

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 12 May 2019. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Christian's Armour (Part 1)

Ephesians 6:10-14

For the last couple months, I have been preaching through **Ephesians chapters 5 and 6**; and we are now coming down to the last half of **chapter 6**. However, before we go any further, I would like to do a little review. You see, it is important to remember what this whole section of **Ephesians** is about. There is a “big picture” about Christian living that Paul is giving us. What *is* that “big picture”? Let's take a look.

Read Ephesians 5:18.

Ephesians 5:18 is the key to this passage. This whole section of **Ephesians** is about being “*filled with* (controlled by) *the Spirit*.” Basically, Paul is showing us what Spirit-filled Christian living looks like. For one thing, Paul says that Christians who are “*filled with the Spirit*” do not get drunk with wine, but instead allow themselves to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. Christians who are “*filled with the Spirit*” sing songs, hymns, and spiritual songs of praise to God. Spirit-filled Christians give thanks to God in all things. Spirit-filled Christians submit to others, and waive their rights. A Spirit-filled husband loves his wife with the kind of sacrificial love that Christ had for His church; and a Spirit-filled wife reverences her husband, and submits to his authority. Spirit-filled children obey and honour their parents; and Spirit-filled fathers bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Spirit-filled Christians give their employers their best work, as though they were working for Christ Himself; and Spirit-filled employers treat their workers with Christ-like kindness, and without respect of persons.

Of course, having this kind of Christian conduct is not the *condition* for salvation! We are not saved by our good works; we are saved by *Christ's* work on the cross for us. What we are reading about in **Ephesians 5 and 6** are the *outward evidences* that a person who has *already* been saved is now living his daily Christian life by the power of the Holy Spirit.

With this in mind, we now come now to **Ephesians 6:10-18**. In this passage, the tone changes considerably. Paul is no longer talking about the church and the Christian home. He is now talking about the ruthless realm of Christian warfare. Yet, he is still talking about the *Spirit-filled Christian life*. Really, the passage that we are about to read is the climax of Paul's teaching about the Spirit-filled life. A Christian who is “*filled with the Spirit*” will be prepared for spiritual warfare.

Whether you realise it or not, there is a battle going on all around you. Should you be unsaved, Satan and his demons are fighting to keep you from receiving Christ as your Saviour. You are in the dungeon of sin, and don't even know it. On the other hand, if you *do* know Christ as your Saviour, then you are in the battle (whether you are prepared for it or not). Before you were saved, you were a pawn under Satan's control. You weren't even trying to fight him, because you were on his side! You were his captive. However, you are now translated from Satan's kingdom to Christ's kingdom. That makes you Satan's number one enemy! Satan can't reclaim your soul; but he is doing everything in his power to tempt you to sin; to keep you paralysed and ineffective for the Lord; and to ruin your testimony.

Christian, you need to learn every piece of your *spiritual* armour and weaponry as thoroughly as a trooper in *physical* combat knows *his* armour and weaponry. You can't just float through the Christian life. It is

a battle; and you must be prepared for Satan's onslaught. As we start into this three-part series on the Christian warfare, it is my prayer that if you be unsaved, you *will* be saved, and become part of Christ's army. It is also my prayer that if you be saved, you will learn how to put on your spiritual armour, so that you will be able to withstand the wiles of the devil. The title of this message is ***The Christian's Armour***.

Read Ephesians 6:10-14.

I. The Christian warrior's power (v. 10)

(Read verse 10 again.) The book of Ephesians has often been compared to the Old Testament book of **Joshua**. What is the similarity between the two? Well, in the book of **Joshua**, we are told about the warrior leader Joshua, as he led the children of Israel into the Promised Land of Canaan. Likewise, in **Ephesians**, we are told about our Commander, Jesus Christ, who leads Christians into victorious spiritual warfare against the devil and his angels.

By the way, it is important to understand what the land of Canaan typifies for us, as Christians. In some of our hymns, the land of Canaan is compared to heaven; and the crossing of the Jordan River is compared to physical death, whereby the believer is ushered into heaven. However, this is not the application that the New Testament writers made. In the New Testament, Canaan is compared to *the Christian life*; and the conquest of Canaan is compared to *victorious warfare* in the Christian life. A good example of this is in **Psalm 95**.

Read Psalm 95:6-11.

