

The Book of Ephesians
Learning to Use God's Armor, Part 8
Ephesians 6:10-17
October 3, 2010

Pastor Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher
Countryside Bible Church

Over the last seven weeks we've been considering in detail the battle that is raging in all of our lives as Christians. If you want to find an illustration for that battle, what it looks like, where would you go? Well the best place to go is the Old Testament. There is a definite parallel between the battles that Israel fought to secure the Promised Land and our spiritual battles in this life.

When I was growing up, and still sometimes we sing a hymn called *On Jordan's Stormy Banks*. Some of you may remember that hymn. That hymn features, or sort of compares, the Promised Land to heaven, and crossing over the Jordan River, as death. So, the Jordan is death, and then you enter into the Promised Land. So, it pictures all those battles that the children of Israel fought gaining the Promised Land, as heaven, I guess. And that's okay. We can sing that song and understand what it means. We're going to pass through death and enter into what God has promised us. But that's not really the comparison the Bible makes.

When you look at that Old Testament story and the series of events that unfold there, the New Testament compares the exodus from Egypt and the Passover with our salvation. Christ, Paul says to the Corinthians, is our Passover Lamb. We ate of Christ as it were. We partook of Him at our salvation. The Promised Land in New Testament terminology really reflects the battle of sanctification that is the battle to become increasingly more like Jesus Christ in this life in this world, to overcome the sin that's a part of our lives. So, the conquest of the Promised Land then is a picture, if you will, of what our spiritual battles are like.

With that in mind turn back for a moment to Joshua 1. Just to remind you of how that unfolded, Joshua 1. You remember Moses dies, and then the Lord speaks to Joshua and He says, "Moses is dead" so verse 2 of Joshua 1, I want you to

“cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses.”

Now that’s very interesting. God says I promised you this land. I’m going to give you this land. It’s yours. Oh, but by the way, you can only have it if, first of all, you walk through the land. Notice verse 3, “every place on which the sole of your foot treads” [I promise you the whole land, but you’re only getting it when your foot passes over a particular portion of that land. Secondly, by the way, there are battles to be fought. There are enemies that must be defeated.] Look over in Joshua 6, the story of Jericho, and this is how it begins.

“Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel; no one went out, no one came in. The Lord said to Joshua, “See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king *and* the valiant warriors.”

And therefore there’s something you have to do. There’s a battle you have to fight. You have to follow My instructions. There are still enemies even though I’ve given you the land; even though I’ve won the battle. Until the Israelites obeyed God, until they did what He commanded not one battle was won not one enemy was defeated even though He had given them already the land. And when they were victorious, it wasn’t their victory, it was God’s victory.

That’s exactly like sanctification. That’s exactly like the battle to be more and more like Jesus Christ. We advance only because God has promised us. Promises like Romans 6:14, “For sin shall not be a master over you.” That’s a wonderful promise, but guess what, that doesn’t happen automatically. That’s a promise about a great victory, but we still have to fight. There is still a powerful enemy. And we will only defeat that enemy as we use the resources God has provided. And when we use those resources, and when we gain the victory, it will not be our victory, it’ll be God’s victory. He alone gets the credit. Do you see the parallel between the battles for the Promised Land and the battle to take back the corners of our souls?

Paul describes that spiritual battle in Ephesians 6. We are not fighting for land; instead, we are fighting for our souls. We are fighting against attacks on our souls to keep the land that Christ has conquered. And to spiritually survive in this war, we must be equipped, we must be prepared, we must use the resources God has provided, and in Ephesians 6 Paul explains what those resources are. Let me read it for you again, Ephesians 6:10.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

The paragraph really continues down through verse 20, and the theme of this paragraph is the only way for us to win the war for our souls is to stand firm in the strength of Christ and in the armor of God. Paul really details here the way we are to prepare; the various parts of our preparation.

In verses 10 - 13 he gives us a general explanation of our duty. And he says, if you’re going to prepare, you’ve got to understand your orders. We must understand our orders. And in verses 10 - 13 we’ve looked at those orders together. In verse 10 he says what our orders are. “Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.” How do we do that? Verse 11. “Put on the full armor of God.” Why? Verse 11 goes on to say, “so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.” Against his attacks on the Word of God, against his intimidation with fear and persecution and against his seductions with personal temptation. We have to be armed against his attack.

