

INTRODUCTION

Today we are going to talk about how important it is to know your spiritual armor. In boot camp, soldiers are taught to know their weapon. They can disassemble and reassemble them. They do it over and over again until they know it so well they can even take it apart and put it back together in total darkness. The sad fact is that there are a lot of believers today who are standing on the battlefield undressed while spiritual warfare is raging all around us, all because Christians do not understand their armor.

Ephesians 6:10-17. “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

Paul says there are six critical pieces of equipment for you to achieve victory in the Christian life. This morning we are going to talk about four of them, the four that you put on. Next week we are going to talk about the two that you hold and what you do with those weapons. Why did Paul choose to use this kind of a metaphor? When Paul wrote this letter to the church at Ephesus, he was in prison and there was a Roman soldier right beside him, guarding him. So as he is dictating this letter he looks at the Roman soldier and he looks at the pieces of equipment he is wearing and he says, “You know, that’s a picture of how we ought to be equipped and armored as believers.” So he takes a physical truth of literal armor and he relates spiritual truth.

I. THE BELT OF TRUTH

The first piece of equipment that he talks about is the belt of truth that every soldier would wear. Every Roman soldier wore a very thick belt, usually 8 inches wide, somewhat like weightlifters wear to support their front and their back under strain. It also provided protection for them if an opposing soldier tried to punch them in the stomach. This thick belt that was often nail studded as an extra measure of protection. An important function of the belt was to hold the sword. The belt was also the last piece of equipment a soldier would put on, after his tunic and all the loose fitting pieces of clothing. They were tucked into this belt and cinched up. Roman soldiers wore tunics—we would call it a short bathrobe—and you don’t want to go into battle with that bathrobe flapping. They had to tie it up. The King James Version often uses the phrase “gird up your loins.” That doesn’t mean anything to us today, but back then it meant “make sure everything is tight” so you can proceed into battle.

1. Protects us from error

What does it mean to you and to me every day of our lives? It means we must hang onto the truth of the word of God. In John 8:32 the Lord Jesus said, “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” I believe Paul is talking about the objective written word of God. What you find written in this book is the truth. The Bible says, “Your word, O God, is truth.” What does this belt of truth do for you and for me? Number one it protects us from error. The objective written word of God protects us from error. We know what’s right and what’s wrong. The devil is a liar and a deceiver. He wants us to make mistakes. Our defense against doing that is this word which tells us what is right and it tells us what is wrong. If you don’t get into this word and study it every day, you’ll fall into error. If the only time you ever study the word of God is when you come in here to church on Sunday morning and you hear me teach it or if the only time you ever open this word is when you go to your Sunday School class and you never do it six days a week, you will be a poorly equipped soldier. You must get into the word every single day so you will know what is right and what is wrong. This belt protects you from the world.

I read an interesting editorial by Charles Colson some time ago about how America is morally sick. Colson says America is afflicted with what he calls “moral AIDS.” AIDS is Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, when the body is no longer able to detect diseases and illnesses and soon dies. We have become so desensitized to sin and evil in America that America is no longer able to resist it and fight against it. He also says evil and wickedness is like a cancer eating through our culture. There are people out there who have absolutely no moral standards. There are people who justify in their own eyes what is right and wrong, but the Bible says there must be an objective standard the word of God. The Bible is our guide. This is the truth that tells us what is right and what is wrong.

2. Holds everything together

What else does the belt of truth do? Not only does it protect us from error, but secondly it holds everything together. This belt was used to cinch up the rest of the battle gear. There are a lot of Christians today who know the security that comes from getting into the word of God every single day. Those people who are in the Word find that everything is together and they are moving forward. On the other hand there are a lot of Christians who don’t have this belt and they are tripping over themselves day after day because they haven’t girded up their loins. They haven’t tightened everything up with the word of God. Some time ago I saw a bumper sticker that said, “A person who has a Bible that’s falling apart usually has a life that isn’t falling apart!” AMEN! You get into this word because it is truth. You say, “Wait a minute I thought the sword was the word of God.” Well that’s why I made the distinction. This is the objective written word of God, *logos*, the other is the applied word of God, *rhema* that I’ll be talking about next week. We need both the written word and we need the applied word to be victorious. So put on that belt!

II. THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The second piece of equipment is the breastplate of righteousness. A breastplate is worn over the chest and protects the vital organs of the body. Common soldiers wore breastplates that were basically a leather vest with overlapping plates of thin metal sewn on top. So they were protected to some degree from the arrows and the spears of the enemy. You know how it is important for

every Christian to put on this breastplate. What is a Christian’s breastplate? Our breastplate is righteousness.

