

**Be Strong in the Lord**  
**Part 2: Wear Your Armor**  
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Our text this morning is the same we studied last week:

Ephesians 6:10-17

10 Finally [or *henceforth* or *from now on*], be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 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. 13 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. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

I've entitled this sermon, "Be Strong in the Lord Part 2: Wear Your Armor." This morning we are going to spend a few minutes thinking about the armor of God that Paul describes, and the incredible privilege and responsibility that comes with it.

*Have you ever worn something that changed the way you thought about yourself?*

Ideas: Uniforms, a costume for Halloween or a for a play. Remembering when I got ordained and my church put a robe and a stole on me. For some people, even wearing a necklace with a cross on it represents a significant change in how they see themselves.

A main reason that Paul has written this letter from prison is to help believers see themselves the way God sees them, and to live accordingly. Remember how the letter starts:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us **in Christ** with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us **in him** before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

Who we are and what we do is now and forever “in Christ.”

Wearing the armor of God...

- We stand in Christ.
- We stand in the world, where Christ stands.
- We stand among those people with whom Christ stands.
- We stand against that which Christ defeated on the cross: The principalities and powers, the devil, and death itself.

*So where is that, exactly? For we have read and listened and studied the gospels, where does Jesus stand? With whom? What does he say to them, and why?*

I'd like to invite you to try this exercise. I shared this on FB and email yesterday, so maybe you've been thinking about it. How would you succinctly fill in these blanks?

*Jesus stood with \_\_\_\_\_ people,  
told them that \_\_\_\_\_, and  
invited them to\_\_\_\_\_.*

I know this makes for bad livestream viewing, but I want to give you one minute to answer. Fill in those blanks with the first word or two that comes to your mind. Trust yourself, and don't worry about getting it wrong.

Now hold onto that. We'll come back to it at the end.

Let's take a closer look at Paul's description of the armor.

The full armor of God:

- a. Belt of truth. If you've ever heard the expression "gird you loins," this is where it comes from. We are wrap the truth of God's desiring and save love for us. We are to surround ourselves with the truth of Father has reclaimed the world through the Son. When I think of the word "truth" I sometimes substitute it with the word "reality." *What would change for you if you reminded yourself: "God wants me surrounded and protected by the ability to see things as they really are"?*
- b. Breastplate of righteousness. The Greek word *dikaiosune* means both righteousness and justice. When one person lives in right relationship with others, that is righteousness. But when a whole community or nation or culture does it, it is justice. Righteousness and Justice protect our vulnerable and vital organs. We can stand in the midst of danger and rally others to stand with us because of we have this protection. Since it covers the front of us, we can imagine that God intends for us to lead with righteousness/justice in our spiritual warfare. *What would change in the church and in our country if the church took the lead in establishing justice, and set justice work as our leading concern?*
- c. Gospel-of-peace boots. We march on in hope. The hope of the gospel is that, through Christ, there will be peace, wholeness, and fullness of life. Paul draws this image from Isaiah 52:7, where we hear a beautiful promise. I remember singing this verse as part of a praise song we often sang in the church of my upbringing:

Isaiah 52:7

How beautiful upon the mountains

are the feet of him who brings good news,

who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness,

who publishes salvation,

who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

We proclaim that our God reigns even as the conflict rages on. *Where will you go with your Gospel shoes? To whom are you called to carry a message of hope during pandemic and global economic crisis?*

- d. Shield of faith. Those of us who know this passage of scripture well often assume that the faith described is ours. But if this is God's armor then it must be God's faithfulness. God is

reliable and trustworthy to protect and preserve. This shield will not fail though everything else we put our trust in inevitably will. *How are experiencing God's reliability in your life right now?*

e. Helmet of salvation. Again, we who know this passage well tend to read this individualistically: God has saved *me*. But if we look at Isaiah 59 - the text that inspired Pau - a different picture emerges. In it, the prophet says that the Lord has seen all the evil in the world and has wondered why no one can be found to stand up for justice. Then the Lord decides to personally intervene.

Isaiah 59:16-17

16 He... wondered that there was no one to intercede;  
then his own arm brought him salvation,  
and his righteousness upheld him.

17 He put on righteousness as a breastplate,  
and a helmet of salvation on his head;  
he put on garments of vengeance for clothing,  
and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.

God does place on the helmet on us as a sign of individual security. God places it on us because we are now tasked with imitating God and bring liberation to those who are in bondage. *How does it feel to hear that God has entrusted you personally and the church corporately with the task that is so close to God's heart?*

f. Sword of the Spirit – God's Word. I know I am going to upset some people here, because we who grew up in the church have been told that Paul is talking about the Bible. What else could he be talking about, right? Well, the problem is that the letter he is writing is part of our Bible, as are other New Testament documents that were written after Paul wrote this. Paul is likely being inspired by Isaiah 11:4-5 that describes how the Messiah will "strike the earth with the rod of his mouth." The word Paul imagines is how Jesus Christ as Messiah spoke God's truth in a way that cleansed, healed, and separated truth from falsehood. I dropped this interpretive grenade into the men's breakfast group on Thursday to test how much consternation I'd cause. I also asked them to tell us where else, besides the Bible, they hear God speaking to them. The answers quickly started to flow. Spouses, friends, wise authors and teachers, even non-Christian colleagues who can

see and name what is true – the Holy Spirit speaks through all of them and even directly to us, if we our hearts our attuned. Yes, the Bible is our trustworthy and reliable source of truth, and we should examine what we hear elsewhere against the plumb line of Scripture. That’s why we don’t simply read the Bible, we consume it. We take it in, make it part of us. That way, when we are out in the battle we have the Sword of the Spirt ready at a moment’s notice to separate the truth from illusion. *In what area of your life do you most need God’s truth to be made clear to you?*

By now, I you are I see that I’ve already made a big mistake with my sermon title. The title says, “Wear your armor.” I’ve drawn our attention to the texts in Isaiah that inspired Paul because they help us understand the incredible things that Paul is saying.

First,

**It’s not YOUR armor.** It’s God’s armor, that God has placed upon us, the church.

Second,

**We were never meant to wear this armor alone.** The work and the warfare is for the whole People of God to do together. We aren’t called to be lone rangers or Christian freelancers.

Third,

**The armor was not given to us for self-preservation.** The purpose of the armor is to enable us to stand, and remain standing, when the days are evil. To stand this way isn’t merely defensive. We are drawn up as it were into a military formation. Our unity in the Lord’s power and protection gives us the ability to advance against evil.

Lastly, we remember that - As the powers of this age try to resist God’s plan of gathering up all things in Christ (Eph 1:10) starting with the church - the struggle we face isn’t an indication that the plan isn’t working. It is proof that **God’s plan IS working and we were always part of that plan!**

So to recap:

As we wear the armor of God...

- We stand in Christ.
- We stand in the world, where Christ stands.
- We stand among those people with whom Christ stands.
- We stand against that which Christ defeated on the cross: The principalities and powers, the devil, and death itself.

So how did you fill in the blanks?

*Jesus stood with \_\_\_\_\_ people,  
told them that \_\_\_\_\_, and  
invited them to\_\_\_\_\_.*

What you put there says a lot about the burden and calling God has placed on you.

Now that you yourself have said it, what will you do it about it?

Amen.

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