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The Armor of God



Spiritual Warfare - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses the concept of the Armor of God in a spiritual context, referencing the teachings of Paul in the Bible. He emphasizes the importance of truth, righteousness, salvation, faith, and prayer in serving as "armor" for the Christian in times of spiritual battle. Gregg breaks down the different components of the Armor of God, explaining the significance of each piece and how they can be applied in daily life. He stresses the need to maintain righteousness through a commitment to avoiding sin and maintaining a clean conscience.

Transcript

In this session, I'd like to look more closely at the resources that are given to us. We'll also be looking a little later at the devices that Satan uses against us. But actually, before getting directly into that subject, I'd like to look at our devices, our equipment, actually, that the Bible says is ours in the spiritual warfare for our defense.

Now, we were talking last time about the edge that the Christian has in battle, being principally the fact that we're simply carrying out the completion of a battle that's already been accomplished. Our victory has been accomplished by Christ, and we are just mopping up. The issues of battle are not in question.

There is no reason to be curious or in doubt about how this will ultimately turn out. It is just a matter of when and how long it will take us. And I think that has a lot to do with our seriousness and dedication to the task of getting the job done, which is to enforce, honor the victory that Christ has already accomplished in heaven.

Now, the church is to bind on earth the things that have been bound in heaven, and although Jesus made that comment twice and did not make it in the context of spiritual warfare, it is nonetheless the case that the Scripture describes Satan as having been disabled and disarmed and bound. Heaven knows of these facts, but earth does not yet. And therefore it is the mission of the Christian to see to it that this reality is enforced and realized in the earthly sphere where we are working and where we are to get the job done.

Now, I'd like you to turn again to Ephesians chapter 6. I'm sorry that we have to turn so frequently to some of the same passages, but these passages are so full they require us to come back to them to hit different parts of them and to look more closely at individual aspects. In Ephesians 6, which is probably the best known and most often used passage in Scripture with reference to spiritual warfare, we have Paul speaking of the armor of God. And I'd like you to begin reading along with me in Ephesians 6 at verse 10.

Paul says, "...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 fiery darts 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 things." Now, here we have mention of armor. Obviously, when you talk about armor, we are considering a martial or military kind of an imagery. And we have, I have, heard much about the armor of God from various teachers.

One of the most common things that I've heard repeatedly is people saying, well, in the morning when you get up, you need to put on your armor. You need to just prop yourself upright in bed, put your feet on the floor, and before you even get out of bed, just consciously put on the helmet of salvation, and put on the breastplate of righteousness, and so forth. Well, I don't know if, I don't know if Paul is thinking in those terms.

I've actually heard some people recommend that you go through the physical motions of, okay, I'm putting on the helmet of salvation now, you know. I mean, this seems, to my mind, more goofy than really biblical. I don't think that Paul had in mind when he said, take the armor and put on the armor, that he meant that we should go through some kind of pantomime of putting on pieces of articles of armor.

I think what's really going on here is that Paul is describing the normal features and advantages of the Christian life, and using a metaphor that likens them to the equipment of a soldier. After all, what are you talking about? Having your waist girded about with truth. Okay, well, truth is nothing mystical.

Truth is a concept that we know a great deal about, and we've already mentioned that truth is what the battle is all about. If we don't have the truth, then we don't have anything to offer the world, because the world is lost because of deception. We have the breastplate of righteousness.

Well, righteousness is also a typical biblical subject. Our shield is faith. Well, there's a lot that we know about faith in the Bible, the helmet of salvation.

These items, really, it's not as if Paul is introducing something new, that he's introducing some new angle on the Christian life, and that is that in addition to Christian living, you need to learn how to do warfare and put on these pieces of armor. I think that what Paul is doing is saying that Christian life is a warfare, among other things. One metaphor under which we can think of our Christian life, besides that of sheep following a shepherd or runners running in a race, or some of the other metaphors of Scripture, we can see it as soldiers in an army, soldiers in a warfare.

It is a warfare for truth, and we have been given adequate advantages and protections so that we can win and stand in the conflict. Our righteousness, our salvation, our faith, the truth that has been given to us, these things serve us, even as pieces of armor serve a soldier. And when we take up the armor of God, again, I don't think there's any value in the pantomime of acting like you're putting a helmet on your head, but I do think that Paul is saying that you need to take stock and make sure that you have all the aspects of the Christian life that protect you from the enemies of the wicked, from the wiles of the devil, the fiery dark of the wicked one, as Paul puts it.

Now, I want to talk about the armor a little bit, because Paul does give us this as a partial picture of his whole concept of spiritual warfare, it's the armor that we have, and although Ephesians 6 is the best-known place where Paul actually lists pieces of armor, it is not the only place that Paul speaks about armor. If you turn over to 1 Thessalonians, in chapter 5, you'll find that there's sort of a shorter, similar passage about armor. In 1 Thessalonians, chapter 5, verses 5-8, Paul says, You are all sons of light and sons of the day.