1. Positional righteousness covers our heart

Now the word “righteousness” is a good Bible word, but basically the word righteousness just means being right with God. The Bible says, “It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.” (1 Corinthians 1:30). There are two ways you can understand this righteousness. First of all there is positional righteousness that covers our heart and protects it from the penalty of our sin. What is the penalty for the fact that we are all sinners? The penalty for our sin is separation from God forever and ever in a place called Hell. Once you become a Christian you are in Christ. That’s our position and that righteousness covers you.

How many of you can lift your hand this morning and say, “Pastor, I am righteousness.”? Hold up your hand everybody that can say that. Ok put them down. You are doing a little bit better because the first time I asked that maybe only two people raised their hand. How many of you can say, “Pastor, I am going to Heaven when I die. I know I am.”? Let me see your hands. Well we have a problem here, because only those who are righteous are going to Heaven. You can’t raise your hand and say, “I’m going to Heaven when I die if you didn’t raise your hand to say, “I am righteous.” Those of you who did not raise your hand when I said, “How many of you are righteous?” misunderstood my question. You thought I said, “How many of you are *self*-righteous?” but I didn’t ask that. I said, “How many of you are righteous?” If you are in Jesus Christ, if you are a Christian, you are righteous. It is not your righteousness it is HIS righteousness. The Bible says, “All our righteous acts are like filthy rags.” (Isaiah 64:6) I’m not talking about that righteousness—I’m talking about HIS righteousness.

You still don’t understand it? The distinction between self-righteousness and God’s righteousness is made in Philippians 3:9: “not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.” There is another reference 2 Corinthians 5:21. “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that IN him we might become the righteousness of God.” Just like a soldier in a breastplate, “in him we might be made the righteousness of God.” So if you are a Christian, if you are in Jesus Christ, when God looks at you, he looks at you through the filter of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It is what is called imputed righteousness. It was given to you as a gift. You didn’t earn it. Now let me ask you one more time. How many of you will lift your hand and say, “Pastor, I am righteous.” Right!

2. Practical righteousness protects us from sin

There’s a second kind of righteousness, practical righteousness, which protects us from the power of sin over us. We are covered with the righteousness of Jesus Christ and that protects your heart once and for all from the penalty of Hell, but every day we must practice righteousness, holy living and pure living, because we are Christians. You aren’t saved by your good works; you’re saved *unto* good works. You’ll never attain a state of sinless perfection this side of heaven. If you ever meet somebody that says, “I am sinless. I am perfect.” You say,

“Well, you just sinned because you’re a liar.” Nobody is perfect and without sin. The apostle John writing in the first chapter said, “If you say that you have no sin, the truth is not in you and you deceive yourself... These things have I written unto you that you may not sin.” That doesn’t mean so you won’t ever sin again. It means as you grow and mature as a Christian, you will sin less and less and you’ll practice the righteousness of Jesus Christ that’s already there.

III. THE BOOTS OF PEACE

The third piece of equipment is what I call the boots of peace. The sandals the Roman soldiers wore were more like a boot than a sandal. The sole was very thick with many layers of leather and embedded in this leather were nails or short pieces of metal or stone so that in battle the soldier could get traction on muddy ground. I was similar to cleats. Thick pieces of leather covered the top of the foot. The only open parts were the back of the heel and the very end of the boot, an open-toed boot you might call it. In addition, there were thick pieces of leather the soldier would wrap up his shin and his calf and tie just below the knee. In fact, they would tie on their shins something similar to what baseball catchers wear as shin guards to protect their shins from rocks and other things.

For an army, boots are critically important. The army moves on its feet and if they don’t have the right kind of equipment, that army will be hurt. That’s why during the Vietnam War the Vietcong were always setting booby traps, holes in the ground for soldiers to fall in that had sharp poisonous bamboo sticks to hurt the feet of the soldiers. If they killed one American soldier, he was out of the way, but if they injured a soldier where he couldn’t walk, it would take two more soldiers out of commission because they would have to carry him. The Romans understood how important these boots were. Now that’s the picture. What is the application?

1. Delivers us from instability

Paul says, “Put on your feet the readiness of the gospel,” and the word gospel means “good news.” He’s talking about peace. He’s talking about how as a Christian we are given the peace of Jesus Christ and it is this peace that allows us to stand firm, regardless of what is happening around us. Jesus said, “I have told you these things, so that in me you might have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33). This peace delivers us from instability.

