

# OpenTheo

## Ephesians 6:10 - 6:24



### **Ephesians** - Steve Gregg

In this message, Steve Gregg discusses Ephesians 6:10-24, which emphasizes the importance of standing firm against evil and wearing the armor of God. He notes that Christians must be prepared to withstand spiritual attacks and trust in God's strength to help them. Gregg touches on the idea of the church being a counterculture, influencing society with the gospel message, and emphasizes the need for both defensive and offensive weapons in spiritual warfare. He emphasizes the importance of truth, righteousness, and love, and the power of prayer in spiritual battles.

### **Transcript**

Okay, we're at Ephesians 6 and verse 10 is where we begin today. Paul says, Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Above all, taking the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the fires of the wicked one, and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, being watchful to this end, with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints, and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that in it I may speak boldly as I ought to speak. But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you, whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and that he may comfort your hearts.

Peace to the brethren, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen." Obviously, the last four verses are simply a closing with personal greetings and explanation of the circumstances of the sending of the letter, and do not really comprise part of the body of the letter itself.

And therefore, verses 10 through 20 of Ephesians chapter six really wrap up the body of the message of the letter of Ephesians. I remember back when we began our series on that, I mentioned that Watchman Nee years ago came out with a book called Sit, Walk, Stand, which was his way of outlining the book of Ephesians. The first two chapters are about our position in Christ, seated in heavenly places in Christ above all principality and power.

And therefore, the first position in which we are seen in Ephesians is sitting. And then in chapter four and through chapter five, and really some of six, we have the exhortation to walk, and to walk in a certain manner. It has to do with not just sitting and enjoying our position in the heavenlies, but walking out in the nitty-gritty matters of this life where we have obligations to fulfill, progress to make, growth, and just really spiritual maturity to achieve.

And so in chapter four we read walk worthy of the calling, which you were called in verse one. Or in verse 17, that you no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles. When you come to chapter five, verse two, and walk in love as Christ also has loved us.

In verse eight of chapter five, walk as children of light. And in chapter five, verse 15, see that you walk circumspectly. So you've got all this walking in chapters four and five, and really the latter part of chapter five and the early part of chapter six are properly a part of the discussion of how to walk also.

Because wives and husbands and children and parents and servants and masters must learn to walk together. And the walk that they have together has defined roles for them. And so Paul talks about those roles and what the proper way to walk is in those circumstances that people find themselves in.

Almost everyone is either a husband or a wife or a child or a parent or a servant or a master. There would be perhaps a few people who don't fall into any of those categories, but these are the major categories in which the Christians would be finding themselves and needing to know the special requirements, the special demands of the circumstances they're in. Now, at the same time, I point out back where in chapter five, verse 21, where he says, submitting to one another in the fear of God, that this actually begins a military kind of a theme as well, because the word submitting, a hupotasso in the Greek, is a military word.

It means to be ranked under, to assume your position under some other higher ranking

person in the hierarchy. And that is a term that comes out of the military. Of course, he doesn't use it in a strictly military sense when he talks about wives, husbands, children, parents, servants, and masters, but he does turn more to a distinctly military metaphor in verse 10, when he says, finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. And so this last section is not really about walking, per se, but about standing. So in addition to seeing our role in the Christian life as seated with Christ in heavenly places and walking in this world, making progress toward the goal of sanctification, there is also the need to stand, because as we walk forward, we are walking against a stiff wind.

We are walking against, we are swimming against the tide. There is resistance to our progress. That resistance he defines for us in verse 12, but he makes it clear that because of such resistance, we need to not only be able to go forward, sometimes we need to be able to just make sure we don't lose ground, make sure we're not pushed backward, that we stand our ground, and that we, sometimes no progress is being made except the very ability to not lose ground under opposition is as good as progress.

And there are seasons where we can walk forward without very much direct assault, and our progress is measurable. There are other times when we're in the midst of trials, in the midst of temptations, in the midst of really difficult circumstances spiritually or even physically, and these become in some cases a spiritual trial for us, a test of our faith. And in those times, simply not to lose ground is the challenge and is commendable if we succeed in not losing ground.

So he says we need to stand against the wiles of the devil. The word stand is used as frequently in this section as the word walk was in the previous one. He tells us to stand, in verse 11, against the wiles of the devil.

And in verse 13, he says that you may be able to withstand, which means stand against, the enemy and the evil, and having done all to stand, verse 13. Then verse 14 starts with the word stand, therefore. So we have just as much of an emphasis in this last section on standing our ground as we had on walking in the earlier section.

Now this is his final note in this epistle. He says, finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. In order to stand against a strong enemy, we must have some strength also, but our strength is in the Lord.

Now, be strong, as it's translated here, it almost sounds as if it's active, but in the Greek this is passive. And some translators, newer translators have felt it should be translated something like be made strong or be made powerful, I think the revised version says. It's not so much that you're commanded to become strong somehow by some action of your own, but rather to be made strong is what is implied here in the passive voice of the

verb.

And it suggests, of course, that the strength we have is something that we're made to have. It is not something that we have in ourselves. It is something imparted to us.

Now, he doesn't say be made strong by the Lord, but he says be made strong in the Lord. This in Christ theme is throughout Ephesians and it's because we are in Christ that we are made strong. If we have been found in him, if we are members of his body, if his life and his spirit is in us, then there's every reason to expect that his strength is ours also in the face of opposition.

In fact, Paul, when struggling tremendously against a messenger of Satan that was sent to buffet him in 2 Corinthians 12, said that even though he was weak physically, God told him, my grace is sufficient for you. My strength is made perfect in your weakness. And Paul said that he gladly will then embrace and rejoice in his infirmities and weaknesses and so forth, because when I'm weak, then I am really strong.

And when I am not trusting in myself, when I am brought to the end of myself, so there's nothing more of me that I can trust in, and there's only God to lean upon, then when I feel weakest is the time when I am potentially the strongest. That's the time when God is most pleased to manifest his strength in me because I do not appear at such time to be personally strong, and therefore whatever strength appears is attributable to God. And that's why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1 that God has chosen the weak things and the foolish things to confound the strong and the wise so that no flesh would glory in his sight.

And so the strength that God gives in time of trial to those who look to him and do not forget him and who do not trust in their own strength is adequate for all things, for all trials, because you are strong not in your own strength, but in the power of his might. There is no limit to the power of his might, and therefore you should never underestimate what you will be able to endure if you are in his strength, if his grace is made sufficient for you. We have all read and heard the testimonies of people who have suffered greatly, whether it's in Foxe's Book of Martyrs about early Christians or whether it's in modern times, people like Richard Wurmbrandt or Corrie Ten Boom, or people who suffered at the hands of other people.

Or we know of, you know, read of people who've suffered in poverty and other other horrible circumstances that we have never really quite known. And I don't know about you, but over the years as I've read those kind of stories, I couldn't help having it come to my mind, what if I were in those circumstances? What, you know, how would I do? Just the very thought of some of the tortures that some Christians have been subject to is enough to make your skin crawl. And you think, man, I just don't think I could do that.

