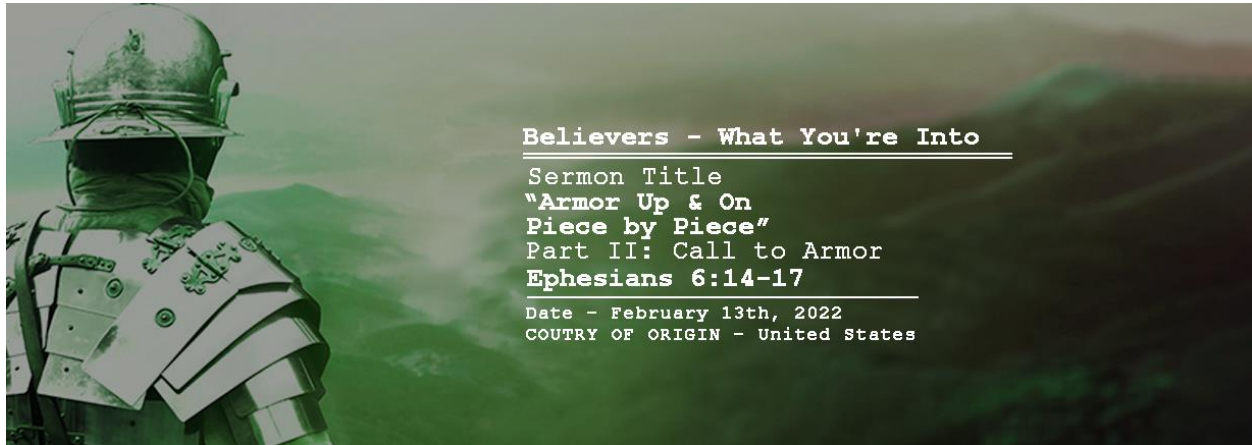


“Armor Up & On – Piece by Piece”



Call to Armor Part II

Ephesians 6:14-17

Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

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Let's see. What are those sunglasses? I had them just a moment ago. Oh, there they are, in my shirt. Have you ever had that happen to you, where you're looking for something? And it's there. It's kind of right there. The sunglasses used to be right here and all I had to do is recognize that they're still right here. So I pick them up and put them on and I'm ready to go. Right? So I found out that I'm not the only one with lost glasses issues. (showing pictures on screen) This lady can't find her glasses either that are right there, on her head. You ever been in a situation like that? How about a lost cell phone that's right in your hand? Now that's a good one. And it kind of happens with keys sometimes too, picking up this and picking up that and then you can't find your keys. Where are my keys? I just had them. Oh, they're still in your hand. Well, here are a few others that even got printed on T-shirts. I think they have a T-shirt for everything now days, don't they? And of course, guys, what happens when we're looking for something in the refrigerator? It's right there. But we can't see it. Well, you know, we probably didn't put it in there in the first place. And even if we did, it would still be hard to find. Yeah, that's a good one. That's a good one.

This morning, the passage we're going to look at is very much like this. It's right there. Take it up, put it on. The passage I'm talking about is in Ephesians 6. We have something that we need to take up and put on, in what the Apostle Paul calls in this passage, this present darkness. Last week, we looked at this present darkness. And some of the things that we identified about this present darkness. The Apostle Paul talks about this present darkness in verse number 12, where he says, what we struggle with is not "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 place". And we identified each of those. If you're interested in reviewing that, it's online and available for you there. This morning, we're going to follow up on that, concerning what the Apostle Paul says that we're to take up and put on, piece by piece. It is the call to armor. We're going to pick up in verses 10 and 11, where he says by note of encouragement, "Be strong in the Lord", supernaturally strong, "in the strength of His might", what is to be active in our life, it's residual in him. "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil". "Therefore", he says in verse 13, "take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm". The passage points out to us that there is an evil day, in the method of Satan, the enemy, there is an evil day that is particularly aimed at and launched towards you. That's what the passage is telling us.

