the Christian life, God has provided for us the means.

And that means we're without excuse when we fail. One of the ways the devil defeats us, and that's true of our culture, especially in the highlands and in the islands, we worry so much about how we stand.

We look at our failures far too often. We're forever looking inwards rather than looking to Christ. And he often attacks Christians in this way because they become absorbed within themselves.

And they only get depressed if that's what they're going to do. We need to lift our heads up and we need to look to Christ. He is the one who has defeated the devil. And if we don't do that, we're utterly useless as Christians, my friends.

Sometimes we try and even struggle with the devil and try and beat the devil, but we can't do that. He loves it. And it's for this reason, my friends, that we need to put on the whole armour of God.

[26 : 47] Because that's the only way to fight this battle, with the whole armour. And it's worth it while studying every single piece of armour which we can't do this evening. And he tells us to put the whole armour because that to me is striking confirmation that this is a hard fight we're in.

So as he tells us, that we need to take every individual part. But every part must go on. And this, my friend, is a conflict where it's the Christian who's doing the fighting.

We're doing the fighting. It's we who wrestled. If that was something that was done for us, we shouldn't take the glory. And that's as far as we would go.

We would accept all the fruits and all the benefits of our successes and the victories. No. We need to be in the fight.

The very fact that we're told to clothe ourselves in that armour and to put each piece on brings home the fact that this is a hard battle.

[28 : 02] And my friends, we cannot be missionaries either. We cannot contract ourselves out of this battle. No, we can't. That means that we need to know how to fight.

And that leads us to another question. How do we fight? And here we see the significance of the whole armour.

it means that we cannot pick and choose what we could offer. It needs to be the whole armour. Now when a soldier was going into battle and I would inspect them, sometimes we were all expecting, but if this was my platoon or my company going into battle, I would ensure that every single soldier was inspected and they had every single piece of kit they required for the battle run.

Because we didn't want to run out of ammunition. We didn't want the radio batteries to go down. We needed all of the equipment so that we could win the fire fight. And that is true.

We cannot pick and choose what piece of armour we put on in the Christian fight. We need the whole body of Christ. Now what does that mean? And this is important my friends.

[29 : 18] We need the whole of Christian doctrine. We need to be studying the whole of God's word. whether it be evangelism, whether it be justification, sadly, all of these doctrines, we need to study them all.

And that sadly today is part of our weakness. Some churches are fantastic at doing evangelism. Many people join the church and then all of a sudden fall off because it's an experiential experience to have.

doctrine and theology is vitally important if we want to be strong and we need to focus upon the whole armour. The helmet of salvation, we need to protect our minds.

I mean, how many folk have we come across in our colleges who have a handful of theology and doctrine but have neglected their hearts?

it's everything must be taken in. How many people have maintained a good conscience but they made shipwreck of their faith and their lives?

[30 : 32] The whole means every single piece of theology and doctrine that is in the Bible. In other words, the whole word of God is what we need to be studying. What a perfect balance it is in the word of God.

Now this is the balance that we have to display in our Christian fight if we want to be able to sustain the battle. There is only one way to stand and that's to be strong and have the whole armour on. Now, let me apply some of that because there are some times we need to expect the devil to harass us.

We're living in evil days today, you must agree. and we can expect trouble. Our enemy is wily and we ought not to be surprised that Satan attacks our greatest weaknesses and confronts us with our sins.

We've got to expect harassment. But secondly, we must examine that every piece of armour is on and that we keep our armour in mint condition, not rusty armour, but armour that is well looked after.

[31 : 50] A third application we could use is that the God of all grace will sustain us and we need to remind ourselves of that. All who lean on God will be victorious.

That is in one of the psalms. Of course you might lose a few scumishes. Yes, you will along the way. that those who lean on Jesus will know that we can gain victory because Satan must be destroyed and Christ has destroyed Satan.

Never give him to despair because Satan has lost the battle. Let the glory that awaits us animate our souls.

My friends, let us remember when we're struggling and times are difficult that God has promised us a crown. Listen to what the apostle Paul said and the last epistle he wrote to Timothy.

I am ready, this is Paul speaking, I am ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course.

[33 : 15] I have kept the theme. You see, Paul didn't sleep. He stood and he said, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day.

My friends, let me remind you that that day is coming to every one of us. And there is a day coming, my friends, if we in this battle keep obeying the word of God, study the word of God, pray over the word of God, meditate upon the word of God and put our trust in Christ.

That day is coming when he will say to you and I, well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of the Lord. Stand therefore, my friends, for the crown is coming.

Let us think often of that coming day when we shall stand in the presence of God through the righteousness of Christ, not in our righteousness, but in the imputed righteousness of Christ.

Oh, what a day when all the fighting will cease, when all the shadows shall flee away. Oh, happy day when we shall see not unto us, but unto thy glory.