And last time we looked in verse 12 at the nature of the warfare in which we are engaged, we saw that it was universal, that is, every single Christian is involved in this battle. It is personal. He uses the word wrestle, it’s hand-to-hand combat. It is spiritual. It’s not against people. It’s not against flesh and blood. It is supernatural. It’s against Satan’s forces. And my girls gave me a hard time for this word which they couldn’t spell for their notes, hierarchical. It is organized. It’s structured. There’s this army that Satan has organized in a certain way. That’s the warfare in which we are engaged.

And then in verse 13 Paul summarizes our orders, he says, “therefore take up the full armor of God so that you will be able to resist,” that is the schemes of the devil, “in the evil day” and having made all the preparations you are supposed to make then you’ll be able to stand firm. Now don’t miss Paul’s big point in verses 10 - 13 as he goes through our orders. He’s telling us this. The enemy you are fighting in hand-to-hand combat every day of your spiritual life, the enemy you’re fighting in your thoughts and in your mind is too powerful for you.

It’s not just a manner of expending the right amount of human effort. If we think we can fight this war on our own and win, we are sadly mistaken. But here’s the good news. Christ, is able to make a stand, and He makes a stand by giving us His own strength. How?- by our putting on the full armor of God.

And today we come to Paul’s detailed explanation of that armor. Verses 14 - 17, the details about the armor itself. We can call this second part of our preparation, *Put On God’s Armor*. Our preparation involves understanding our orders, and secondly, it involves putting on God’s armor.

Now, in these four verses, 14 - 17, Paul gets to the heart of what he wants us to know about this defense that we have against Satan’s tactics. Before we come to the individual pieces, I want us to make some general observations. I’m afraid that most Christians have really no idea what this passage is talking about. They can picture a Roman soldier outfitted in all of the armor. That plays out pretty well on flannel graph or power point. And they know that somehow they’re supposed to be like that soldier, but they really don’t have a clue as to how.

What I want to do this morning is sort of sweep away the clutter. Sweep away a number of the misconceptions that we have about this armor that Paul describes here. Lord willing, next time we have together, we’ll begin to look at the individual pieces. But today, I want to make some overarching general observations about this armor; this armor that is supposed to defend us against error and against intimidation and against temptation.

The first general observation I think we need to make about this armor is that there is an intentional order in this list that Paul give us. There’s an intentional order. Notice in verses 14 - 15 Paul lists pieces of armor that a soldier on duty would wear all the time. A belt or a sash, and we’ll talk about what that was when we get there, a breastplate, and the right shoes for your feet. If a soldier’s not sleeping and if he’s on duty, those pieces were always on.

But when you get to verses 16 and 17, you come to the last pieces of armor that a soldier would have put on just before the battle. He would have added to the pieces he wore all the time, his helmet. He would have put that on his head as he prepared for the actual battle. And then he would have picked up his shield and his sword. So, although, all this armor is essential for the battle, and Paul makes that very clear, at the same time it's important to understand that the first three pieces of this armor are the foundational pieces that no soldier should ever be without. You wear them all the time, not just at the moment of battle.

So, first of all, there's an intentional order. There's another general observation we can make about the armor, and that is that the metaphor Paul uses here of armor is flexible, it's flexible. What do I mean by that? I mean that Paul doesn't always paint this armor exactly the same way. When he uses this metaphor of Christian armor in other places in his writings, he often slightly changes it. Let me show you what I mean. Look in Ephesians 6:14, there we're told the breastplate is what? The breastplate is righteousness.

Okay keep that in mind. Now look down in verse 17, the helmet is salvation. Okay keep those two filed away, and turn back with me to 1 Thessalonians 5. Paul will use the same image, but he'll change the qualities. First Thessalonians 5:8, he's been talking about the day of the Lord, that the day of the Lord is coming, the day God pours out His wrath and fury against the earth, there're those who are the sons of darkness who aren't prepared, there're the sons of light, that's us who are prepared, and therefore he says, verse 8, "Since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation."

Now did you notice Paul changed. In Ephesians 6, the breastplate is righteousness. Here it's faith and love, in Ephesians 6 the helmet is salvation, here he changes it slightly, it is the hope of salvation. Now what does this mean for interpreting Ephesians 6?

It means that when you look at Ephesians 6, the main point is not where that piece of armor is fastened. It's not which quality is attached to which piece of armor because here he changes that. Instead, the main thrust of the passage is on the qualities. Some commentators wax eloquent about all of the organs that a particular piece of the armor protects. For example, the English Puritan William Gurnall wrote a book on these few verses here in Ephesians 6. One passage- three volumes, 261 chapters almost 1500 pages on these verse's. See it's not as bad as you thought it was here.