Now, according to chapter five, verse 16, the days are all evil. With the coming of Christ, the nature of what's happening here, we're to make the most, redeem the time because the days are evil, there's harm, there is hurt there. But a particular one, in the strategy, the methodology of Satan, is a day that he has planned to unleash particular harm towards you. A day like Job experience, hopefully not to that degree, but that comes at you, all at one time. In that situation, you and I are not adequate to be able to stand victoriously, standing firm towards this. Yet that is the call. And it's the call that requires supernatural power that is in him. And that presents the need for taking up and putting on this complete armor. That's what he says twice, it is the complete armor of God. It is all that you need in this present duress, this present darkness. It's all that you need, that he's provided.

So this morning, we're going to put on the pieces. After last week, looking at the first part of the call. Today we're going to put on the pieces. We're going to talk about what these pieces are. The first three of the six pieces that make you complete, able to stand in this evil day of which there may be several, are things that we're to routinely be putting on. Notice this beginning at verse number 14a, "Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth". This is the idea of girding this on you, having put on the girdle of truth, some translations bring out, having put this on, then in verse 14b and 15, also "put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace." Now I want you to note that this is the "having put on" ones that we are routinely to be equipping ourselves with, when encamped, routinely when encamped, because we are currently encamped in the evil day. That's what Ephesians 5:16 says, we're to make the most of this time because the days have hurt, they have harm, they have difficulty, they have challenges that run adversely to you and to the kingdom of God, as Satan constantly attempts to do, which is sidetrack you, stall you or to take you out of the picture. That is legitimately, according to what the

Scriptures tell us, what he's up to and he will launch an evil day to progress that agenda. When you're encamped, when that evil day comes that you don't see coming down on you, you are routinely to put on those first three pieces that we'll talk more about.

Then we are, when you're rousingly noticing that this is a particularly challenging day, to put on these three pieces, verses 16 and 17, "In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you will be able, you can extinguishing all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God". When you're engaged, when this thing begins to be extremely challenging and you notice that you are being afflicted here, then it's time to take up these pieces of equipment. He wants you involved. He wants you to be in on this. Routinely as we are encamped in these evil days and specifically as this begins to break on you, a launch of a very difficult time. And those times do come. Have you ever noticed, have you ever said, I wish, I hope I don't have to live this day again! Ever had those kinds of days, when you were particularly challenged? Then take this up. It's God's intent for us to be equipped here, to be involved.

First off, Paul talks to us about this belt of truth. Having put on the belt of truth, this is more than a decorative piece. I know that today, a lot of times belts are kind of to beautify the outfit or to make it more attractive. But what, generally, is a belt intended to be used for? It's to hold up your pants, to keep them from going south, right? In football we had a particular piece of the uniform that we had to wear, to hold these pads in place, and there was this belt that had these metal loop things in it, and you pull it around and loop it over and then pull it again. And it was to hold these other things like knee pads and thigh pads and back girdle pads in place and to keep them tight and to keep it there. This is more than a decorative piece when he's talking about the belt. As a matter of fact, I have put up here a diagram, it's a pretty accurate picture of what was the Roman soldier that Paul was chained to, at least he saw them frequently during his time of imprisonment here, and he uses this. But this this doesn't come exclusively from Paul's experience. In Isaiah 59, this same terminology is used when God himself girds himself as the divine warrior to go out and take care of the issues that are facing his people. Psalm 59 makes it very clear, he girds these pieces on him. This is the power that's residual in him for this conflict that we are to gird on.

Here, in this picture of the Roman soldier, is this belt thing, you can see it here. You see a Roman soldier wore a large tunic that kind of had some holes cut into it, holes cut for his head and for his arms, it's kind of like a poncho, it was kinda like that only not so designed because this was just a big square of material that they had on. And when they were doing this, it was very, well let me say it wasn't formed fitting. I would say that this thing was flapping and flipping all around. So what they would do is they would have a particular way in which they put a belt through this, and they would pull that belt, and it would cause these things to come up tight to them. And it became, with the straps that is also located here, that's connected to this, there's a strap that runs across there, and this belt with this strap had a place in which the scabbard of the sword would be attached, and to which the next piece of armor would actually be held in place. That's the picture that he provides here of what God was doing. And this is for the girding or the tying

together. And this tying together is truth. It's the tying together with truths. Paul says, Put on this belt, this thing that girds it all up, ties it together, of truth, the belt of truth.