I couldn't survive that. I don't see how I could possibly not give in under such torments

and tortures and pressures. But I dare say that the people who did endure such things heroically would have felt the same way had they anticipated such things and asked themselves the same question.

How would I endure such a thing? How could I possibly do it? And the answer, of course, is, as everyone who writes such books seems to testify to, that God gives the strength. That when you are subjected to pressures greater than you could possibly in your human personality endure, there is a supernatural endowment of grace which is sufficient. And so that you're made strong in the power of his might.

And it's an amazing thing. You should never think, well, I'll follow the Lord unless it gets to this degree of difficulty, because I just know I couldn't endure that degree of difficulty. I'll just hope and I'll try to avoid those kind of difficulties and just hope and pray that those things never happen, because I don't ever want to fall away.

And I don't think I could possibly bear such things. That is, that simply is not trusting in what God has said is true. God has said that his grace will be sufficient.

And whatever terrible things, whether it's a loss of a child or loss of a spouse or loss of the parents or anything, loss of work, loss of a home, losses, losses and pains and so forth, we can rightly view these as being in the category of things that the devil uses to attack your faith. But we have reason to do so because of the book of Job. It was the devil who sought to test Job's faith and tried to get him to curse God, get him to defect.

And in what ways did he do that? He took his children, he took his possessions, he took his health and reduced him to utter torture of illness and even rejection and misunderstanding of his friends and his wife. The man lost everything and everything is the result of the devil saying to God, let me do this. And he will curse you to his face.

Well, the devil turned out to be wrong. And even before the time of Christ, even before the time of Moses in all likelihood, there was the grace of God, which enabled Job not to defect, even when subjected to things that he had greatly feared, he said. And so we see that God's grace and strength is adequate.

And James tells us to remember Job and the prophets in this very respect. He says, you have heard of the patience of Job and you've seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very merciful. What is it? Tender mercy.

What's the word he has? Anyone got that memorized? It's in James chapter 5. I want to get the exact word. Compassionate and merciful is the way the New King James understands it. It's a little different in the King James where I formerly memorized it.

Anyway, the warfare that we face is sometimes coming from a physical set of circumstances, which the devil brings. There are many people who say, well, the devil can't touch the Christian. The devil can't hurt you.

And, you know, in response to that, we should just say, well, yeah, what about Job? You know, I'm sure he wasn't a Christian in the sense that we think of that term strictly speaking, but he was one of God's people and the devil was permitted to touch him. The devil touched Paul. He had a thorn in the flesh, a messenger from Satan sent to buffet him.

The devil can touch you. He can hurt you, but he cannot harm you if you are standing strong in the Lord and in the armor of God. And therefore, Paul says in verse 11, put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Now, he's going to enumerate certain pieces of armor in the verses that follow, but not immediately. He introduces in verse 11 the fact that he's going to talk about armor. Then he goes on and talks about the struggle before he goes back in verse 14 to talk about the pieces of armor that he has in mind.

The idea of having the armor of God is something we might pause to consider a moment, because the armor of God can mean the armor that God wears, or it can be the armor that God supplies. And when he actually gets down to talking about the individual pieces of armor, he selects pieces from a passage in the Old Testament, Isaiah 59, and it's speaking about the Lord. Isaiah 59, verses 16 and 17.

It says, He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor. Therefore his own arm brought salvation for him, and his own righteousness, it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head.

Now, those two items come to be named in Paul's list of pieces of armor. The breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation. Obviously, Paul didn't make that up, he got it out of Isaiah.

He goes on and put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and he was clad with zeal as a cloak. Now, Paul doesn't mention those. Why? Because vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, it's not ours.

And therefore, while Jesus can wear the armor of vengeance, that can be part of his kit, it is not part of ours. We are not to exercise vengeance. You see, we have here a picture not of the Christian soldier, but of Christ himself.

He is arrayed with the helmet of salvation, he is arrayed with the breastplate of righteousness, and he has the garment of vengeance. Now, he issues armor to his subordinates in the army, and he issues to us a helmet of salvation, and a breastplate of righteousness, and other things that Paul mentions. He does not issue to us the garment of vengeance for a cloak.

That is not ours to wear, that's his. He is the one who initially wears the armor, and when Paul says, put on the armor of God, he could have in mind the armor that God himself is

wearing, as per Isaiah 59.17, or of course he could mean the armor which God supplies to the troops. Now, there's one sense in which Paul's statements about the armor in other places suggest that putting on the armor of God is nothing else but putting on Jesus, and that he's talking about the same theme here that he was talking about when he talked about putting on the new man, but he's just using a different to make the point.

In Romans chapter 13, Romans 13, beginning with verse 12, Paul says, the night is far spent, the day is at hand, therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the day, not reveling in drunkenness, not in licentiousness, and lewdness, not in strife and envy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts. Now, here's an interesting juxtaposition between two thoughts.

Let us put on the armor of light, Paul says in verse 12. In verse 14, let us put on the Lord Jesus Christ. It's entirely possible that he means those as synonymous ideas, we know that he tells us to put on the Lord Jesus Christ here, and he tells us to put on the new man in Ephesians 4, which is identified with the body of Christ, or with the new humanity in Christ.

Likewise, when you put on Christ, if Christ is wearing the armor, then you have put on the armor. You don't put on the armor as separate things, you put on the armor as you put on Christ, who himself is armed. And where's the armor? It seems to me.

Now, we read 2 Corinthians not very long ago, we were going through that book, and in chapter 6 of 2 Corinthians, in verse 7, Paul is describing some of the features of his ministry by which he proves himself to be authentic, and among the things in that long list, he says in 2 Corinthians 6-7, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. Now, in Romans, he called it the armor of light. Here, he calls it the armor of righteousness.

And in Ephesians, he calls it the armor of God. There's not really any reason that I can see to find some way to distinguish between these different references to armor, as if there's one set of things called the armor of light, and another outfit called the armor of righteousness, and so forth. It seems that Paul is simply talking about the Christian, as if we are engaged in a soldiery enterprise, that we are armed, and it's a mission of light.

It's a mission of righteousness. It's a mission of God. And therefore, it is the armor of all those things, depending on how Paul wants to pull the words together in any given context.

There's another passage in 1 Thessalonians 5, where he mentions armor, and in this case, as in Ephesians 6, he also mentions specific pieces of armor. In 1 Thessalonians 5, in verse 8, Paul says, But let us, who are of the day, be sure, putting on the breastplate

of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. Now, here we only have two items mentioned.

There's a breastplate, and there's a helmet. That's also the case, of course, back in Isaiah, which we noticed a moment ago. Isaiah 59, 17 only has two items, a breastplate and a helmet, and then the quote, of course, of vengeance, that Jesus was wearing a helmet of salvation and a breastplate of righteousness.