Now how do you get there from these verses? Well you get far too elaborate in trying to press the metaphor into all of its details. I'm not being critical by the way of Gurnall's work, it's a wonderful work. I'm just saying you can get carried away with pressing the details too far. And obviously, it's clear from passages like 1 Thessalonians 5:8 that that's not what Paul wants us to do. We can make some general observations about what body parts the various piece piece's of armor protect and that's okay. We will do that. But that's not the main point.

The main point is that these are all spiritual qualities, spiritual realities that are essential to our spiritual protection. That's his point. And together they make up our armor that protects us from Satan's schemes. So, don't get carried away with assigning what piece to what quality and all of the details in fleshing that out too much. Instead look at the big picture. Here are spiritual realities that guard our souls.

There's a third general observation we need to make about the armor. Paul's illustration of armor comes from two distinct sources. Where did Paul come up with this idea? Well, it comes from two sources, and this is very important to understand to interpret it rightly. The first of these sources is clearly the many Roman soldiers that Paul would have seen throughout his life. He grew up in the Roman Empire, in Tarsus. And then when he was a teenager, he was sent to Jerusalem where he trained under Gamaliel. In Jerusalem and in Caesarea there on the coast of the Mediterranean there was always a large contingent of Roman soldiers because of the potential for uprising, the potential of rebellion. And so, his entire life he would have seen Roman soldiers. On the various Roman roads as he traversed the Roman Empire, he would have seen legions of Roman soldiers.

But Paul's exposure to Roman soldiers was much more intimate than that. In fact, as he writes this very letter, he may have been looking at a Roman soldier or even chained at the wrist to one. Ephesians is one of four letters in the New Testament that theologians call the prison epistles. The other three are Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon. They were all written, those four books, during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome. You want to know what was going on during that first imprisonment. Read the last two verses of the book of Acts. Here's what it says.

“Paul stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.”

This letter to Ephesus was written near the end of that imprisonment, near the end of those two years probably around 62AD from his own rented quarters in Rome under house arrest.

Now, to come up with this illustration then, Paul had to look no farther than across the room or in some cases someone awaiting trial could actually be continually chained to a Roman soldier. We don't know if that was true at this stage of Paul's imprisonment or not. But he was certainly under house arrest, so there would have been a Roman guard nearby. And so there was a constant reminder of armor. There are two ancient secular sources that describe the Roman soldier's armor, and as we work our way through the armor, we'll rely on both of those.

But there's another source. Not only the Roman soldiers around Paul, but there is another source of this metaphor, and I would suggest to you that it was even more influential in this passage than the Roman soldiers around Paul. That source is the Old Testament. Now look at Ephesians 6:14 - 17. Note that many of the verses in that section are capitalized in our English translations. Certainly in the NAS, that's true, and in many other English translations. Why is that? Because verses in the New Testament that are either direct quotations from the Old Testament or are clear paraphrases of an Old Testament passage are always capitalized in our English translations.

So, in other words, where you see all caps in verses 14 - 17, those phrases come from the Old Testament. And if you trace those phrases back to the Old Testament, you will find that all of them come from the prophet Isaiah. So, understand this, this metaphor is not an accident. As we will see, it is based on Paul's deep understanding of the Old Testament Scripture. It grew out of his understanding of Isaiah, and that becomes very important to how we interpret this armor.

Number four, a fourth observation, general observation, we can make about the armor is that it is the armor of God. Now I know I've touched on this point before, but as we begin to examine the armor in detail, it's absolutely essential that you understand this. Notice twice in verse 11 and again down in verse 13, this is called the "full armor of God." Start with that expression "full armor." That's a little misleading in the English because it implies that there's a Greek word translated "full" and there's a Greek word translated armor. But in reality, the English words "full armor" translated only one Greek word. It's the word from which we get a very rare English word, "panoply."

You know, we sing a hymn sometimes, an old hymn about putting on the panoply of God, did you ever wonder what that was? It's this word. It simply refers to the complete armor of a heavily armed soldier. It's the package of armor that a soldier wears; the whole ensemble, the

whole package. We are commanded to put on or take up the panoply, the complete armor, the full armor. But notice that this complete package of body armor is called “the armor of God,” the armor of God. What does that mean? Now this is not an idle curiosity. Understanding this, what “the armor of God” means is absolutely crucial to Paul’s point. And therefore, understanding what Paul means by God’s armor is crucial to withstanding Satan’s tactics in our lives.