You know, that's a very interesting thing, this belt of truth. How do you put on a belt of truth? I mean, I'd know about putting on a belt to keep my pants up, I know how you do that. But what about in spiritual warfare, how do you put on a belt of truth? I think it's helpful for us here to kind of think about what truth is. You know, that question was kind of asked, it was asked of Jesus, What is true? Remember the situation? Jesus is brought, through the coaxing of the Jewish leaders, the chief priests, by the Jewish people to Pilate, to be judged. And he's ushered in there. And in this passage, beginning in John 18:33, Pilate says to him, Are you a king? This is the second time he gone into talk to Jesus. And Jesus says, Are you saying this on your own or did somebody tell you about me? And Pilate says, Am I a Jew? It was your nation and your chief priest, who've delivered you up to me. And Jesus replied, My kingdom is not of this world. For if my kingdom were of this world, then my servants would be here. So you are a king, Pilate says. And Jesus says, For this purpose, I have been born. And for this purpose, I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth, to tell you about the truth. He who is of the truth, hears my voice. And Pilate's response was, What is truth? Now, he wasn't saying that abstractly. He was saying that concerning the situation that was in his face, to what is real here. to what conforms to what is real. When you're talking about truth, you're dealing with what is real, this is reality. This conforms to what we face. This is what our life is, this is what it contains. And Jesus had already told him what truth is, I've come to tell you, to bear witness of the truth. He's who's of the truth hears my voice. They incline themselves to my words, what is truth. The tying together of all of this protective armor that God is going to have for us in this conflict against rulers, against authorities, against cosmic powers, against the spiritual forces of this present darkness, is all tied together with truth.

And this idea, of being truth, isn't new, this tying it together with truth, isn't new. In Psalm 15, God allows a question to be posed to him. The question is, Who can come into your presence, who can abide here, who can settle down and dwell through their life in your presence, being there? And he says, Psalm 15:2, It's the one who speaks truth in his heart, talking to yourself with what conforms to reality. We only know because of what God has told us in His Word. But this truth thing, Ephesians 4 verse 15, we are to speak to one another, the truth in love for the purpose of being conformed, growing up in all things to what Christ is as a person. This is what Paul talking about putting on. This is what he's referring to. It is speaking, based on God's truth of reality. We've called it around here, being straight up and being straight out, straight up and straight out concerning what we're facing in life, concerning the shortcomings that I have, concerning the sins that I deal with, concerning, to be straight up with this. That is the under armor for all of the armor. It girds it all up, it holds it in place, that you deal truthfully with your own heart. And you know, that's difficult, because our hearts are deceitful. They will deceive even ourselves to always put ourselves in the best light. We will always do that. As a matter of fact, my father-in-law used to tell me quite frequently, that we can justify anything in what we say to ourselves. We can. Do you think that's funny that my father-in-law said that to me? It's true. we can. And it needed to be said. This is what binds all of it in place. It's what under armors us for all of the armor.

And the additional piece that comes on next is the breastplate of righteousness. This righteousness, right standing, is not our righteousness. Complete this with me, For all our righteousness is as filthy rags, Isaiah 64:6, it is tainted. Our projection of our right of ourselves to other people, that's our self righteousness, our projection of our right of ourselves to other people, our self righteousness is tainted. It is tainted. The right standing that we have with God is an imputed righteousness, which means it is a given to our account righteousness. It is Christ's righteousness that is placed to our account. He took our sin on the cross, and he gave us his righteousness. You know the verse on this, For God made Him who knew no sin to be made sin for us that we become the righteousness of God in him. That's 2 Corinthians 5:21. This is the imputed righteousness. But that imputed righteousness that we have from Christ makes us a new person. Notice with me Ephesians 4:21 where Paul says this, "assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as this truth is in Jesus"...now verse 24, "to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness". This imputed righteousness leads to us being a new self, and now having a righteousness that is coming from God, we have a concern to really do it right, to really do this in a way that is in accord with what God has in mind as right. That becomes the righteousness of the breastplate.

