

War Zone

Part 5 – The Armour of God

ILLUS – Bob Vernon was a Los Angeles motorcycle police officer. The day was just dawning when he saw a red pickup truck speed through a stop sign. This guy must be late to work, he thought. He turned on his emergency lights and radioed that he was in pursuit. The pickup pulled over, and the officer approached. Meanwhile in the truck, the driver was scared. He thought, “The cops already know!” He rested his hand on the same gun he had used a few moments before to rob a twenty-four-hour market. The sack of stolen money was beside him on the seat. The officer said, “Good morning, sir, may I see your...” He never finished the sentence. The driver shoved his gun toward the policeman’s chest and fired from just inches away. The cop was knocked flat seven feet away. A few seconds later, to the shock of the criminal, the officer stood up, pulled his service revolver, and fired twice. The first bullet went through the open window and smashed the windshield. The second tore through the door and ripped into the driver’s left leg. “Don’t shoot!” the thief screamed, throwing the gun and sack of money out the pickup window. What saved the policeman’s life was dozens of layers of Kevlar, the super strong fabric used for bullet-proof vests. Only three-eighths of an inch thick, Kevlar can stop bullets cold.¹

Eph 6:10-18

So far in this series we’ve seen that we’re in a daily battle.

We also saw that the battle takes place in the mind, and that Satan’s only real weapon is temptation, which seeks to attack God’s Word.

I defined temptation as: An attempted incursion by enemy troops into God’s territory with a view to gaining control and establishing a stronghold.

A stronghold was an immensely fortified tower built into the wall, which was so strong that even if the enemy breached the wall of the city, the stronghold could be defended with relatively few soldiers.

Now we come to the armour of God – it’s a spiritual armour.

We’re just doing an overview.

For total protection from the enemy, we must wear the *whole* armour of God.

This whole passage reminds us of what was worn by a Roman Centurion in the days of Paul.

The Armour Of God

1. Gird your waist with truth [v14]

My image of a girdle was something my grandmother might have worn, but it’s not; it’s actually a belt.

Description – The girdle held the sword². [It was used] to fasten clothing securely around the waist [and] made rapid movement easier and was vital preparation for any vigorous activity³.

This belt was a very important piece of the soldier’s equipment.

It held the breastplate in place.

Also, the sheath that held the sword, not only hung off a shoulder strap but was attached to the belt.

¹ Charles Mylander, The Encourager

² Wiersbe, Warren *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament Vol 2* p58

³ Lincoln, Andrew T. *Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians* p447

That highlights an important truth as we study all these weapons and armour, that it's not a matter of picking and choosing which ones you want and which ones you don't.

Choosing some parts above others will always leave us vulnerable to the enemy's attacks in some measure.

They're all interconnected.

So what does it mean to have on the belt of truth?

God has called us to be people of truth.

It's so important that when He took all of the laws He wanted to give to Israel and reduced them to Ten, one of them was, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour." (Ex 20:16)

Truth is important to God.

Truth is the foundation of trust; if you want to be trusted, tell the truth.

All you've got to do is lie to someone once or twice, and they won't listen to you again, or believe you.

Truth aligns you with God's character.

Lying sets you in opposition to God and aligns you with the devil's character, because the devil is a liar. (Jn 8:44)

Truth means owning up when you're the guilty party.

Truth means you don't tell so-called white lies.

And you can lie without saying a thing; you can lie by not telling the truth on your tax return.

Truth means being honest, with yourself and God.

And that often requires humility.

ILLUS – I remember one time when our refrigerator was leaking. A repairman had already fixed it before, and we knew we had to push a wire up a tube at the back to clear it. The man had used a coat hanger, but none of ours were flexible enough to go round the curve at the top. My 15-year-old son decided to get a piece of string. I said, "That's a stupid idea. The string will just flop all over the place." It worked, and I had to apologise.

And I can't admit the truth to him unless I first tell to myself and God.

Jesus said, (John 17:17) Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

So God's Word and the truth are the same thing.

1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

1 John 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word [truth] is not in us.

So if we say we haven't sinned (when we have), we're not wearing the belt of truth.

You might say, "I'm not saying I don't have any sin, or that I've never sinned."

But let's look at the context here: Smack bang in the middle of verses 8 & 10 is (surprisingly) verse 9.

"If we confess ..."

So the opposite of denying my sin is confessing my sin.

This isn't some general thing; we can often admit that we're sinners in general.