One of the biggest problems Christians have is that they are constantly falling down. You’re not falling “from” your salvation; you’re not losing your salvation; you’re just falling down all the time. You are walking along and you are tempted and suddenly you give in to temptation and you’ve fallen down and you have to get up and you’re knocked down again, and you have to get up and you’re knocked down again. Many Christians spend a lot of their time on their backs because there is no stability. Did you notice Paul says, “Stand firm” three times? That’s what the boots; those cleats allowed a soldier to stand firm when he was being attacked. That’s why football players wear cleats. That’s why golfers have spikes on the bottom of their shoes. That’s why baseball players wear cleats: Because it gives them traction. This is especially true of a golfer when he is swinging a golf club. It gives him the ability to keep his feet firm when he is swinging. The soldier who could stand firm usually won the battle but the soldier whose feet

slipped out from under him was easy prey. I am talking about this peace that passes all understanding; this peace that resides in the heart of every believer. It is that which gives you stability. You don't have to talk about it. You don't even have to identify it, but it is there. Other people can see that peace in you and people who don't have don't understand it. That's why the Bible says, “It is a peace that passes all understanding.”

I read about a professional golfer who played with Jack Nicklaus, President Ford and Billy Graham. This PGA golfer was known for his temper and for being a reprobate (a sinner). He really was looking forward to playing with the President, but he wasn't too sure about Billy Graham. After playing 18 holes of golf with Billy Graham, this professional golfer stomped off the 18th green. He was so angry the veins were bulging in his neck and one of his fellow pros saw him and said, “Man, what's wrong with you?” He said, “I don't need Billy Graham stuffing religion down my throat!” The man followed him to the practice tee and this guy was just beating balls getting his anger out and the man said, “Wait a minute. What did Billy Graham say to you?” The golfer said, “He didn't say a word to me but I knew what he was thinking.” Billy Graham and other Christians possess an inner peace that when they make a bad putt or a bad drive, when things go wrong in their family or in their life, they have the ability to stand firm. You as a Christian have that peace, just like you have the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Don't give up. Stand firm. It protects us and delivers us from instability.

2. Supports us as we walk

Number two it supports us as we walk. That's what these sandals did. By the way, the boots the Roman soldiers wore were never designed to run in. They were never designed for retreat. In fact, Josephus gives an example of a centurion who was retreating (which was unlike a Roman centurion) and he tripped and fell on some rocky soil and was killed. You can't run with cleats on rocky surfaces. This means that as Christians we are to never turn back. We are to always move forward.

Next week we are going to learn that we have a lot of allies. One of the things Roman soldiers did was link their shields together and form a phalanx. They would move forward together and that's how they conquered the world, because all these other armies just had straight lines of soldiers coming at them line after line. The Roman phalanx would just cut through one of these lines and go deeply into it and then turn back around and beat them. They were always moving forward. As a Christian, you link up with other believers and move forward. Is there progression in your life? That's what these boots of peace are for.

IV. THE HELMET OF SALVATION

Let's look at the final piece of equipment. It is the helmet of salvation. The common, ordinary foot soldier's helmet wouldn't be ornate. It would be a very rough kind of helmet that had several layers of leather with hammered metal over the top of it. The neck covering of those helmets was long and would be much like the breastplate; pieces of leather upon which overlapping pieces of metal were sewn. The greatest nemesis of a foot soldier was a cavalry soldier. The cavalry would come riding in on horses and had long, broad swords 3 or 4 feet long. They'd ride through the battlefield taking off the heads of the foot soldiers. A good, strong

helmet that protected the neck and the side of the head would ward off the blows of the horsemen. A good soldier always had a good helmet. You don't go into battle without your head being protected. That's why football players wear helmets.

When I was in high school football game, I was running with the ball to the line. One of the men on defense grabbed the side of my helmet inadvertently. When he grabbed the side of my helmet, the chin strap popped out and the helmet came off my head and started rolling across the field. My mother said she almost had a heart attack. She thought maybe my head was still in that helmet. I didn't do a very smart thing. I still had the ball and I was still up so I just lowered my head and kept on running. The next thing I knew I was on the sidelines with smelling salts under my nose. Never run into a group of guys who have helmets on if you don't. That's why as Christians we shouldn't dare try to go out into spiritual warfare without this helmet of salvation.

1. Protects us from doubt

What is the application? Just as our truth, righteousness and peace is found in Jesus, so is our salvation in Jesus. “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12) This helmet of salvation protects us from doubt. There are two kinds of Christians here this morning. Some of you have been delivered from doubt; you have absolute, total assurance of your salvation. If I were to ask you “Are you a believer? Do you know the Lord?” You would immediately respond, “Oh, yes, pastor. I know the Lord. I'm going to heaven when I die. I am a Christian. Jesus is so real to me!” The second kind of believers when asked the same question responds with “I think so. I really hope I will.” As a Christian should have absolute, total assurance of your salvation so you never ever doubt again. John wrote, “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” (1 John 5:17)