What does it mean – the armor of God? Well there are two implications in that expression, that genitive. One is that God is the source of the armor. It’s the armor of God in the sense that it originates with God, and it is given to us as a gift. It is the armor that God supplies to believers to protect them. Whatever this armor is, it comes to us from God, and this is so important, because the stress here is not on the need to take the complete armor. You know our English might mislead us, when you say full armor you can think that the stress Paul is saying, you know make sure you don’t leave one piece off.

And of course that is implied, we are to put on all of this armor. But that’s not the stress. The stress of this passage is that we need the armor that God supplies. We cannot stand against the devil and his schemes on our own. We need armor from outside of us. We need God’s armor, the armor God gives us, not our own puny defenses but God’s, not our own strength, but Christ’s. We need the armor of God, we need the armor that God supplies, because what I have will not do. It will not allow me to resist the tactics of Satan in my life. So, God is its source.

But there’s a second implication here in this expression “armor of God.” Not only does it mean God is the source of it, but it means God is the real owner of this armor. Let me put it like this. It is the armor that God Himself wears. It’s God’s own personal armor. Now, as we observe, much of the description of the armor has either been directly quoted from the Old Testament or clearly paraphrased from an Old Testament passage, and if you trace those capitalized phrases there in verse-s 14 - 17 back to the Old Testament, all of them come from Isaiah.

And if you look at them in Isaiah, you will discover that they all describe armor that a person called “the servant of the Lord” wears. Now you tell me, if you’re familiar with the Old Testament, if you’re familiar with Isaiah at all, you know who “the servant of the Lord” is in Isaiah. It’s none other than whom – our Lord Jesus Christ. In each context it is a reference to the Messiah. In other words, it’s a reference to our Lord Jesus Christ. He is described in Isaiah as this mighty warrior fighting to bring salvation to His people.

Let me show you this. Go back to Isaiah, and let me show you each of these in its context. Isaiah 11, in Isaiah 11 Isaiah begins to talk about the fact that out of what looks like a decimated Israel in the captivity, it looks like they've been cut off like a tree and just a stump left. Out of that stump verse 1 of chapter 11. "... a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from its roots ..." It's like you walk by, and you see this massive oak tree that's been cut down. It's all gone, but out of the root nearby is a little shoot, the promise of future. That's the Messiah. The Lord is the righteous branch.

Verse 2, He's described as possessing the Spirit of God, empowered by the Spirit of God, verse 3, "He will delight in the fear of the Lord, He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear;" [In other words, he doesn't need to be informed. He has this omniscience. He's able to know without being told without having the evidence presented.] "But with righteousness He will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked."

Now watch verse 5, "Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, and faithfulness the belt about His waist." When we get to the belt the belt of truth we'll talk about this verse a little more. But it's taken from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of this verse, verse 5. And it's about the Messiah, it's about His armor.

Now turn over to Isaiah 52, and you'll see the next piece. Isaiah 52:6. Isaiah has just been lamenting that God's people have been destroyed, oppressed, captured both physically and spiritually enslaved. "Therefore," verse 6, "My people shall know My name; therefore in that day I am the one who is speaking, 'Here I am.'" Here's a reference to Messiah. When Messiah comes, "How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him" [Singular, the Messiah,] "who brings good news," that is the gospel. Paul quotes this about the gospel, [he] ... "announces peace," with God. The Messiah brings good news of happiness. [He] ... "announces salvation." He "says to Zion, 'your God reigns.'"

Verse 10, "The Lord has bared His holy arm in the sight of all the nations, that all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God." This is the message of the Messiah. And in verse 7, that's the verse that Paul borrows to talk about our feet being shod with the preparation of the

gospel of peace. He's borrowing from the Septuagint translation of verse 7. It's about the Messiah's armor. And notice down in verse 13, he continues to talk about the Messiah and of course when you get to chapter 53, that's really where you get to the heart of His mission where He will die as a substitute for His people to bring salvation.