A breastplate is an interesting thing here, because this righteousness is a breastplate of protection. The breastplate was a very interesting piece of armor. It was made either of a solid piece of metal that was kind of hammered into place and molded to conform to the body. And it was both front and back. I know that I've heard some people say you don't have any armor in the back, actually, there is armor for the Roman soldier in the back, they had armor in front and back. If it wasn't made out of a solid piece of metal, it may be made out of little pieces of metal that were all hung there, kind of like chains. Sometimes it was made of chain mesh. Sometimes it was even made of hoofs or horns that were cut in little pieces and strung across there. And it was for the purpose of protecting the vital organs, the heart, the lungs, the bowels, those parts which could be easily damaged if they took a striking blow or piercing arrow. This breastplate, our concern for right after having been given Christ righteousness, is what protects us. It protects this major part of what's called the torso, it's the major part of strength and of pivoting, it's this core, oftentimes it's called the core. It was for our protection.

How do you put on a breastplate of righteousness? Well, look at Ephesians 4:22, "put off the old self". We recognize this habit or pattern that we have brought over from maybe what we learned when we were young, maybe what was modeled in our family, what we picked up on our own from our own desires, a fallen nature, you put off this old self that "belongs to your former manner of life" and grows "corrupt through deceitful desires". By the way, there are still desires that deceive us. And verse 23, "be renewed in the spirit of your minds", verse 24, "and put on the new self which is created in the likeness of God", what is truly right, and truly goes his way, which is termed holy, the breastplate of righteousness.

And here's the last of the routine pieces we put on, when we're encamped, in the general nature of our days. The last piece is the boots or the shoes for the feet. Notice what Paul says here in Ephesians 6:14-15, "Stand therefore, having fastened down the belt of truth,

having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet", boots for your feet, "having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace". This was for the sure-footedness of the soldier as he traveled. You know, they didn't have army convoys with big trucks, they didn't have planes to transport or helicopters or paratroopers. These folks all walked it, they walked. And one of the tactics in this kind of combat was to make razors sharp sticks and strew them on the path of the approaching army. Obviously, a hand to hand combat soldier is not going to be very effective if he has injured feet. So they wore these really thick soled shoes, we would probably call them more like boots, but they didn't have the kind of technology to make boots. So they would strap these thick soled shoes on their feet. And underneath, they would put these spikes of metal, kind of like cleats that a football player would wear, or a baseball player would wear. And they had these so that as they went over this terrain, they wouldn't lose their footing. I know that during the winter, the shoes that I tend to wear have some pretty good tread to them. And that's intentional. It's a problem when I go in the house, and I don't particularly get all the snow knocked off. But the intent here is so you don't slip. The other day, my daughter and I went somewhere. And when we came home, there was this kind of snow and ice on our sidewalk and her shoes that she wore were oh so lovely shoes. They were just beautiful but the soles on them were smooth. And we walked up on the sidewalk and she began slipping and sliding. I wasn't doing that though because of the tread on my shoes, like the cleats that football players wear, baseball players wear.