Now, here Paul mentions just the breastplate and the helmet, but he words it a little differently, which shows that Paul is flexible. He refers to the breastplate as faith and love, and the helmet, which he elsewhere calls the helmet of salvation, he here calls it the helmet of the hope of salvation. Now, I'll bring those data into our discussion of the individual pieces of armor in Ephesians as we come to those verses that that becomes relevant, but I just want you to be aware of the various places and manners in which Paul brings up and discusses or mentions the armor elsewhere other than here.

Apparently, in putting on Christ, we put on the armor which Christ is himself wearing, and by being found in Christ, we are best defended. We are strong in him by the power of his might, and we are armed and shielded in him by the armor that he wears. Now, he says that putting on this armor, just like putting on the new man, something we do apparently in a progressive way as well as something that's been done by having just come into Christ initially, he says it guarantees that we will be able to stand, again in verse 11, against the wiles of the devil.

The word wiles that Paul uses here, he's used earlier. It means schemings, but he used it of the wiles of men in Ephesians 4.14. Back in Ephesians 4, in verse 14, he used the same word where he said that we should no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men and cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive. The cunning craftiness and trickery, these are the same concepts, but they're applied to men.

Now we're told that this cunning craftiness and trickery is the devil's ploy. Now, we've got more than one agency trying to deceive us here, trying to trick us. Obviously the devil, but also men, and Paul tells us, of course, in both cases that we need to not succumb to deception, whether it comes from man or directly from the devil himself.

The idea that there is a personal devil is not as popular as it once was. I don't know if it was ever really popular as an idea in the sense that it was something everyone felt good about, but it was widely held, and is still widely held among evangelicals, so there are those who would question whether the devil is a personal being or whether he's just a symbol for the evil in every man and so forth. Suffice it to say that the Bible everywhere speaks about the devil as if he were a personal being, and therefore if it is a metaphor for anything else than that, we are not told so in Scripture, and we must concern ourselves with the devil as if he is personal.



He is somebody who does things and has a plan and wiles and an agenda and schemes and reactions and so forth, and therefore the devil is who we're up against. Now, the idea of the devil coming into the believer's life as an opponent has, you know, there's various ways of looking at why the devil is there, why we have to stand against the wiles of the devil. I mean, if God didn't want us to succumb to the devil, why doesn't he just get rid of him? Is the devil somehow God's equal, that God cannot just effortlessly get rid of him? Is the devil somehow got some innate right to exist that even God cannot violate? I don't think so.

I don't think there's any creature in the universe that has an innate right to exist and that God cannot violate that right. God is sovereign, and as the sovereign and the creator of all, he can do what pleases him with his creatures, and the devil is certainly a creature, a created being. And I don't need to go into all this now.

I've done so much more at length in my spiritual warfare series of tapes that we have, and also in our studies of Isaiah and Ezekiel when we talk about the origin of Satan. And many people believe that God is not happy that the devil is around, and it's just a plan that went bad. God made the devil as a good guy and intended for him to really be a great glorifier of God and worshipper of God as a great angel, but something went wrong and the devil just kind of fell and became wicked.

This is the idea that Satan was once an angel and fell is perhaps the easiest answer that Christians have found to get to the question of why is there evil if God is good? The question philosophers always wonder about, if there's a good God, how can there be evil? Well, the Christian wrestles with that too, but many Christians seek to find some refuge in the suggestion that God doesn't approve of evil at all, and he didn't really intend for there to be evil. It was really just the devil who caused all that. And while most people are not even aware of an alternative theory that the devil was made exactly as he is rather than made as an angel, which theory does have as much support biblically as the alternate, just doesn't have the support of tradition on its side and long time exposure in the church, the answer that the devil is a fallen angel doesn't really solve the problem, because even if it were so, and it's hard to imagine that it could be so, that God would be surprised by the fall of Lucifer, that God really intended Lucifer to be a good guy, but to God's great surprise, Lucifer became a bad guy.

This of course takes a fairly low view of God's foreknowledge and maybe even a low view of his intelligence, which is not a very, in my opinion, very God-honoring opinion, but even if we could allow this, that God somehow was caught by surprise by this whole set of circumstances, then we must ask ourselves, why then when he found it to be so, that the devil had fallen, did he not rid the universe of him? Why did he not just do what the Bible indicates he will someday do, namely throw him into the lake of fire? And certainly the answer must be that God has use for him, which is one of the best arguments for, one of the several best arguments for the view that Satan never was an angel in the first

place and God made him to be the way he is, because he has use for him. God has use for a tester. If there had been no serpent to test Adam and Eve, we have reason to believe they never would have had any serious consideration of whether they would obey God or not, they'd just obey him rather mechanically without any kind of suggestion to the contrary.

They didn't have a sinful nature in them to incline them to do the wrong thing, they were neutral. But a tester makes it possible to allow people to make a true choice. And it seems that God wants such a choice to be made by all people.

He'd like it, he'd prefer it if everyone would repent and would resist temptation and say no to the devil and yes to God. That's what God would prefer to be the case, apparently, from scripture's indications. But at the same time, he doesn't want us to follow him because we have no other choice.

He doesn't want us to follow him without, in a vacuum, where there's really no real moral freedom. That is at least how I understand God's thinking on it and God's purposes as I try to synthesize what the Bible says on it. And therefore God wants there to be a devil at this present time or else there would be none.

And apparently he wanted there to be one in the Garden of Eden or there would have been none there. And so it's very possible that God made the devil just the way he is because that's what God wanted there to be. And he had use for it.

And we, you know, my father once asked our pastor when I was a child, and I don't remember what the answer the pastor gave. He might have given a good answer but I might have been too young to remember the answer, I just remember the question. Because it stuck in my mind, I didn't know the answer either.

My father, the pastor was at our home, and my father said, I understand why God lets there be a devil to tempt us and so forth before we become Christians so that we might make a choice, you know, with a real option available to us. But I don't understand why after we have become Christians, once we have decided that we will follow God and that we don't want to go the devil's way, why doesn't God then call the devil off? Why doesn't God say, okay, Satan, you had your chance with them but they made the right decision and you leave them alone? And the question seemed very good to me, I don't remember what answer the pastor gave, but I remember the question well because it seemed like a question I didn't know the answer to either. But there certainly is an answer, certainly God has a reason that he allows us to be engaged in conflict.

There are times when God spares his people from conflict. We read of it in Exodus, that when God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, he did not take them by the way of the Philistines because he didn't want them to see battle and be discouraged. They were too new in their faith in God, they didn't know God very well, and he was afraid they'd be

too quickly discouraged.

But after 40 years of orientation with God, they were subjected to many battles and had to rout seven kings out of Canaan in very challenging battles. And God taught their hands to war, and God taught them how to be obedient and how to trust God for victory and so forth. And he tested their loyalty by causing them to face challenges and see whether they would go forward or run away.

And sometimes they did run away and did not pass the test. Other times they did, and the ones who did were the ones that God made into great heroes and leaders in the nation, in the book of Judges and people like David and so forth. Likewise, he does not want us, I think, to be unacquainted with battle.