In **Psalm 95**, King David is writing to the children of Israel who lived in his day: and he is warning them *not* to harden their hearts, as their forefathers had done. He reminds them of a time, 400 years earlier, when God forbade their forefathers to enter into the land of Canaan because of their unbelief and hardness of heart. He reminds them of how their forefathers had to wander in the wilderness for 40 years, until all that generation died off. Because of their unbelief, they were not permitted to enter into God's place of "**rest**" (the land of Canaan). So, what was David implying? What was he saying to the people in *his* day? Was he saying that *they*, too, might be barred from entering into Canaan if they didn't stop hardening their hearts? Of course not. They were already *in* Canaan! (They had lived there for 400 years at that point.) Clearly, when David said that they might come short of God's "**rest**," he was talking about some *other* kind of rest than the land of Canaan. What "**rest**" was he talking about? Let's go to the New Testament, and see how Paul explained it.

Read Hebrews 4:1-2, 6-11.

In **verse 8**, Paul makes a very important point. He says that if "**Jesus had given them rest, then would he** (David) **not afterward have spoken of another day.**" Now, just to clear up any confusion, that name "**Jesus**" is simply the New Testament spelling of the name "Joshua." ("Joshua" and "Jesus" both come from the same Hebrew name, *Jeshua*.) Basically, Paul is saying that if *Joshua* had given the Israelites true and lasting "rest" (by leading them into the land of Canaan), then King David would not later have had to warn the people of *his* day not to come short of God's rest. In other words, there is a place of "rest" that is far more important than the land of Canaan. David is talking about a place of *spiritual* rest. He is talking about a place in your life where you stop hardening your heart. He's talking about a place where you stop striving against God in doubt and unbelief, and instead simply "rest" in God's promises. Paul makes this very clear! **(Read verses 9-11 again.)**

What application can we draw from this passage? Well, the most important application of this passage is that if you have never been saved, you must stop trusting in your own good works, and simply **“rest”** in the saving work that Christ has already done for you on the cross. However, I believe there is also a secondary application for believers. Should you be saved already, you must stop wavering and floundering in doubt and fear. Perhaps you are saved; but you sometimes have paralyzing doubts about your salvation, because you are not grounded in the promises of Scripture. Perhaps you don’t doubt your salvation; but you *do* doubt other promises that God has given you—such as His promise to provide all your needs; or His promise to give you power to overcome temptation; or His promise to direct your path, through His Word and His Spirit; or His promise to give you a **“peace that passeth all understanding”** as you submit to Him. If this be the case with you, Christian, then stop hardening your heart. Stop doubting God’s Word. You are in the Promised Land of salvation; but there are giants of fear and doubt to slay. There are strongholds of lust, anger, bitterness, and pride to pull down. God will give you the victory, if you will only trust Him!

With this in mind, let’s return to **Ephesians 6**. (**Read Ephesians 6:10.**) In this verse, Paul is quoting from the book of Joshua. Let’s take a look at the passage that he is quoting.

Read Joshua 1:5-9.

Three times in these verses, God commanded Joshua to **“be strong.”** It is this statement, **“Be strong,”** that Paul is quoting in **Ephesians 6:10**, when he says, **“Be strong in the Lord.”** By the way, the Hebrew verb **“be strong”** is *chazaq*; and the most literal meaning of *chazaq* is “to harden.” Interestingly enough, this same word is used in a *negative* way in many Scriptures. For example, in many verses we are told that people **“hardened their hearts”** in rebellion against God. Yet, we can also “harden our hearts” in *obedience* to God. You can “harden your heart” in a good way, or in a bad way. You should have a *soft heart* toward God and His Word; but you should have a “hard heart” against sin, and against your enemy, the devil. That is the kind of heart that the Lord had when He was on earth. In **Isaiah 50**, the Lord Jesus Christ (speaking through the pen of Isaiah) prophesied about His future suffering and death; and in **verse 7** He said, **“For the LORD God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.”** Our Lord Jesus “hardened,” or “strengthened” Himself in His resolve to do His Father’s will—no matter what the cost. We should do the same!

We *must* harden our hearts in obedience. We *must* be strong in the Lord. Yet, where does this “hardening” come from? Where does this strength come from? It comes from the **“power of his might.”** Remember the “resurrection power” of Christ, which Paul talked about earlier in **Ephesians**? *That* is the power in which we must trust!