[34 : 40] When we shall be able to sing that song, stand up, stand up for Jesus, stand in his strength alone. The arm of flesh, it will fail you.

You dare not stand alone. Put on the gospel and the rich priest, put on with prayer. When duty calls or danger, be ever standing there. I'm conscious of time of God, but there is this final exhortation in verse 18.

And that, my friends, is probably one of the most important aids and helps that we have as Christians here tonight. And that is prayer. My friends, some people say that this is another part of the armor, but no, it's not.

There are some commentators who say that, but I don't believe it is. It's not described, it's not an extra piece of armor. But this is surely our responsibility.

It is that we need to pray, and pray without seeking. This is something we have to do. And it's something we have to do in connection with the armor.

[35 : 55] because we're commanded to put each piece on with prayer. The whole armor put each piece on with prayer.

Now Cowper, the hymn writer, he made this statement, which really is powerful. He said, restraining prayer, we cease to fight.

But he says, prayer, makes the Christian armor brighten, and Satan trembles when he sees the weakest Christian on his knees.

What that means, in essence, is that the armor that is provided for us by God cannot really be used except when we're in communion with God.

The danger is that we'll put this armor on in some mechanical way. That is not going to help us win the battle.

[37 : 10] Which piece must be on with prayer and in fellowship with our Lord? Christ didn't say, watch and pray for no reason.

And he did not say, pray without ceasing, for no reason. The place that prayer has in the New Testament is remarkable. And we see that especially, and I'm closing with this, we see that especially with the Lord himself.

How marvelous to a read of Christ's prayer line. Now we're talking about Christ who had perfect knowledge. And yet note the frequency he had, the frequency of his prayer line.

He turned to prayer and would spend the night in prayer. Little wonder that Jesus said to you and I, and he says it to us tonight in Luke 18 1, men ought always to pray.

Now that's gender free. Men ought always to pray. He also said pray without ceasing. Now in Stornoway, a quotation and I really enjoyed it, was from Noel Vicki explaining what it meant to pray without ceasing.

[38 : 30] Apparently there was a group of divines who were looking at writing a catechist and they came to this question, what does the Bible mean or what does Jesus mean when he says that we are to pray without ceasing and that men ought all to pray.

What does it mean? Well they couldn't come up with an answer that satisfied them all. So they decided to have a break and stop for some refreshment. And the maid who brought the refreshment, one of them decided to ask her, what do you think is God meant or Jesus meant by watching pray and by praying without ceasing?

Well she said that's easy. When I get up in the morning the first thing I do is wash my face and I pray that God and Jesus would wash my sins and cleanse me in his precious blood.

When I put on my clothes I pray to God and say, oh Lord clothe me with your righteousness and enable me throughout the state to live to your glory. Then I go about doing my dusting.

And then I pray that God would cleanse my heart and take all my sins. Pray without ceasing. What a brilliant illustration of praying without ceasing.

[39 : 56] And that's what Jesus is saying that we should be doing ourselves constantly in prayer, just talking to the Lord. He's not commanding us to make long prayers or short prayer, he's going to

speak to him.

And we must ask ourselves tonight in closing, what place does prayer have in my life? What prominence does it have? Our ultimate position as Christians, my friends, is tested by our prayer lives.

Prayer, the Bible states, is more important than knowledge and understanding. The ultimate test of my understanding of scriptural teaching is the amount of time I spend in prayer.

That's quite a thought. And that should challenge every single one of us who are Christians here tonight. And that is where we'll see every single chair filled. You know, and I'm going to close it up, when I was coming this morning in the car, I listened to a sermon, and one of the illustrations that was given was he, someone asked, there was this group of people from America who came to the tabernacle in London, where Spurgeon was.

He was to preach that morning to his congregation of 7,000 people, the largest auditorium in the world for Protestant faith. So Spurgeon said, right, come with me, walk through the corridor, down the stairs, down another stair into the basement, and he opened the door slightly.

[41 : 37] There, directly under the pulpit, were 200 men praying. There, he said, is the success of my ministry.

Powerful. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us, for Christ's ministry. Eternal Father, we thank you for the fact that you are the hearer and the answerer of prayer.

Lord, may each one of us be challenged. Lord, I need to be challenged. We all need to be challenged in our own prayer lives, so that we might be those who would be crying for the heavens to be rent, for your spirit to come down in mighty power, to put to shame those who mock and laugh at your people when they ask us, where is your God?

Lord, bear your eye. Not that we deserve that you should bless us, but we plead with you that you would have mercy upon us. Lord, bless these thoughts to us tonight, and enable us as you children to have on the whole hour of God, and may each piece be put on with prayer, so that we would be able to stand and withstand the enemy of our souls, who is trying constantly to hinder us in our Christian lives.

so bless us to that end, we pray, and take away anything from our memories which was not to your glory. For Jesus' sake, we ask. Amen.