And the simple reason is that as long as others will have free choice, who have not yet chosen, as long as others have not yet decided to become Christian or not, the devil is going to have many resources available to prevent them, if he can, from making that choice. And we are working against him. He wants to prevent them from seeing the light, and we want them to see the light.

And one cannot have this tension of purposes without there being some form of clash, unless there's no power on one side or the other. And there is power on both sides. There certainly is great power on the side of the Church, if we are strong in the power of God and in the power of his might.

And so we are locked into conflict for the souls of men, and also for our own still, because we are refined by trials, we are refined by conflict, and we are strengthened by them, and we are continually tested in them as well. You know, when I married my wife, let me say, I mean, suppose, no, this wasn't the case, but suppose there was another man that was courting her at the same time I was, and who wanted her to marry him, and she chose to marry me instead. Of course, that would be meaningful to me, especially if the other man was one that offered her an attractive deal of some kind, and she chose to be with me instead.

And that would be meaningful. But after being married for 16 years, what if I thought she was staying with me now only because she had no other options? What if it was in my, what if my mind was running, what if another attractive offer came to her now that we've been married 16 years? Would she still choose to be with me? Or would she go off with someone else? Um, obviously, that's the kind of question that men don't like to think about. Women don't like to think about it when it's on their side either.

But it would be an awful thought for me to think that my wife stayed with me only because she had no other choice. Um, I mean, I'd like for her to stay with me in any case. But it's more meaningful for me to know that she stays with me out of faithfulness, out of commitment, um, out of concern for her promises made to me and my feelings

and things like that.

And that even if there were other choices open to her, she would reject them even now. Because getting married isn't the whole relationship. Getting married is the beginning of the relationship.

The relationship is for the rest of your life. And it's likewise with our relation with God. That we choose God in the face of other options, which the devil likes to present, is meaningful.

That we continue to choose him through the entirety of our life with him, although other options continue to present themselves, is even more meaningful. And I believe it's meaningful to God. And it is no doubt part of the reason, it may not be a full explanation, but it probably enters into the correct explanation of why God allows us to be tested.

Part of the reason is for our own loyalty to be tested from time to time. Of course, that's what, what Moses said to the people of Israel in Deuteronomy 13, that false prophets may come and they may show signs or wonders, but God is testing you to see whether you love the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul, he said. In Deuteronomy 13, 1 through 3. And there's no reason to believe that God deals differently with us than he did with Israel in that respect.

But also there are conflicts because we are aggressively seeking to capture the same territory that the devil now holds. And the devil is not powerless, and therefore there is a power struggle. And that territory that the devil now holds is the minds of all men who have not surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

And our task is to bring them under that Lordship. But as Paul makes clear in verse 12, we don't do this in the way that most sovereigns try to bring people under their sovereignty, under their Lordship. When Caesar or Alexander the Great or any of the great world conquerors, Napoleon or whatever, tried to bring people under subjection to them, under their Lordship, they did so with force of arms.

They did so with military devices and troops and armies and bloodshed and force. This is not how Jesus does, because you cannot win a woman's love by putting a gun to her head and saying, you must love me. And God wants to be loved.

He wants us to serve him because we love him. He could force us to, but that would, if he wanted to do that, he could have just made us animals in the first place without free will. I mean, it's his whole purpose in making us free, unless the integrity of that purpose is going to be compromised, he has to basically win our love.

And you don't do that by, as I say, putting a knife to the throat or a gun to the head. And so we do not wrestle, Paul says in verse 12, against flesh and blood. That is, we don't conduct a physical warfare against human bodies, but against principalities, against

powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places.

One commentary I read said that the first line of verse 12, the force of it, the emphasis of it in the way the Greek reads, should read something like, not for us is wrestling against flesh and blood. Emphatically saying it's not our place to wrestle against flesh and blood. It's not our place to fight people.

Emphasizing that it may be somebody's place to do it, but not us. It's not ours to do. It's not for us to do.

Fighting and wrestling with human beings may be something that some people should do at times. Law enforcement officers, perhaps the armies of nations, need to at times defend their citizens and so forth and their borders or whatever. But it's not ours to do.

Paul, I believe, sees the church as having an extremely distinctive calling. That it does not overlap the calling of the government or the state. And this is not clear to us at all, although we talk frequently in our country about separation of church and state, yet from the time of Constantine on, the idea of the church having an entirely different mission than the state has, has been significantly obscured because there were many centuries in the Middle Ages, from the time of Constantine on, where the church and the state were very closely merged.

And the interests of both were seen as identical. And the kings were subject to the popes in some cases. And so the fortunes of the state were seen as the fortunes of the church that ruled the state.

Now, of course, in our society, it's sort of the opposite of way. It's not that the church rules the state, but to a large extent, the church has allowed itself to be ruled by the state, and we receive benefits from the state. And we now have freedom of religion that we value and don't want to lose.

And the state assures us of this as long as we assure the state of our support and of our participation in the defense of the state. Obviously, if the state in a free country like this one, if it loses power to an enslaving oppressor, then the church loses its religious freedom. And there's been sort of de-struct with the modern church.

The state will give us tax exemption for our properties. The state will give us freedom to pursue our religious goals without interference. And we will, for our part, do everything the state asks us to do.

And if that involves going out and fighting the state's wars, then, well, it's only fair. Most people think Christians share in the benefits of freedom that were won through bloody wars. And sharing in these benefits confers to us also an obligation to participate in the defense of these freedoms and of these benefits that we have.

And so there are very few Christians, it seems, who even question whether it is ours to wrestle with flesh and blood or not. Obviously, if our country goes to war, we're part of this country. We're citizens here.

And if they draft us, well, then what are we to do but our civic duty, our patriotic duty, to defend the nation? Well, so is common to think among Christians today. But I don't think Paul would recognize that thinking. In his day, there were different spheres and different things to be accomplished.

The government was there to accomplish certain things. God would ordain the state. God ordained the government authorities, Paul said.

And he did that to punish evildoers and to praise those who do well. The state is there to enforce justice. And sometimes that requires the use of force.

Paul said the ruler does not bear the sword in vain. And the sword was an instrument of execution. And there are times when it is what God ordained the state to do, to execute people who've done things worthy of death, whether that be persons who are capital criminals in the civil realm, or whether it means oppressors who come to kill innocent people within the borders of the country.

This is what God ordained the state to do, apparently, from what Paul says. And Peter also says so. But God has ordained the church to do something entirely different.

And that is not to punish evildoers, but if possible, to reform them, to bring them to repentance, to restore them to God. We have a message not of domination. We have a message of reconciliation.

It is not the church that is called to enforce righteousness by physical means. God promotes righteousness two ways in this world. And he's instituted two institutions to do it.

One is he seeks to persuade the wicked to become righteous. And he's ordained the church to pursue those goals. Secondly, where certain wicked people refuse to pursue righteousness, and they pursue a life of sin and criminal activity, he has ordained the state to intervene, to physically restrain, and when necessary, punish people who will not do right.