In order to be able to maneuver and to be sure-footed these boots, would be a better term, that they wore were for this sure-footedness in the traveling and in the fray. And for us, this is called footing given by the gospel, the good message of peace. This is what gives us our footing, that there is a good news message, a good news message of peace, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, Romans 5:1. Jesus said, Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, John 14:27. These are two statements he made concerning peace, a settled harmony and tranquility being established. First of all, when Jesus said, Peace I leave with you, it is the peace that he had established with God through the blood of his cross, he made peace through the blood of his cross. This is such a vital thing in this conflict because Satan is going after you. Now it may not be him in particular, but he has a plan that he's going to launch on a particularly trying day, that's going to attempt to sidetrack you, he's going to attempt to stall you making progress here and ultimately, through your thinking, he wants to take you out. He is a murderer and he bides not in the truth for there is no truth in him. When he speaks, he speaks a lie, because that's what he is, the father of lies, he is the father of deception. Now that's aimed at you. And here is your sure-footedness. There is a good news message, that you have absolute peace with God through what Christ did. And when our looking at ourselves...being a loser, wiping out, carrying the guilt...is going to be launched at you, you need to stand cleated, surefooted, in this conflict, and be ready with this.

You need to be ready with it for yourself and for others. Jerry Bridges and others have written on this, and have called it preaching the gospel to yourself. It's not you, it is God. It's always depended on him. But you're in the fray, and you've got this road to travel and you need the sure-footedness, spiked or cleated, as this comes at you. I know from

interaction with lots of people over time, people here, myself in the mirror, such thoughts of failure, discouragement, disappointment...I always thought that it would be better but what I've done...that's it. That's where the gospel of peace comes into play. Because if God be for us, who can be against us? Nothing living, nothing dead, nothing to come, can separate you from this love of God in Christ Jesus. You need it, I need it. It's the armor routinely put on in the encampment of the evil days.

Then note this, the evil day is going to come. And so that you may be able to stand firm in the evil day, and having done all to stand, stand therefore and, verse 16, "Take up the shield of faith". This is a very important, vital provision that God delivers to us, in this conflict that is beyond us and that we cannot pinpoint the movement of the enemy, we can only be shielded in the power of his might, this supernatural strength that resides in him. Take up the shield, he says, be ready with it, take up the shield. Now the Roman shields were of two types. There was the small disk type. Kind of like the Captain America shield. Have you seen the Captain America shield? I think I've seen someone here with a shirt that has a Captain America shield on it. It's not that shield. That small one was for the Roman legion to have on their arm, and they had their blade in the other. And this small kind of shield was to be able to move for the strikes of hand to hand combat that would come at you. There was another shield. It was a larger shield. As a matter of fact, if you look up here in the diagram, that's what this shield looked like. It was about two and a half feet wide, which made it about 30 inches, about the size of a door. A door is usually 36 inches for full size. So this was about 30 inches wide, and it was slightly bowed. And it was four and a half feet tall. So that's about 54 inches tall. And there were squared edges and it had this bent piece of lumber, wood across it. And then over that, it was covered with a leather skin or something of a similar nature, a goat skin that could be damped. They would put some kind of water or some kind of damp liquid on it, to dampen it. And that was for a purpose. This shield was more like the fully armed Roman legion. And this shield was for the purpose of them drawing up against one of the most potent weapons in the enemies arsenal, which was the arrow that was shot at a distance at them, without the coming risk of face to face, hand to hand combat, the arrow. And what even made these more injurious was that they would dip these in a asphalt or something that could be set on fire. And they would then aim the flaming arrow. So not only the puncture wound, the piercing, but also the burning would be particularly difficult. Flaming darts, flaming arrows, very, very damaging. Now the Roman soldiers could put these large shields, as they were configured in such a fashion, they could put these shields side by side by side across, and essentially, create a moving wall, concerning these flaming arrows from a distance.

This was the nature of the shield. And the armor piece, that he says this is, is faith. This is entrusting yourself to God. Not to what you think in this situation. I know, amongst folks in the church that grasp this, the expression is...sometimes my thinking gets off here. And I need, I need to have someone bring me back. Has that ever happened to you? Your thinking kind of gets off here. Well, let me tell you, the flaming dart is aimed at your thinking. That's the target. That's it. That's the target over and over and over. It's where the Apostle Paul says, I am afraid for you, as the serpent deceived Eve, you should be led astray in your mind from the sincerity and simplicity of devotion to Christ. And that's the aim. Judas, the Bible tells us, Satan put it into his heart to betray him.