One other passage, turn over to chapter 59, and notice verse 15, the middle of the verse. ... "Now the Lord saw" [that], "and it was displeasing in His sight that there was no justice. ... He saw that there was no man, ... was astonished that there was no one to intercede;" [So God takes the initiative,] "... His own arm brought salvation to Him, and His righteousness upheld Him." [This is again the Messiah, verse 17,] "He put on righteousness like a breastplate and a helmet of salvation on His head;"

In other words, Jesus Christ the Messiah takes the initiative to save His people, and then the rest of the verse he'll also deal with His enemies. But what I want you to see is that these references in Isaiah picture our Lord as a warrior, dressed for battle as He goes forth to save, to rescue His people. And so, the armor which we are encouraged to put on in the spiritual warfare in which we're engaged is our own Lord's armor. It's the armor the Messiah has worn, and He's now provided it for His people as they engage in battle.

Now go back to Ephesians 6, now you understand why it made sense for Paul to begin this section about the armor with the expression in verse 10, "be strengthened in the Lord and with the power of His might," because the armor that we're putting on, is His armor, His own personal armor. So clearly then, when Paul refers to this armor as being "the armor of God" he means not only that it comes to God from us that it's a gift of God to us, but it is Jesus Christ's own personal armor, it is the armor of God, the second person of the Trinity.

And understand here that when it talks about Jesus putting on armor, it it's not like he's putting on a piece of brass or metal, that's not what it's describing. It's a metaphor. The armor here are the qualities or virtues that are true about Him. These pieces of armor are like a metaphor for the qualities that describe Him. He is true. He is righteousness. He is the good news. He is the only legitimate object of faith. He is our salvation. He is the Word of God. So, when we put on the armor that describes our Lord, we are in reality putting on the qualities or virtues that are true of Him.

So, there are four general observations so far. There is an intentional order. The metaphor is flexible so don't press all the details. Paul's illustration of the armor comes from two sources, not only the Roman soldiers around him but the Old Testament. And number four, it is the armor of God. He is the source of it and it is Jesus Christ's own personal armor.

Now the fifth observation that we need to make, we must make is about the meaning of these pieces of armor. The meaning of the armor must be consistent with the context of Ephesians. Whatever the armor means it must be consistent with the context of Ephesians. That means that whatever the armor is referring to, whatever the individual pieces are referring to it must be consistent with being strengthened with Christ and His might, verse 10. It can't be our own resources. It must be able to protect us from the tactics of the devil, verse 11. From falsehood and error, from fear and intimidation from personal temptation, and it must be able to protect us from supernatural forces, verse 12. With all of that in mind what exactly is this armor that protects us from Satan's tactics?

I have read in preparation for studying this passage and teaching you, reams of commentaries, theological journal articles and various books on this passage. Because I have to tell you honestly that I have always known this passage to be important and I've had some idea of what it means, but I don't really feel like I've ever gotten to the bottom of it myself. And so, I've launched a journey of my own here to get there, and as I've read and studied, it seems to me you can boil all of the views, and there are many of them, down to really two ways to interpret this text, two ways to interpret this text.

The first way that many interpret this text is to say this armor is subjective internal qualities in us, subjective internal qualities in us. Qualities that we have to grow and develop and that becomes our armor. Those who take this view would interpret the various pieces of armor like this: they would say in verse 14, truth means truthfulness. You need to be truthful, you need to be sincere, and that'll be an armor against Satan. Righteousness, that means you need to be personally righteous. You need to have a life that is characterized by righteous deeds. Verse 15, the preparation of the gospel of peace, they would say that you have to have a constant readiness and eagerness to share the gospel with others. Verse 16, faith, you need this internal confidence in God. Verse 17, salvation, you need an internal hope of future deliverance. Verse 17, the sword of the Spirit, this is an internal use of the Scripture.

But I I'm not convinced that these internal qualities are what Paul means. In fact, I'm convinced they cannot be what he means. They cannot be subjective internal qualities in me. Why?

Because trusting in my own virtues, is utterly inconsistent with the context of the passage. What am I told in verse 10? Be strengthened with Christ and His might. Verse 11, my own virtues are not able to protect me from the tactics of the devil. If you doubt that, read the Bible. Look at men and women far more righteous than we are whose righteousness was not able to protect them from Satan's tactics. Read spiritual biographies of Christians down through the centuries and you will find very righteous people whose righteousness, whose internal qualities and virtues were not a defense. They cannot stand up against our spiritual, supernatural enemy.