So that righteousness is enforced two ways. God's preference, obviously, is that people would turn from their wicked ways and live. He says, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

That he has had to ordain the state to punish wicked people who will not repent is simply something God has had to do grudgingly, because people won't do what he wants them to do. But his preference is that the wicked will turn from their evil ways and live. And so

he has called the church, the body of Christ, to participate in the striving against evil at a different level.

Not wrestling against the evil people. Jesus said, you have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, do not resist.

Actually, when he said eye for eye, tooth for tooth, he said, but I say to you, do not resist the evil man. And the Christian is not called to that kind of resistance. There are indeed people that God has ordained for that role, but they're not Christian.

In my opinion. I believe the state is not a Christian institution. Now, if the state becomes Christian, as if all the people in government become believers, then what do we do? Well, that's a good question.

And it could be explored some other time. And I have some provisional answers I could give. All I want to say here is that Paul expresses here his sentiment that he expresses elsewhere also that we Christians are not called to physical conflict.

Not for us is the wrestling against flesh and blood. Sometimes criminals need to be wrestled down, but it's not our match. It's not our assignment.

We have another assignment. And if anyone says, well, how do you dare justify and join the freedoms of living in a free country, which was won by bullets and blood and so forth? And you yet will not go out and participate in its defense. I do participate in its defense.

The Bible says, when a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. And righteousness exalts a nation. But sin is reproached to any people.

A nation will come under dominion of another nation as God permits it. And it will not, as God does not permit it. God is sovereign over nations.

He raises up kings and he brings down kings. The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord. He can put it in the heart of a king to invade another country or not to.

And he can determine the outcome of all battles. God can destroy America, even if every Christian takes up arms and tries to fight off whoever the enemies are. But God will not destroy America if America turns to God.

God will not have motivation to destroy the nation. If there had been only 10 righteous in Sodom, he would have spared that city. And if where there is righteousness in a nation, God spares the nation.

It is, in fact, the presence of the righteous and those who advance the cause of righteousness in a nation. They are doing more to preserve the safety of the nation than are those who are not advancing righteousness, but are merely out defending the

borders. It is only in so far as the church fails in her warfare.

That physical warfare even becomes a necessity in a nation, because if the church is successful or faithful, at least in promoting righteousness by living righteous lives, by preaching the gospel, by teaching others to observe all things Jesus commanded, by bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, a nation with a virulent Christian witness in it is going to eventually... The opposition is going to be eroded, as it was in the Roman Empire eventually, or as it has been in some modern nations, where communism and other oppressive systems have fallen, and the Christian church, which kept at it, kept praying and kept witnessing, eventually eroded away at the power of those powers. A nation will eventually, in all likelihood, I say in likelihood because of course they still have free will, have a representation of righteousness within it that will prevent God from wanting to bring disaster upon it in the form of military conquest. The Bible gives us a doctrine of war that God uses war to punish nations.

That is, every war you read of in the Old Testament is seen as a war where God is punishing the heathen or punishing Israel if they're the ones who fall in battle. And even in the New Testament, God is the one who sends his armies against the city that rejects him in the parable of the wedding feast. The king sends out his armies to destroy them and to burn their city.

That was the Roman armies that did that, but they were God's armies because in the New Testament, as well as the Old, war is God's instrument of judgment on nations that have come to earn his displeasure. The church, if it wrestles effectively against the powers of darkness and effects a change in the direction of righteousness, and by the way, the church can do that in measure. I'm not saying the church can turn a whole nation around to God because there will always be individuals who won't.

Let's face it, if you could be a little more righteous than you are right now, that would increase the sum total of righteousness in this nation. If every Christian, without influencing even one other person, but just would personally be more holy than they are now, it would increase the holiness quotient in this nation. And, I dare say, because of that holiness, because of the light that that would bring, there would be new converts also, and that would also increase the holiness factor in a nation.

Righteousness exalts a nation, and the more holy and the more righteous and the more uncompromised and the more vigorous the witness and the more uncompromised the lives of the Christians, the more righteousness will exist in the nation. It may always remain at a minority, but it will be there, and God will take it into account. Now, there are times when it remains such a minority in a nation that God has to wipe out the nation anyway, but typically, historically, he's taken the Christians to a safer place when he's going to do that, at least giving them opportunity to go.

But it is not for the Christian to engage in the defense of a nation that God has written



Ichabod over. If the nation has rejected God so that it's under God's judgment, it's not for the Christians to fight against God. But it is for the Christians to fight.

Our freedoms are here not because of wars, but because of righteousness. And you can see we're getting fewer freedoms as time goes by because there's less righteousness. Now, we don't wrestle against flesh and blood, but we do wrestle.

We are not wimps. We do not shy away from conflict. We're not afraid of danger.

We just recognize that there is a greater danger than that of invaders, and that is the spiritual wickedness, the principalities and the powers, the rulers of the wickedness in heavenly places and so forth that Paul mentioned, the rulers of the darkness of this age. Now, Paul mentions in verse 12 four things or categories or something. Some people think they're synonyms.

Some people think he's just talking about the demonic realm, and he uses these different terms to refer to the demonic realm, principalities and powers, rulers of the wickedness. Rulers of the darkness of this age, spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places. These might all be synonymous terms.

There are others who believe that all of the categories mentioned are indeed demonic beings, but some feel that there are ranks. Just as we mentioned earlier that Paul tells Christians in different stations of life to rank themselves under each other, also the enemy has his ranks. And some have suggested that principalities and powers are one ranking level of demons in the demonic hierarchy, and rulers of the darkness of this age is another rank, and the spiritual wickedness in heavenly places is the highest rank of demon powers.

Actually, there's no way to prove that this is so. I know Kenneth Hagin was told this by revelation once when Jesus appeared to him, but some of the things Jesus told him, I don't know if I agree with, so I'm not sure if it was really Jesus. But anyway, there is a possibility that these are various ranks of the demonic hierarchy.

It's also possible, as I mentioned earlier when we were in our introduction talking about the special language of Ephesians and the frequent use of the terms principalities and powers, that these principalities and powers may not in fact be a reference to demonic powers at all, although I'm certainly of the opinion that the other two things, the rulers of the darkness of this age and the spiritual host of wickedness in heavenly places, I certainly believe those are demonic powers. But the term principalities and powers standing by itself in Paul's usage can mean demonic or human rulers, because we saw that in Titus 3.1, Paul uses the exact same Greek expression and says, tell the Christians to be subject to principalities and powers. It's translated differently in the New King James, but it's the same Greek expression, meaning earthly rulers.

Now, I don't know that this is so, and I'm not sure anyone can be sure. We just don't know what Paul had in mind for sure. Certainly some of these things he mentions are clearly demons, spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies.

Does not refer to angels of a good sort or to God. It does refer to spiritual beings of some kind, and they are wicked, and therefore we have every reason to recognize this as a reference to non-corporeal demonic principalities and so forth, or non-corporeal demonic forces. Though, as I say, the reference to principalities and powers not modified by the expression in the heavenlies with reference to that clause, the phrase, might include that our struggle is not against individual people, but we are in our own way struggling against the powers that be.