Read Ephesians 1:15-20 / 3:14-18.

In order to **“be strong in the Lord,”** you must first realise that you are *weak*, and totally unable to defeat the enemy. Charles Spurgeon put it this way: *“A primary qualification for serving God with any amount of success, and for doing God’s work well and triumphantly, is a sense of our own weakness. When God’s warrior marches forth to the battle, strong in his own might; when he boasts, “I know that I shall conquer: my own right arm and my conquering sword shall get me victory,” defeat is not far distant. Are you mourning over your own*

weakness? Take courage—for there must be a consciousness of weakness before the Lord will give thee victory.” Folks, this biblical teaching is contrary to every religious system in the world. In every false religion, it’s all about *self-effort*; but in the life of the born-again Christian, it’s just the opposite. It’s about *death to self* and *complete reliance upon Christ*.

The Christian life *begins* the moment a person lets go of his self-effort and self-righteousness, and instead places his faith in Christ, and in His righteousness. However, it does not stop there. To live a victorious Christian life, you must *continue* to let go of self-effort, and *continue* to rely on Christ, every single day. Before you were saved, you were not able to produce any righteousness that was truly pleasing to God; and you *still* can’t! In and of yourself, you can’t do it. Real righteousness must come from Christ’s working in your life.

Christian, are living in a continual cycle of spiritual defeat? Are continually giving in to sin? Do you wonder *why* you can’t get the victory? The reason is simple: you are not trusting in **“the power of his might”**: you are relying on yourself, and *your own* will power. You *are not* prepared for the battle, because you do not have the strength of the Lord.

Perhaps you are thinking, “O.K., Pastor, I know that I am not being strong in the Lord. I feel as though I’m always defeated. But *how* can I ‘strengthen myself in the Lord?’” Well, that’s what Paul will detail for us when we get to our spiritual armour. However, before we talk about the armour of God, there is something else of which you must be fully aware.

II. The Christian warrior’s foes (v. 11-13)

(Read verses 11-13.) Make no mistake about it, Christian: the enemy that we are fighting is not flesh and blood. The Marxists, atheists, humanists, and leaders of false religions, are not our real enemy. The *real* enemy that we are fighting is **“spiritual wickedness in high places”** (That phrase **“in high places”** literally means “in the heavenlies.”) Your real enemy is Satan, **“the prince of the power of the air.”**

Now, you must never forget that your biggest enemy is your own sinful flesh. Paul said, **“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing” (Romans 7:18)**. Your old, adamic, sinful nature operates just fine without Satan’s help! Yet, at the same time, Satan and his minions are around every day to *seduce* you to give in to your flesh. They whisper thoughts into your mind that are in opposition to God’s Word, and His will. Satan has been at it for 6,000 years; and he is *very* good at enticing people (including *God’s* people) to sin.

You know, it is easy for us, as Christians, to focus on what Satan is doing out there *in the world system*—and especially in high places of power. Without question, nearly all the **world’s rulers** are pawns in Satan’s hand. The fact that Satan offered Christ all the kingdoms of the world if He would only worship him clearly shows that for now, God is allowing Satan to wield great power over the kingdoms of the earth. The most powerful leaders in government, banking, corporations, media, and entertainment all over the world are immersed in the occult. For example, every year, elites from all over America and the world gather for an event called **Bohemian Grove**, in California. Hundreds of powerful men gather deep in the Redwoods, and worship an image of **Baal**, as well as of a giant **40-foot owl**. They even do a mock human sacrifice! The **entertainment industry** is filled with people who are pawns of Satan. The vile, perverse, Satanic, occultic filth that is being spewed from Hollywood’s movies is conditioning people’s minds, and is preparing them for the kingdom of Antichrist!

I could spend the rest of the morning giving examples of the stranglehold that Satan has upon the “world system.” However, to focus only on “the big picture” of Satan’s agenda would be to miss the point. What you need to realise, Christian, is that **Satan has it in for you!** There are wicked, fallen angels who watch every move that *you* make. Satan’s demons study you inside and out every day. They get as close to you as you will allow them to get, and tempt you to sin against God. They are doing their best to establish a beachhead in *your* life, and in your family’s life. They want to fan the flames of *your* selfish lusts and desires. They want to draw *you* away from fellowship with God. They want to turn your thoughts against Him. They want to make you think that following God’s will in your life will make you miserable. They want to keep you distracted with meaningless pursuits, which have no eternal value, so that you will not be an effective witness for Christ. They are doing all in their power to cause you to fall headlong into *grievous* sin, which will bring reproach to the name of Christ.