So, there's a second way to interpret this armor, not as subjective internal qualities in us, but number two, as objective external truths about God or acts of God, objective external truths about God or acts of God that I have to understand and apply. That's the armor. This view of the armor I think best fits with the overall context of Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus because Paul uses this whole armor metaphor as the conclusion to his book.

He's bringing his letter to a close, and this is to wrap it all up. This is to be a fitting conclusion to all that he's taught us. So, he comes back to the same themes that we've seen before in his books. He comes back to truth and righteousness, the peace the gospel brings, the importance of faith, the work of God in salvation, the place and priority of the Word of God in the life of the Christian.

But not only does Paul come back to some of the same themes, but even in this conclusion, this armor metaphor takes the same approach. You remember how the book of Ephesians is structured? Chapters 1 - 3 – not one command except remember. It's all about our position in Christ. It's all about what God has done that we must understand and apply what God has done in Christ through the gospel.

And chapters 4 - 6 are about our practice – we must appropriate and apply the realities of our position. Verse 1 of chapter 4, therefore begins, “walk worthy of your new position in Christ.” See the armor that Paul is describing then here at the end of his book that sort of wraps it all together does both. The armor first and foremost listen carefully, the armor first and foremost is understanding, meditating on, and comprehending our position, what God has done for us in Christ. And then, only secondarily, the armor is about appropriating and applying that to the practice of our lives.

This view best fits the immediate context. We're strengthened by Christ's strength, not our own. The truths about God or the gifts of God that we must understand and apply. It fits the context of

the book, understand your position, what God has done for you in Christ. And only then can you walk worthy of it. So, if this is right view, and I believe it is, and I'll be unfolding that for you in the weeks ahead, how do we interpret the individual pieces of armor? Let me give you just a thumbnail, and we'll fill this out in the coming weeks.

Verse 14, we're to put on truth, that means we must understand the whole great sweeping truth of redemption that is in Jesus Christ. Righteousness, we must understand the imputed righteousness that is ours in justification.

Verse 15, the preparation of the gospel of peace. Our soul's stability, the shoes on our feet, the stability of our Christian lives comes from the knowledge of the peace with God that we have gained through the gospel.

Verse 16, faith, we must take cover, we must shield ourselves under the promises of God to us in Christ. Salvation, we must fully appropriate the reality that we have been rescued from the penalty of sin, we are being rescued from the power of sin and we will be rescued from the presence of sin.

The sword of the Spirit in verse 17, we find our confidence and defense in specific propositional statements God has made to us in His word.

And understand this, each of those is a gift of Christ to us. He is truth, and He teaches us the truth. He is righteous, and He gives us righteousness. He is our peace, and He brings the good news of peace with God. He is faithful and true, and therefore it makes sense for us to trust in Him, and He gives us the faith to trust in Him. He is the Savior, and He rescues us from the wrath to come. He is the Word of God, and He helps us find protection in its promises. The armor is Jesus Christ.

In fact, look over at Romans 13, Paul makes this point in this context he's really dealing with the virtues side of the armor.

But notice what he says as he concludes this chapter, verse 14. "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," It's in the context of armor, notice back in verse 12, "put on the armor of light."

What is the armor? Ultimately the armor is "the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts." In other words, he's saying the armor that guards us, the armor

that protects us is ultimately Christ Himself. And when we put on Christ, ultimately it will express itself in our living. But that's not the main point. The main point is it is Christ Himself we put on.

By the way, Augustine, great church father was saved through hearing that verse and understanding it. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. That's your only hope. Listen, let me summarize it like this. Don't miss the big point Paul is making here.

The believer's armor is not what we are or do. The believers armor is not what we are or what we do, it's understanding and applying what God has done in Christ and in the gospel. You will only grow as a believer, you will only be shielded from Satan's attacks in your life as you deepen in your understanding of what God has done in Jesus Christ for you. That is the armor. It's Christ, and it's His work, properly understood and properly applied. In the coming weeks we'll unfold each piece and see it in its richness.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for this amazing truth, thank You for Christ. Thank You that in Him we find everything that He is not only our salvation, that He is our protection, our defense.

Lord, exalt Him in our minds and hearts, may we think deeply on these things, may we be committed to putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, to putting on His own armor, those qualities that describe Him, understanding the truth and applying the truth and living in light of the truth.

Father, I pray You would do this work in our hearts not for our own sakes but for the sake of the One who loved us and gave Himself for us. Lord, we so desperately want our lives to honor Him. Teach us how to put Him on. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.