Both the powers in the heavenlies that are spiritual and wicked, and their earthly counterparts in the form of social structures and governments that oppose the gospel, and that would thwart the progress of the gospel. I will not take a stand on that being the correct interpretation, but I will say that that is not impossible, and we can see that not only does the church manage when faithful, when faithful to bring about spiritual change in individuals, but also social change and structural change in societies where the gospel has had a tremendous influence. It is in a sense the Christian counterculture that Jesus is bringing, his kingdom and its dynamics of an alternative society is pounding up against the prevailing culture, and its social norms and so forth, and beliefs and the political powers that sustain it, that there is not only a one-on-one conflict for the soul of an individual, it is the souls of the nations.

It is discipling the nations, and therefore there is a conflict against the wicked powers that be, as well as the spiritual powers. Now, when we pray, we are told by Paul in 1 Timothy 2 that we are to pray first of all for all men and all who are in authority, rulers and so forth, that we might live a peaceable life and all of that. So, prayer is part of our warfare, and praying about the political situation is one of the priority concerns in prayer, Paul said, because changing the political structures is a concern to us.

But notice he didn't say to vote or to rebel or to revolt. He said to pray, and it is a spiritual warfare that we do. It's not a political warfare.

I would not say that no Christian should ever be involved in any political activity. I can't say that. Politics is too vague a category, and many of the things that Christians must speak out against would possibly fall into the realm of what we call political issues.

We might just think of them as moral issues, but of course many moral issues have recently become politicized. And therefore, if we would speak out against feminism or against the mainstreaming of homosexual lifestyles or the tolerance of abortion or whatever, if we speak about those things, we might just see ourselves speaking about moral issues, but those issues have all been politicized, and so it's very difficult to say the degree to which our actual warfare as Christians, speaking the truth and love,

involves us in categories that might be called political in some ways. All morality is our concern, and some of that overlaps with issues that are called political issues.

And so I'm not going to say Christians should not be involved in any way in politics. Furthermore, I'm going to suggest this, that in speaking out about things, the Bible does not tell us exactly what ways are taboo as far as addressing these issues. There are Christians who feel that voting is right, and Christians who feel that voting is wrong.

Is that part of our warfare? I don't believe it's a central part of it. I don't believe that our warfare is principally political, and I have not been an active participant in voting. In fact, I'm not even a registered voter at this moment.

I'm not totally against it. It's just that I don't see that as where the cure is going to come. Our warfare is not political, per se, although it may be that someone could say that by voting, one is in a sense bearing witness or putting an endorsement on righteousness, which a Christian should be able to do, and I'm not going to say that that isn't so.

I'm just trying to skirt the whole issue of Christians' political involvement and just say that our real warfare is a spiritual one, but of course spiritual things are manifested in physical behaviors, some of which might be interpreted as political by some. But our war is against a spiritual kingdom, and we are advancing the interests of a spiritual kingdom, and it does not wage war in a physical sense, but a spiritual sense. So Paul affirms this also in 2 Corinthians 10.

2 Corinthians 10, verse 4 says, For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. This is our warfare, bringing thoughts into captivity, not bodies. For this you don't use carnal weapons, physical weapons.

Our warfare, notice the emphasis, the weapons of our warfare. Now there are weapons of other people's warfare that are carnal, but ours is of a different sort. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but they're of a different sort entirely.

So we don't wrestle with flesh and blood. We don't carry out a campaign depending on physical weapons, but we are involved against spiritual foes with mighty weapons that will pull down the strongholds of the enemy. Verse 13 says, Therefore take up the whole armor of God, which is similar to his statement put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand.

Now there's a guarantee here, it would appear in this verse, sort of a promise that if you maintain your stand, armed as God arms you spiritually, you will in the most evil circumstances, the evil day, whatever that may mean, withstand. You will stand against all the forces that the evil one can bring against you, and having done it all, when all the

dust is settled, you will be still on your feet. It's like the promise in James 4, 7, Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

It doesn't say he'll flee immediately, and it doesn't say how long you'll have to resist, but if you keep resisting, you will be the one on your feet when the battle is ended. If you don't resist him, then he may end up putting it over you. If you don't put on the armor of God, then you may find yourself to be the one pinned in this wrestling.

But the guarantee is here that if you put up the resistance in the power of his might, of God's might, and in full armor, then you will stand. You don't ever have to worry about the question, will I ever fall away? Well, you won't, if you do what the Bible says to do, and that's always the way it is. It's always a decision you have to make.

Stand, therefore, having girded your waist with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace, above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one, and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And this is not the end of the sentence, but let me stop there for a moment. There are five items mentioned that we could properly call pieces of armor.

They would be the girdle of the waist from which the sword would be hung, no doubt, and which is the belt, and also to which the breastplate was attached. The belt is not, strictly speaking, a piece of armor, but it holds some of the other armor together, and it binds up the garments that would otherwise perhaps get in the way and so forth when you put the armor on, because they'd wear some kind of a robe or cloak underneath it, some kind of thing underneath, and the belt would bind it up. But that would be technically part of the clothing, part of the armor you wear, and then you have the breastplate, you have the shoes, you have a shield, and you have a helmet.

So there are five items mentioned there. When he mentions the sword of the Spirit, that's not technically a piece of armor, that's a weapon. Armor is for defense, a weapon is for aggression.

And likewise, prayer is mentioned in verse 18 and 19, which I believe is also seen by Paul as a weapon of aggression. There are, therefore, five items that Paul mentions in connection with our defense, of wearing armor to protect ourselves against attack, and the other two items, the word of God and prayer, are more weapons, the weapons of our warfare, which Paul mentions elsewhere, which are not carnal, but are mighty through God to the pulling down of the strongholds. Now, I don't know how exactly Paul would want us to press the analogies he makes to this here.

Paul, when he wrote this, was, of course, under arrest. He was under house arrest in Rome, and there were soldiers attached to him. Whether they were actually attached

with a chain or whether they were just assigned to live with him and to keep an eye on him is not clear.

Many commentators believe that Paul was actually chained to a soldier at the time he wrote this. In any case, he had opportunity to see soldiers at close quarters, and as he was riding of the Christian's warfare, it may well be that he noticed the soldier and just thought, well, let's see, you've got a breastplate, you've got a helmet, you've got a belt there, you know, you've got a shield over there in the corner, and a sword. And he may have just thought, well, that's, the Christian has his equivalent of those things, too.

And these are the things that Paul mentions. But whether there's, you know, the temptation for a preacher, and for me as a preacher, to find some way in which righteousness particularly corresponds with a soldier's breastplate, as opposed to, I mean, could Paul as easily have said, put on the helmet of righteousness, or have the shield of righteousness? It's hard to know. Now, I can, over the years in teaching on this passage, I've found ways which I have used to correspond them, but I've always wondered, is this really what Paul has intended? I don't know.