That's easy, but we flounder when it comes to the specifics.

ILLUS – If my wife says to me, "You really let your anger get the better of you there." Immediately, I'm faced with a choice. I can do the normal human thing and say, "No I didn't. It wasn't me. You can't prove a thing." What that means spiritually is (1 John 1:10) If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word [truth] is not in us. Or I can take the humble road, admit my sin, and confess it both to God and to the injured party.

It's my choice, but if I want to wear the belt of truth, that's what I've got to do.

Truth hits you right here (in the heart) where you live.

Remember also to speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15)

Truth without love is brutality. Love without truth is sentimentality. Kindah Greening

2. The breastplate of righteousness [v14]

If that policeman I spoke about at the beginning hadn't been wearing his bullet-proof vest, he'd be dead.

The breastplate is that important.

Description – made of metal plates or chains, covered the body from neck to waist, both front and back⁴.

For the Roman soldier, the breastplate was vital for the protection of the chest, lungs, and heart.

So what does it mean to put on the breastplate of righteousness?

There are two kinds of righteousness mentioned in the Bible: Imputed and imparted.

To impute means to attribute something to someone, to count it as being so.

ILLUS – Let's say I'm a billionaire, you're a pauper, and I make you a secondary credit card owner on my account. You're drawing credit from my account. You're not wealthy in your own right, but my wealth has been imputed to you. It's counted as being so.

Imputed righteousness is as if God says, "Here, you don't have any of this righteousness stuff. I've got plenty, so have some of Mine."

And He gives us righteousness – as a gift.

That's why we can't claim any credit for it.

This brings us to the blood of Jesus.

The Blood of Jesus

Rev 12:11 And they overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

We see here that the blood of Jesus is part of our armour or weaponry, so how does it work?

How do we overcome the enemy by the blood of the Lamb?

ILLUS – When they made a breastplate, how did they get all those bits of metal to hold together? They fastened them to a leather or linen⁵ undergarment. It was all part of the breastplate.

The blood of Jesus is like that leather or linen undergarment, because without it, the rest of the breastplate would just fall to bits.

Without that cleansing blood, our righteousness is non-existent.

That's why our own righteousness is no protection against the enemy.

Isaiah 64:6 But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

You can't hang all that metal on rotten old rags.

So if we want to have our breastplate on properly, it's important that we understand the blood of Jesus and how to use it properly.

It's part of our armour.

Now here's where we run into a couple of religious superstitions.

⁴ Wiersbe, Warren *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament Vol 2* p58

⁵ Vincent, Marvin *Word Studies in the New Testament* p408

Do you guys know what a superstition is?

A superstition is a belief based on emotion (especially fear) rather than reality.

And despite the fact that we have God's Word to guide us, the church is often guilty of developing its own set of superstitions.

Sadly, when you start dealing with superstition, you can tread on people's toes, but we need to base our beliefs on the Truth, not on our feelings.

We have to be careful that we don't insult the precious blood of Jesus by using it superstitiously.

I want to look at two superstitions regarding the blood of Jesus which are fairly common amongst Christians.

First let me say that blood is mentioned 100 times in 92 verses in the New Testament, and I've checked them all.

Out of those, the blood of Jesus is clearly indicated in 35 verses.

I gave particular attention to those, so I know I'm on solid ground with what I'm about to say.

First, over the years, I've heard lots of people talk about "pleading the blood."

They plead the blood about this, they plead the blood about that.

Let me just say this: First, that phrase "pleading the blood" does not exist in the entire Bible.

You cannot plead the blood and anyone who does has a serious misunderstanding of the grace of God.

I know it sounds very spiritual, pleading the blood, but you don't need to plead.

If you want the blood to do its job, it's easy.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If you want the cleansing of the blood of Jesus, there are just two conditions: Walk in the light, confess your sins.

It's simple, no pleading necessary.

Pleading the blood is what people do when they don't actually know where they stand in Christ.

Second superstition: Please don't treat the blood of Jesus like a bucket of paint you can daub over anything you like.

I've heard people pleading the blood of Jesus or using the blood of Jesus to cover all sorts of things.

ILLUS – One woman told me, "We plead the blood over our house, our car, our dog." I'm serious!

You can't do that; that's a total misuse of something that's very precious.

If you have a look at those 35 verses I mentioned before, **every** time it tells us what the blood of Christ does, it uses words and phrases like these:

Remission of sins, eternal life, purchase the church, propitiation, peace with God, justification, new covenant, redemption, forgiveness of sins, reconciliation, cleansing of the conscience, purification, access, cleansing, sanctification.

Every one of those verses comes down to one thing: the reconciliation of a person with God.

That's it. There's nothing in there about it being applied to anything other than a real live human being.

It's not a lucky charm to ward off evil, like a piece of garlic you hang around your neck to ward off vampires.

Check it out for yourself; you can't even apply the blood to someone else, you can only apply it to *you*.

And how do you apply it?

It's not a charm to prevent you from getting a broken leg; it's not a personal force field to keep you from going through tough times.

It's part of your breastplate to protect your heart.

How does it do that?

It cleanses your heart from sin and keeps your relationship with God right.

This is important because Satan doesn't care if you know what the weapons are, provided you don't know how to use them.

So let's take a brief look at one of those theological terms I mentioned – justification.

What is justification?

Justification means guiltless, uncondemned, and positively righteous before God.

Repeat this after me: I am guiltless. I am uncondemned. I am positively righteous before God, because of the blood of Jesus.

It's just as if I'd never sinned.

That's what protects you from enemy activity in your life.

John 14:30 I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.

What does that mean?

It means that when the devil came to Jesus, he found Him to be "guiltless, uncondemned, and positively righteous before God."

And the devil had nothing to work with.

And through the blood of Jesus, we are justified and made righteous with the same righteousness that Jesus had in Himself.

What destroys the effectiveness of the breastplate of righteousness?

Unconfessed sin, or to say to God, "I'm sorry," when you have no intention of changing.

That was imputed righteousness, but the second aspect of righteousness is imparted righteousness.

In other words, God begins to deal with our lives and change us to be like Christ.

And as we continually yield to Him, He slowly but surely imparts His righteousness to us.

This process is called sanctification.

3. The preparation of the gospel of peace [v15]

We have to shoe our feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Description – Paul had in mind the Roman *caliga*, or half-boot, which ... left the toes free, enabling him to move readily but also giving him a firm grip⁶. [They] were made of very strong leather, and the soles were thickly studded with hob-nails in order to give a sure footing⁷. The hob-nails also enabled the soldier to use the shoes as a weapon by stamping.

ILLUS – A number of years ago, I used to work as a groundsman. I remember we were digging out a tree stump. We'd been hacking away with our mattocks and axes, and digging into the surrounding ground with our spades. Anyone knows that sometimes you need to put your weight behind your spade to get it in. So I slammed it into the soil, then jumped on with my feet either side of the blade. Here's where I discovered two things. First, the blade of the spade has a kind of lip where the metal is bent over. That would have been okay expect for my second discovery – my boots were old and the soles had split. I had nice big cracks ready for

⁶ *Dictionary of New Testament Theology: Vol 3* p966

⁷ Freeman, James M. *Manners and Customs of the Bible* p462

my spade to hook into. So when I went to get back off, I couldn't. I just tipped over backwards and ended up flat on my back.

Footwear is important.

The shoe was a very important part of the Roman soldier's outfit.

Without the right shoes, he would be seriously disadvantaged in battle.

Just as you wouldn't go jogging in your good shoes or go to a business meeting in your Wellington boots, a soldier had to have suitable footwear.

They were suitable for long marches, gave him speed when he needed it, and the ability to stand firm in combat.

So what are the shoes we have to put on?

Our shoes are the preparation of the gospel of peace.

That's a strange sort of phrase – what does it mean?

The term [preparation] means readiness, preparedness, or preparation⁸.

So what we have to ask ourselves is: If part of my armour includes my shoes, and that means my readiness or preparedness of the Gospel, how can I make sure that I'm ready or prepared?

Let me quickly give you some ideas.

First, to be prepared with the Gospel of peace, you must at least know what the Gospel is and believe it.

If you don't have a clue where to start to share the Gospel with someone, you ain't ready, and you ain't got your shoes on Jack!

Second, it means praying for specific people and opportunities to share your faith.

If you're not doing that, you forgot your hob-nailed boots.

Third, it means actively looking for opportunities to share your faith.

If you're not, you're fighting in bare feet.

Let me finish this message by asking you these questions:

Are you wearing the truth? Are you honest with God?

Do you have on the breastplate of righteousness? Do you treat the blood of Jesus with respect?

Do you have on your Gospel shoes? If you don't, you're not ready to fight.

⁸ Lincoln, Andrew T. *Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians* p448-449