Satan is an extremely powerful foe. You are no match for him. Yet, you *can* overcome him—*if* you are strengthening yourself in the Lord, and in the power of His might. God is *infinitely* more powerful than Satan. If you be clad in the armour of God, you will live victoriously.

Now, it is important to remember what we are fighting *for*. Simply put, we are not fighting and warring in order to make it into heaven! Paul is *not* conveying the idea that if you get hit by one of Satan’s fiery darts, and fall down gravely wounded, then you have lost your salvation. If this were the case, then salvation would be by our own good works. This would go completely against everything Paul said in **Ephesians 2**. Paul said, “***By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.***” If you could lose your salvation, then you’d be lost every single time you commit even the smallest sin. **What Paul is talking about here is not salvation: rather, he is talking about daily sanctification.** What is at stake here is either a life of spiritual victory over sin, or a life of spiritual defeat, and ineffectiveness for God.

Think back to the “Canaan” analogy. When the Israelites crossed the Jordan into Canaan, they didn’t kick off their sandals and relax. They were finally at rest from their wilderness wanderings; yet, at the same time, they had work to do! They had a war to fight. God had commanded them to drive out the Canaanites; and the Canaanites weren’t about to surrender and leave! The Canaanite cities were very numerous, and strongly fortified. Many of the Canaanites were fierce giants. The children of Israel had a long war ahead of them. They started out well; but before long, they grew tired of fighting, and began to make treaties with the Canaanites. Instead of driving the Canaanites out of the land, they spared their lives, and put them under tribute. As the result, the Canaanites began to intermarry with the Israelites, and drew the Hebrews into the worship of their gods; and God had to chastise His people.

Likewise, Christian, you have been called to a life of warfare against your sinful flesh, and against the devil! You see, before you were saved, you weren’t fighting Satan at all. He had you right where he wanted you to be. You were doing his will, and you didn’t even know it! But then, you placed your faith in Christ, and entered into the “Promised Land” of Christian living. You began to live by faith; and soon, you came up against spiritual strongholds, and giants. Satan and his demons began to hurl their darts at you, to discourage you from serving the Lord! To some of you, it may have even seemed that you had more problems than you had before you were saved, because everything seemed to be going wrong!

Folks, Satan is relentless. His demons *will* get a foothold in your life, if you let them. Satan is crafty. He transforms himself into an “*angel of light*.” He tries to deceive you into thinking that that sinful desire is actually *right*. He’s patient, too. He waits for the right time to strike. You’ll notice that Paul says, “*That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day*.” What is the “*evil day*”? It’s the day when Satan launches a full-scale attack. When that day comes, you must be ready to stand and fight, *because you have been standing all along!*

How do you stand, then? In the perfection of Christ’s finished work! All the spiritual armour that you need in order to defeat Satan has been provided through the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. With this in mind, let’s look now at the first two pieces of our armoury.

III. The Christian warrior’s defensive armour (vv. 13-14)

(Read verse 13 again.) In this sermon, I have time to speak of only two pieces of our spiritual armour; and both of them are *defensive* pieces of armour. It is pointless to talk about your *offensive* weaponry if you be not spiritually *protected* from Satan’s weaponry.

The first defensive piece of armour is **the belt of truth**. (Read verse 14 again.) What does Paul mean by this expression, “*loins girt about with truth*”? Well, in Paul’s day, people didn’t wear trousers: they wore robes. A *soldier*, especially, had to be ready, at a moment’s notice, to gird up his robe under his belt (creating a sort of “trousers”), so that his robe would not impede his movements, and cause him to stumble in battle. For the soldier, “girding up the loins” was a matter of life or death. Likewise, for the Christian, having your “*loins girt about with truth*” is the difference between spiritual victory, and utter defeat.

Read 1 Peter 1:13-16.