The breastplate of righteousness, it's not hard to see that righteousness covers the heart and protects it from condemnation and so forth, and therefore the breastplate is worn over the heart. The helmet of salvation, I always try to think of some way to associate, you know, salvation with the head, you know, and the protection of the mind or something like that. But it's not the easiest thing in the world to do, and I'm not sure Paul wanted us to press these analogies that far.

He may have just been saying, your advantages as a Christian in Christ serve you in the same manner that an armor serves a soldier. And more for the sake of color than for specific detail, he may have just laid it out in the form of a breastplate and a helmet and all that, and really, basically the things that he refers to may well be more, you know, not to be taken so exactly, but there is correspondence to a degree, and maybe entirely, between the things he mentions and the specific ways in which those pieces of armor might be seen to help a person in spiritual conflict. He says you have your waist girded about with truth.

It's the first thing he mentions. We know that the enemy that we are up against is the devil, and he is said to be the father of lies, and he is the dragon that deceives the whole world. And the first sin occurred because Eve encountered this devil, and he deceived her, beguiled her, from the very beginning in Genesis to the very end in Revelation.

Satan is referred to as a beguiler or a deceiver. And Jesus himself said in John 8, 44, that he is a liar and the father of lies. So it would appear that deception or untruth is the devil's principal mode of operation.

And the first thing the Christian has to have bound to him, like a belt, something that is

attached tightly and binds other things together. Everything kind of coheres with this belt is the truth. The Christian has to have the truth.

Now truth, unfortunately for us, is a word that has a variety of meanings in scripture, some of them very different from each other. When we hear the word truth, we might think in terms of propositional truth. For example, two plus two equals four is a truth.

Two plus two equals five is an untruth. Certain propositions are true and others are not true. And we think of truth often as the sum total of correct or true or accurate propositions.

And the Bible could use it that way, although more often than not it's going to be speaking of spiritual truth in that way, but it's still the sum total of spiritual propositions that are true. In this case, though, I think the word truth is used in the sense of personal integrity. The word in the Greek is a negative word.

It means not concealing. It is the negation of the ordinary word for concealing. And the word truth here means not concealing.

And it seems to speak of personal transparency or personal honesty and integrity. And I think what Paul is saying is the first thing, if you're going to be armed against spiritual attacks, the first thing you better make sure you've got in order is your integrity. Better make sure you're an honest person.

If people can spot dishonesty in you, can catch you in a lie, can see you coloring the truth according to your prejudices or whatever, or deceiving anyone, then you have lost your testimony, first of all. And secondly, you have stepped right into the devil's territory where he has the advantage. He's the father of lies.

And if you become a liar in any sense yourself, you become one of his step-sons. And in order to maintain your integrity, you have to love the truth. You have to maintain a conscience that will never allow you to compromise what you know is the truth.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians, we can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth. And so to be honest is the first thing he mentions. Now, how this corresponds to a belt in a kit of armor, I don't know.

Except, of course, a belt is bound around one and is secured there. And it's also the case from what I've read in commentaries that the belt was the first article of clothing put on by a soldier. He put that on first, and then he attached his breastplate to it, and his sword to it, and so forth.

And so Paul may, just in using the image of a belt, it may not be so much that truth somehow figures in the analogy so much as a belt, as much as it's just the first thing you have to put on. Like if a soldier puts his belt on first, you need to make sure, first and

foremost, that you have put on integrity and personal honesty of character, that you're a person of truth. Secondly, having put on the breastplate of righteousness.

Now, this is the same term that's used in Isaiah 59, 17 of Christ. He had on the breastplate of righteousness. And yet in 1 Thessalonians 5, when Paul mentions the breastplate, in 1 Thessalonians 5, 8, he says, putting on for a breastplate faith and love.

Now, why would Paul, in both passages, and I don't think there's any significance to this, dispute that Paul wrote Ephesians and that he wrote 1 Thessalonians, why would he in one place say the breastplate of righteousness, which is clearly a quote from an Old Testament passage, but in another passage, alter it deliberately to something else, put on the breastplate of faith and love. My hunch about this is that Paul intended righteousness to be seen in both of its aspects. In one sense, we are righteous because we are justified by God, and that is by faith.

However, our practical righteousness, our behavior of a righteous sort, is defined in terms of the degree of its being consistent with love. If we love people, we act in a way that is, in God's sight, righteous. Now, righteousness for the Christian is both that imputed righteousness, which is by faith, and that lived out righteousness, which is an expression of love.

And therefore, when Paul says breastplate of righteousness in Ephesians and in Thessalonians, says put on as a breastplate faith and love, faith is that by which we are justified and made righteous in the sight of God. Love is that principle upon which, when we act in it, we are acting righteously. We behave in a way that is righteous in the sight of God when we love our neighbor.

And so, putting on righteousness would mean maintaining faith and love as a behavior pattern. Now, this is said to be like a breastplate, possibly because the heart is covered by a breastplate, and the heart in the scripture, symbolically, is the target of the devil's condemnation. It says in 1 John 3, if our heart condemns us, then God is greater than our heart knows all things, but if our heart condemns us not, if our heart does not condemn us, then we have confidence toward God, and we receive whatever we ask for from him.

It says that in 1 John 3, verses 20 through 22. Now, the devil certainly doesn't want us having confidence toward God, therefore, he wants our heart to condemn us. And we know that one of the devil's chief ploys is accusation.

He's the accuser of the brethren. He wants to bring condemnation. Why? Because condemnation felt and experienced in the heart alienates you from God.

You know, you can be condemned two ways. One is by sinning and bringing condemnation upon yourself that way, and another is simply by thinking you've sinned and sensing the same sensation of condemnation because you think you've sinned as if

you had really sinned. That's why Paul tells people that even though there may be nothing intrinsically wrong with eating meat, sacrifice to idols, if you think it's wrong, don't do it because it's a sin to you.

It may not be a sin before God, but if it's a sin in your own sight, you bring the same condemnation on your heart as if it were really a sin, and that's all the devil cares about. The devil doesn't care if you sin or not. The devil just wants you to be alienated from God, and when you feel condemned before God, you don't have any confidence toward God.

Now, of course, the righteousness of Christ is through faith, and that takes care, in a sense, of the condemnation problem. There's no condemnation to those who are justified because justification and condemnation are opposites of each other, so our righteousness covers our heart. The righteousness which is by faith, that justification, protects the heart from condemnation, but also the lived-out righteousness.

You will not feel condemned if you're living out a holy life, a life of love. If we love one another, we will have confidence toward God, and that also is stated in 1 John. Didn't intend to give it, so I don't remember what verse it is off the top of my head here, but in 1 John 2, verses 28 and 29, it says, And now little children abide in him, that when he appears we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him as coming.

That means no condemnation. If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of him. And so, if we practice righteousness, then we will not be ashamed before him as coming.

There is another passage that I had in mind though, where he speaks about our loving one another, is our confidence. Well, yeah, okay, it's 1 John 3, verse 18 and 19, My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but let us love in deed and truth, and by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. So, we have confidence before him, and we assure our hearts before him, because we do righteousness, because we love our neighbor in deed and in truth.