Simplicity and sincerity of the devotion to Christ, aimed at the heart, the wants, the emotions there, it's how it comes, David was moved by Satan to number Israel, as God had not intended him to do. Remember, God reduced their numbers with Gideon, reduce them so that they wouldn't think it was the power of their might, that they did this. And Satan moves on David to number Israel. Peter said to Jesus, This is not going to happen to you, you're not going to Jerusalem, you're not going to suffer at their hands and die, don't you talk like that any more! Then remember what Jesus said to him? Get you behind me, Satan! Because you are an offense to me. It's setting your mind on the interest men and not on the interest of God.

That's how it comes and we could go on and on and on, testimonies from folks who have had darts fired at their minds. As a matter of fact, that's what it's going to be like for you in the evil day. And when it starts, know that, know that your mind is going to be the target, he will target your thinking, he will target that, so that you get off in your thinking. And here's where we go. You have enough of exposure here that you pull up this shield of faith and this fiery dart, as it thuds into that lumber of that shield and is dampened by what covers it here, is put out. And I can guarantee you this. It's coming. All of us face this kind of deception. And this is why it's so essential that you must be taking it up. You must be taking it up to yourself, that God is in this, God has good intended in this, God works everything after the counsel of his will, he intends for me to be in this, to strengthen me so that I become more like Christ in our present circumstances. That is the shield of faith. And it is extinguishing all of the fiery darts of the devil.

And also the helmet of salvation. This salvation is an adjective here, this helmet of salvation, salvation is put in an adjective which means the salvation helmet. Obviously, ourselves salvation has a past, a present and a future to it. The past is, by grace you have been saved. It's a done deal. The present is, work out your own salvation now with fear and trembling because it's God who is working in you, to willing and to do His good pleasure, Philippians 2:13. And the future is, our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed, Romans 13:11. Our salvation helmet covers our head because that is the major target area that Satan has. These weapons of hand to hand conflict, if they hit the area like the head, that was considered a major blow, this will knock him out, this injury to eyes, this deranges the thinking. The helmet, for very obvious reasons, is to review this salvation, that God is in this, God is up to something good in this, he wants me here not to destroy me but to build me up, to make me more like Christ, so that I come away from these things, for the purpose of influencing family and friends by walking with Him. This is the helmet of salvation of rescue.

And the final piece here is the sword of the Spirit. And the way he said this is very clear, there is no question that what he's talking about is the word of God. It is God's word. And this sword was just a little sword, it was about a 16 inch or 18 inch sword. And this thing was very maneuverable. It's when in hand to hand combat, you're able to maneuver it. And that's exactly what Jesus did in this conflict, face to face, which we are shown for a purpose. In Matthew 4 and in Luke 4, we hear Jesus over and over and over say, And it is written, And it is written, And it is written, as he did hand to hand combat with Satan there. And it is written, very interestingly, Satan also said, it is written, but he

took it out of context, and he missed applied it. This is the uttering of the word, it is written, to conflict the situation. And it is the sword of the Spirit. Because it is powerful. What do you know that the word of God has done? Let there be light. And there was light. Let there be dry land. And it was. You know, everything that we know, this is the reality folks, everything that we know in this existence, comes here by the word of God, just him saying it. And it exists. And this is what we have in this conflict. Take it up, take it out. Take it up when it comes. Take it up. Where we are folks is in the present distress, in the current darkness. But we take it all up, Paul says, praying at all times.

Father in heaven, we come before you today because you have not left us defenseless or provisionless. But you have given us what is mighty in God, for the tearing down of strongholds and everything that's raised against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to Christ, as we walk with you in prayer. Our Father in heaven, we want to pray for those who are ill, we want to pray for the hospital in their current distress, we want to rejoice with those who rejoice in a besieged city. We want to interact with you because all of this comes effective in our prayer. We pray that routinely we'll be putting on, intentionally, the belt, the breastplate, the boots and at point of need we'll be grasping the shield, the salvation helmet and the sword, step by step in our walk with you. In Jesus name, amen.