This Scripture makes it even clearer what Paul means by “girding up your loins.” Peter says, “*gird up the loins of your mind*.” It is our *mind* that must be “girt” with *truth*. The *mind* is the battleground! A Christian who is not grounded in *scriptural truth* will stumble over fleshly thoughts and worldly philosophies. You *must* be grounded in sound doctrine—doctrines such as God’s holiness; Christ’s deity; the ministry of the Holy Spirit; justification; the eternal security of salvation; your inheritance and spiritual riches in Christ; the purpose of the church; the inerrancy, infallibility, and all-sufficiency of Scripture, and so on. You must be grounded in the truth of salvation first and foremost; but you must also be grounded in the truth of sanctification (how to be set apart from sin, and changed into Christ’s image).

Christian, Satan is far more powerful than you are. You *must* know this Book. Don’t skip your Bible reading for a day here and there, because you think you can withstand Satan. Don’t skip church, and the preaching of God’s Word, because you think you’re strong enough to get through the week. You are *not* strong enough! A soldier can’t fight if he be tripping over his own robe; and neither can a Christian fight Satan if his mind be not established in Scriptural truth. Can you read a worldly novel, watch the telly for hours, or mess around on your phone for hours, yet you can’t carve out time to read your Bible, and be in church? If so, then you are wide open to Satan’s attack. Put down whatever is distracting you, and read God’s Word!

There is one more piece of defensive armour that I would like to talk about today: and that is the **breastplate of righteousness**. (Read Ephesians 6:14.) What does Paul mean by “*the breastplate of righteousness*”? Well, before telling you what it is, I first want to make clear

what it *is not*. Paul is *not* talking about the imputed righteousness of Christ. If you be saved, you received the “robe” of *imputed righteousness* on the day you were saved; and *that* garment *does not come off!* Imputed righteousness is always there, making you accepted with God.

Read Isaiah 61:10.

What we just read about in **Isaiah 61:10** is the *imputed righteousness* that every believer receives at the moment of salvation. This is a *legal, judicial* matter. We who are saved have been declared “righteous.” That is how God is able to accept us. Instead of seeing our sin, God, as our Judge, sees the perfect righteousness of His Son. However, here in Ephesians, when Paul talks about the “***breastplate of righteousness***,” he isn’t talking about *imputed* righteousness: He is talking about *actual righteousness*, which Christ can give us every day.

Read Isaiah 59:17-18.

What we have just read is a prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah is prophesying about Christ’s future ministry on earth. With this in mind, please notice what Christ is wearing. He is wearing “***righteousness as a breastplate***.” That’s interesting, isn’t it? As a man, Jesus needed to be protected from the attacks of the devil. The “***breastplate of righteousness***” wasn’t someone *else*’s imputed righteousness; it was His *own* perfect righteousness! There were no moral weaknesses in Jesus’ life. There were no “chinks” in His armour, at which the devil could aim an arrow. His perfect righteousness protected Him from the enemy at all times. Brethren, *we* need that righteousness in our daily lives! We need more than the *imputed* righteousness of salvation; we need *actual* righteousness! If you will run to Christ at the instant when temptation arises, and ask Him for forgiveness for that wrong thought, and ask Him for strength, He will give you the righteousness you need to overcome that sin!

Brethren, we cannot afford to take off the breastplate of righteousness for a short while, so that we may indulge in a “little sin.” You see, Christians don’t just “fall” into huge, grievous sins. It happens little by little, as Christians allow a “little” unrighteousness in their lives here and there. It happens through a process of “playing” with sin—of allowing sin to grow in your heart. When you allow “little sins” in your life, you are not wearing the breastplate of Christ’s righteousness. Your conscience becomes weak and defiled. Then, the “evil day” comes. Satan has been preparing you for the kill; and, all at once, you fall into very destructive sin. Because you have not resisted your fleshly impulses, you have no power to stand against Satan’s assault. Can a true Christian lose his salvation when he falls? No. However, he does ruin his testimony for Christ, and he brings much pain into his life, and into the lives of others.

Christian, are you putting on your breastplate of righteousness? Are you submitting to Christ throughout the day every day, and allowing Him to give you His righteousness?

Conclusion: This message has been directed mainly toward those who are already saved. However, if you have never stopped trusting in your own righteousness, and instead placed your trust in Christ alone, then you are lost; and you desperately need to be saved! If you have never been saved, please humble yourself, and ask Christ to save you! **To those of you who are saved** I would ask, “Are you wearing your armour?” Are you going out day by day without being strengthened in the power of Christ’s might? Are falling in defeat? If so, gird up your loins with truth, and put on the breastplate of righteousness!