So, righteousness protects the heart from the condemnation that the devil seeks to use to alienate us from God and to evaporate our access to God's work. So, the breastplate is righteousness, both imputed and lived out righteousness, through faith and love. Now, Paul next mentions having your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Now, the gospel of peace and feet, as images put together, comes from Isaiah 52, which says, How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims the gospel of peace, or good tidings of peace. The gospel of peace is what Paul uses here. He gets that expression from Isaiah 52, Isaiah 52, 7. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, and brings glad tidings, that's the gospel of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion,



Your God reigns.

This is us. Paul actually quotes this verse from Isaiah in Romans concerning his own ministry. In Romans 10, I think it is.

And so, this is the gospel of peace that's being brought. Now, the feet of the one who carries the gospel of peace are beautiful, but a soldier's feet crossing over mountains don't remain beautiful. They get all calloused and beat up, unless they have, and blistered, unless they have shoes of an adequate sort.

And so, Paul links this gospel-carrying enterprise with the idea of wearing the right kind of shoes. Now, the preparation for the gospel of peace is what the shoes are. The gospel is not the shoes, but the preparation of the gospel is.

And the word preparation is unfortunately ambiguous. Commentators are not sure whether it means preparedness or readiness in the sense of being ready for anything, be ready to go out and carry the gospel and preach the gospel in hard, over hard terrains and in hard fields and so forth, have the preparation or the preparedness or the readiness to carry the gospel. That is one possible meaning of the word.

The word preparation also can refer to a prepared foundation or an established foundation. And some have felt that since the shoes were probably in his mind the hobnailed shoes, sandals of the Roman soldier, these would be made best for standing your ground. You dig in and then when you swing your sword, the weight of your sword doesn't make you lose your footing because your feet are kind of dug into the ground like with cleats.

And that your foundation upon which you're standing, the preparation upon which you stand in this battle, in waging your war and so forth, is that of the gospel that you represent. I don't know which is really what was in Paul's mind. It is true that most of what Paul is talking about up to this point has to do with defensive activity rather than offensive.

And if it was a preparation to carry the gospel forward, one might think that that's changing the thrust of Paul's thought here, that he's mainly talking about standing firm, to stand where you are. He's not talking about progressing. He's not talking about marching.

He's talking about standing and not losing ground. And therefore, the preparation of your shoes, having your feet dug in, and that you're solidly standing on the gospel and not on some other message or some deviation of it. If you alter the message at all and you're standing for something, some other cause, then you're going to be in a weak position when it comes to the devil's devices.

Now, he also mentions above all, verse 16, taking the shield of faith. Now, above all

suggests covering everything else. The shield that he mentions, there are different shields that the Romans had.

And the particular Greek word he uses was for the shield that was almost the size of a door. You know, it was a big rectangular shield and the whole body could hide behind it. There were smaller battle shields and bucklers and things that were used in battle too.

But the word that Paul uses refers to this large shield that literally covered the whole body. And the Roman troops, the front line of them would have these shields. The rest of the troops would be behind them and they'd progress against the enemy, you know, just one step at a time and plant their shield and duck, and they'd just have this moving wall that was invulnerable, moving toward the enemy and protecting them from the enemy's attempts at self-defense.

Now, Paul says that the shield that we have is faith. It covers everything else. Everything is subject to faith, our righteousness, our salvation, our standing, even our use of the word.

If we don't believe the word, it's of no use to us. It won't be strong. It will not be useful in battle.

And so, faith kind of covers the whole life. Everything else is somehow established because of faith and is protected and is made secure by faith. And so, the shield is the shield of faith.

He says with that, you'll be able to quench all the fiery darts or flaming arrows of the enemy. If faith is what quenches the fiery darts, then perhaps the fiery darts are doubts. When the devil tries to plant doubts in your mind, then faith is what removes doubt.

And so, we can see that we're seeing the devil as a liar. We're seeing the devil as an accuser. We're seeing the devil as a planter of doubts.

But these various pieces of armor address each of these different kinds of attack. And the helmet of salvation. Now, this, of course, is an image that he got from Isaiah 59 and 17.

Christ was wearing the helmet of salvation. In 1 Thessalonians, the helmet of the hope of salvation. But I'm not sure exactly why the head piece, the helmet, is used as an image for salvation.

Paul may have just picked it up out of the passage in Isaiah without any special intention of it meaning anything else. It may have been used of Christ in Isaiah simply as a metaphor of righteousness and salvation or his armor, helmet and breastplate. I don't know.

All we can say, of course, is that the head is a very vulnerable target and is one of the most vital targets. If someone hits you in the head, you're gone. If a weapon hits you in the head, if it hits you in the shoulder, the arm, or the leg, or the knee, you're going to be hurting.

But if you hit you in the head, you're dead. You're out of there. And so the most essential thing to defend besides the heart would be the head.

And salvation, basically, you know, without your salvation, you're dead. Without salvation, you're not even in the battle anymore. And so keep your salvation intact.

You maintain your walk with God and your relation with God, which is your salvation. As a helmet on the head would be the last thing that a soldier would ever want to be without out in the thick of battle, having his head vulnerable. He'd be too easily killed.

Prayer is the last thing, or the sword of the Spirit and prayer are the last two things he mentions. The Word of God is the sword. And I think he has that in mind not as a defensive, but as an offensive.

We go and take territory from the enemy through the preaching of the Word of God. And where we can't go and where we face obstacles that we can't overcome, we pray. We pray for the missionaries.

Paul says, pray for me. Pray for all the saints. Pray that I'll be able to speak the Word of God boldly.

So we take the sword of the Word ourselves and reach people with the Word of God. But we also pray for others who are doing so and for the ministry of the Word that it might be effective and that it might not succumb to the opposition. You know, we are not only told in the Bible to pray.

We're also told what to pray for in many cases. And this is one of them. We ought to make sure that when we pray, we do not neglect to pray for the effectiveness of the Word of God as it goes out through missionaries.

That's what Paul's saying we should pray for here. Because not only are we to stand secure as saved people, but we are to see others saved. And that is what the Word of God and our prayers are for.

We pray, thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And we pray for the advance of the kingdom of God at the expense of the kingdom of darkness.

So that the warfare that Paul sees us in is both, as all warfares are, defensive and offensive. We need the armor to be defended so our own souls are not lost. And we need to take weapons so that other souls that are now lost might be saved.

And that territory now held by the enemy may be captured in the name of the king that we represent. And these are the images with which Paul depicts the Christian's activity in the world, in a hostile world. And we're going to have to wind down our whole treatment of Ephesians, unfortunately, in about 30 seconds here.

It's kind of sudden. But the last four verses, as I mentioned earlier, are simply personal notes that are not necessary to the essential message of the book. And so we have it.

Life in Christ, of sitting, walking, and standing in Christ, is the threefold picture of the Christian life given by Paul in Ephesians.