2. Transforms our mind

I have this helmet of salvation that gives me total and absolute protection from doubt. I am so certain of my salvation, that if an angel appeared right now and pointed his finger at me and said, “David Dykes, you are lost. You are not a Christian. You are going to go to hell when you die.” I'd look at that angel and say, “Angel you don't know what you're talking about. You don't understand salvation and you are probably a disguised emissary of the evil one.” An angel couldn't get me to doubt my salvation. Do you have that kind of assurance? You can when you put on the helmet of salvation. The helmet is not salvation. Jesus is your salvation. The helmet is how you think once you are saved so the second thing it does it transforms our mind. The Bible says, “Don't be conformed to this world, but be renewed by the transforming of your mind. Let this mind be in you which is also in Christ Jesus.” This helmet represents the personality, the life of Jesus Christ and when you put it on or actually Jesus puts it on with nail-pierced hands, you begin to think like Jesus thinks. You look at the world differently because of the mind of Jesus Christ.

There are some people who I have heard teaching about the spiritual armor and they teach something like this. They teach every morning when you get up, you need to put on the belt (the word). Then you put on the breastplate (the righteousness of Jesus). Then you put on the boots of

peace and then the helmet of salvation. Every morning. Pick up the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit. You do that every day. Now that’s nice, but I don’t agree with that. Verse 13 says, “Therefore, put on the whole armor of God,” that word *put on* is a word literally meaning *once and for all*. In Greek there is a verb tense that means do it and keep on doing it but that’s not it. There’s also a punctiliar verb, meaning you do it once and for all, that’s what that word means. You put it on once and for all and my advice to you is never take it off. You don’t have to put it on every day. Don’t let the devil strip you of it. It’s already been put on by the Lord Jesus. That’s what Romans 13:14 says, “Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” Because he is our truth he is our righteousness he is our peace and he is our salvation.

If you are not a Christian, you need to enlist in the army. You can enlist this morning. You can sign up right here. Once you sign up you’ll discover you’re already drafted. In other words, God already had it planned and God wants you in his army. Many of you are already in the army now—you’re just not acting like it. You don’t have a weapon or armor and you’re miles behind the front lines sitting back there in your comfort zone, having a good time drinking your tea and eating your sugar cookies. You think the Christian life is a playground—but it is a battleground! Some of you believers who are miles behind the front lines need to advance to the front line of spiritual battle.

CONCLUSION

For every Texan, March 4, 1836, was a strategic day. That was the day 188 ragtag soldiers were inside that little fortress near San Antonio with the Mexican general Santa Anna encamped around it with 6,000 soldiers. A 26-year-old-officer named William Barret Travis stood up and addressed these hungry men who were almost out of ammunition. He said, “We have 3 options. We can surrender and we will probably be put to death. Second, we can try to escape under cover of darkness. We may or may not succeed. Our third option is to fight against insurmountable odds. We’ll probably lose, but in defeat we can inflict such damage on the enemy that later they may be defeated.” Historians tell us Travis took his sword and drew a line in the sand and said, “I can’t make any of you do it, but if anybody is willing to stay and fight, step across this line.” All except one of those men stepped across the line. A few hours later Santa Anna attacked with his superior armament, ammunition and numbers. The battle raged until every one of those 188 men was killed, but not before they killed 600 of Santa Anna’s troops. Four weeks later General Sam Houston led a group of Texans at the Battle of San Jacinto and they shouted, “Remember the Alamo!” (For them it was more than just sweet slogan Texans say. It meant something to them, because they knew those men who had died). Four weeks later Santa Anna signed a treaty and withdrew from Texas soil. That’s probably why I am speaking to you in English today instead of Spanish.

Our battle cry today is not, “Remember the Alamo!” it is “Remember the Cross!” and the cross is not some nice shrine people wear around their necks. It is where our Commander In Chief, our Lord and Master, died and won the victory already. The Lord Jesus has drawn the line in the sand and he says, “How many of you Christians are going to join me in the battle against the forces of evil that are in retreat?” Some of you are in the battle right and you know it—but there are many of you who are not. My challenge to you is this: Get on the front lines. Cross that line

in the sand. Get involved in spiritual warfare. For starters, get off your pew! Start teaching a Sunday School class get in the choir start serving the Lord. Some of you are not members of this church. That’s the first thing some of you need to do. Join this army platoon. Join hands and hearts with these other soldiers as we try to reach this world for Jesus Christ. I just pray God will give some of you comfortable Christians a sense of holy dissatisfaction so you won’t be content to sit in the back lines when the battle is raging on the front. You’re in the army now. Let’s find the battle. Let’s put on our armor and in the name of Jesus Christ attack the gates of Hell! They won’t even stand!

OUTLINE

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1. Protects us from error
2. Holds everything together

II. THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

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2. Practical righteousness protects us from sin

III. THE BOOTS OF PEACE

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2. Supports us as we walk

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes