

Put It On

Series: The Armor of God

Ephesians 6:10-13

January 16, 2022

Welcome everyone to worship.

Today, we begin a new message series, and believe it or not, in my 38 years of youth and pastoral ministry, I've never done a series on this passage.

When they were growing up, my sons Marty and Matt loved to dress up. Halloween was one of their favorite times, but that didn't stop them from having costumes. Of course, they were both variations of Batman, then Star Wars and Star Trek. They had their football phase as well. Marty went to Space Camp one year, so he had a Junior Astronaut uniform (Myra wanted to buy me one last October when we were at the Kennedy Space Center). Speaking of our October trip, Matt was both a Hufflepuff from Harry Potter, then he was a Jedi.

So, my guess is that if they were preaching our sermon series, they would be dressing up for this series "The Armor of God."

We will start today with the introduction, then focus weekly on the different elements. So, I invite you to turn to page 5 in your bulletin.

Let me share a little background. The Letter to the Church in Ephesus is one of the Prison Letters. Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, as were the letters to Philemon and 2 Timothy, were all written from a Roman prison.

- Ephesians 3:1: "When I think of all this, I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus for the benefit of you Gentiles"¹
- Philippians 1:13: "For everyone here, including the whole palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ."²
- Colossians 4:3: "Pray for us, too, that God will give us many opportunities to speak about his mysterious plan concerning Christ. That is why I am here in chains."³

So, Paul was very familiar with the implements of war a Roman guard carried on his person.

Therefore, as he closes his guidance to his dear friends in Ephesus, an idea comes to his mind. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, he uses the image standing before him to build a case for his final words in Ephesians 6:10-13:

*A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.*⁴

Paul gives two commands here. In Bible studies, we call them imperatives:

First, be strong.

¹ Ephesians 3:1 (NLT2)

² Philippians 1:13 (NLT2)

³ Colossians 4:3 (NLT2)

⁴ Ephesians 6:10-13 (NLT2)

The Greek word for strong⁵ originally comes from *doo'-nam-is*⁶. It means strength, power, and is the word from which we get our word dynamite.

We need to be strong in two things.

A. In the Lord.

We must have strength through an indwelling God.

The kind of strength and power you will need is not the kind you can supply on your own. You can't fly on your own; if you try, you are just falling.

You need His strength working in you.

B. In His mighty power.

You can't grit your teeth and push through as hard as you can on this stuff. Paul tells us that human effort is inadequate for the task and challenges ahead, but God's power is invincible.

And this strength must be a spiritual kind of strength for reasons we will talk about in a few moments.

So, Paul says you must have the power, the strength, the dynamite of the Lord.

The second imperative is Put on.

This is the Greek word *en-doo'-o*.⁷

Paul used it in Ephesians 4:

*Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.*⁸

It means clothe, endue, have, put, wear.⁹ It is in the putting on that we are different. A person puts on a police uniform, and they are different.

The passage then gives us the image of a soldier.

My guess is that people look at this passage in one of three ways. Some love this passage. Their favorite movies may be Braveheart, Gladiator, Blackhawk Down, and Saving Private Ryan. They enjoy fireworks and drive camouflage F-150s trucks with gun racks. For these types, "the armor of God" passage is super interesting.

Others may find this text antiquated and ridiculous because of the description of ancient weaponry and warfare. A person dressed up in a tin suit does not communicate strength and vitality and security to us in the 21st century! We find security in soldiers with M16s, sniper rifles, grenades, laser-guided weapons, and tanks. Even better would be some soldiers with attack helicopters and stealth bombers. For modern adults—and even today's kids who grow up playing video games that rarely have men in tin suits—this picture may seem a bit ridiculous.

Another group might find this militaristic language fanatical and unenlightened. Have we not had enough of religious holy war talk? Is not all Paul's talk about "the Spirit" and "evil" simply the product of an uninformed, superstitious writer? Are not the real problems in the world simply psychological, physiological, relational, economical, and/or political?¹⁰ Besides, its imagery for children, VBS stuff.

What Paul is using here is analogy. He is in prison, and like a good preacher, uses the images and experiences around him. Don't believe me? Just think of Myra;

⁵ ἐνδυναμόω

⁶ δύναμις

⁷ ἐνδύω

⁸ Ephesians 4:24 (NLT2)

⁹ Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary #1746

¹⁰ Christ-Centered Exposition - Exalting Jesus In Ephesians: Christ-Centered Exposition, Ephesians 6:10-24

nearly everything she does can be used as sermon fodder. It is the occupational hazard of living with a preacher.

So, Paul uses the image of the Roman soldier guarding him. We will talk about the individual parts in the weeks to come, but suffice it to say, he uses the greatest fighting machine of his day as an analogy of the spiritual truths he is about to convey.

Then, we discover the Why. Why must we be strong and Put on God's armor?

First, to Stand Firm.

Verses 11-12:

*Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.*¹¹

We are to stand firm. We are going to be pushed by society and its decaying morals, by family and friends who want us to go with the flow, even if the flow is to the sewer. The world is against the way of the Lord, therefore, we must stand firm against it.

Second, Resist.

Verse 13:

*Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.*¹²

This world is full of temptations that are against the way of the Lord, and unless we resist, stand firm, we will not be standing in the end.

Then Paul reveals the Foe. Let me say a few things about this.

UNSEEN.

What does Paul tell us? Let me read verse 12 again:

*For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.*¹³

First, Paul says that our foe is not who you think it is. They are unseen. You can't see them coming.

There is a football commercial out there that has a big defensive guy who is given a high tech uniform that makes him invisible. So, no one can see him, to block him, to avoid him. The offensive player gets the ball and is obliterated. He asks, "Who hit me?"

That's the way our foe is. We can't see him, for he is unseen. You don't know when he's coming until he has already attacked you and left.

Do you see now why you need to "be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power?"

Second: evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world.

The Greek word is *ar-khay*¹⁴ and besides meaning "principles" or "rulers," it also means "beginning" as in archaic, being old.

These are the chief rulers, namely Satan and his lead demons. They are the first rank and order in their own evil and unseen kingdom.

¹¹ Ephesians 6:11-12 (NLT2)

¹² Ephesians 6:13 (NLT2)

¹³ Ephesians 6:12 (NLT2)

¹⁴ ἀρχή

Third, against mighty powers in this dark world.

When Satan fell from heaven, he took with him other fallen angels, what we now call demons. Ancient theologians have estimated that up to a third of all the angels became demons.

Take for example the demoniac of Mark 5. He said his name was Legion, because there were many in the man.¹⁵ A full Roman legion was 6,826 men.

So, the mighty powers of in this dark world are many.

Fourth, against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

This one is hard to understand. What is Paul referring to “in the heavenly places?”

One commentator contends that Paul meant the rabbis and Jewish rulers, plus false teachers, who endeavored to corrupt Christianity, such as those mentioned by John in 1 John 2:18-19:

*Dear children, the last hour is here. You have heard that the Antichrist is coming, and already many such antichrists have appeared. From this we know that the last hour has come. These people left our churches, but they never really belonged with us; otherwise they would have stayed with us. When they left, it proved that they did not belong with us.*¹⁶

So, it is all the corrupters of Christianity in all succeeding ages. We see this in our own United Methodist denomination today, with bishops, professors, and clergy denying the Virgin Birth, or the authority of Scripture, or the need for Christ and the work of the cross for salvation. Either way, there are those who are seeking to prevent the spread of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ in the world, and to destroy the souls of humankind.

In “Unseen,” the room where the Council of Evil meets has 4 Daleths (the letter “D” in Hebrew), side by side, standing for “Doubt, Deception, Destruction, Death.” That’s what the unseen evil powers of this world want to do.

Finally, verse 13. We will look at this again in the coming weeks, but let me read it again:

*Therefore, put on every piece of God’s armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.*¹⁷

Did you notice the repeat? “Put on the armor of God?” Why does he do this? Because we are fighting a battle that if we go into it alone, on our own strength, it would be like going onto the battlefield completely naked; no helmet, no gun, no extra supplies, no clothing to protect us.

My friends, we are in evil times, and if you are trying to fight against them with your own intellect, willpower, endurance, and cunning, you will lose. You will not survive. Only through the power of the Lord and the tools, the armor, He gives us can we defeat the devil and his evil, and when it is all over, be left standing.

There are those of you trying to do Christianity on your own. You will fail. There are those of you who are trying to lead a good and moral life. You will succumb. There are those of you who are trying to get to heaven on your own good works. You will be shocked. For Jesus said:

¹⁵ See Mark 5:8

¹⁶ 1 John 2:18-19 (NLT2)

¹⁷ Ephesians 6:13 (NLT2)

“Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’¹⁸

My friends, you will only survive through God. To get to God, you need a God, and that is Jesus Christ.

¹⁸ Matthew 7:21-23 (NLT2)