We are not of the night nor of the darkness. Therefore let us not sleep as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.

But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. Now, here Paul mentions a breastplate and a helmet, as he also does in Ephesians 6. Interestingly, he does not identify them exactly by the same terms as he does in Ephesians 6. In Ephesians 6, he says, put on the helmet of salvation. Here he says, put on for a helmet the hope of salvation.

Now that wording makes it very clear that he's saying what you need to do is acquire the hope of salvation. And it will serve you as a helmet, or like a helmet serves a soldier. Now what about the breastplate? In Ephesians, the breastplate is the breastplate of righteousness.

But here, Paul refers to it as the breastplate of faith and love. Well, one thing seems clear here is that Paul does not feel bound to a certain metaphor that he cannot alter as the situation allows. In other words, there's not some kind of mystical breastplate called righteousness, but various things in the Christian life could be served like a breastplate.

But righteousness is one of them. Faith and love also can serve as a breastplate, depending on what point Paul wants to make using this metaphor. There are other passages where the armor of God is referred to.

In 2 Corinthians 6, verse 7, kind of picks up Paul in the middle of a sentence. He says, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. This is speaking about Paul's own ministry and how he commends himself as a minister of God, how he demonstrates himself to be a minister of God by these various traits, including his wearing of the armor of God.

And he's protected on all sides, on the right hand and on the left, from various kinds of attacks by having this armor upon him. Now, Paul gives us an important understanding of what it means to put on the armor of God when in Romans 13 he equates putting on the armor of God with putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. In Romans 13, verses 12-14, Paul said, 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 in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lust. Now notice at the end of verse 12 he says, Put on the armor of light.

In verse 14 he says, Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. I'd like to suggest to you that these are synonymous. Putting on the armor and putting on the Lord Jesus are not two different things, but are the same thing.

In a moment I'd like to talk to you about what it means to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, but first I'd like to turn your attention back to Isaiah chapter 59, because it is from there that Paul derives his imagery of the armor that we read of in Ephesians. Isaiah 59, and verse 16 and following, principally 16 and 17. Maybe I'd better read verse 15.

About the middle of verse 15 it says, Then the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. 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. He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak. Now this is figurative, but it's speaking of Christ actually.

When it says that God saw there was no intercessor, so his own arm brought salvation for him. That arm is Christ, the arm of the Lord. We know this because earlier, in describing Jesus in Isaiah 53, it says, To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he grew up as a tender plant, meaning Jesus did.

And he's referred to in Isaiah 53, 1 and 2, as the arm of the Lord. Jesus is the arm of the Lord. Therefore in Isaiah 59, it says, The Lord's arm brought salvation for him.

Of course we're speaking of Jesus accomplishing salvation. It's Jesus who put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation for his head. It also mentions that he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak.

These, however, are not necessarily armor. Clothing and a cloak are not necessarily continuing the military imagery. And when Paul wants to use military imagery, he only takes the first two items here that Jesus is said to wear.

Righteousness as a breastplate, salvation as a helmet. And we see that when Paul tells us to take the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation, he's telling us to be clad in the same armor that Jesus is wearing. And the way that is done is by putting on Jesus, by being found in him.

There are a number of places in Scripture, in Paul's writings, where we are exhorted to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, or put on the new man, or to put on certain traits that are associated with the new man. The new man, in Paul's writings, is a reference to Christ, particularly the body of Christ, Christ's corporate existence. This is easily demonstrated by turning to one of the earliest statements on the subject from Paul in Ephesians chapter 2. In Ephesians, actually only in Ephesians, Colossians, and Romans do we ever find Paul using the language of the new man or the old man.

But the earliest appearance of it in Ephesians is in Ephesians 2. And there we read, in verse 15, Now the two here are the Jew and the Gentile. And God has broken down the middle wall of partition, separating Jew and Gentile. It says that in verse 14.

And he has taken the believers of the Jews and the believers of the Gentiles and made them in himself, that is in Christ, a new man. That new man is the body of Christ. Later on, in Ephesians 4, Paul says in verse 22, Which was created according to God in true righteousness and holiness.

This new man is the body of Christ, the church. Earlier in chapter 4, he had said that we must mature until we come unto a mature man. That is, until the church becomes a mature man, in verse 13 of Ephesians 4. The church is seen as a corporate individual, a new man, a new body.

This is the body of Christ, and therefore Paul identifies the church with Christ. For example, in Ephesians chapter 1, verses 22 and 23. Ephesians 1, 22 says, And he put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him, who fills all in all.

Now Paul says that the church is the body of Jesus, and it is the fullness of him, the completeness of him. You see, Paul teaches that Jesus is the head of the body, and we

are the members of the body. The head and the body are all one organism.

They all have one name, one identity. And therefore, the body of Christ is viewed by Paul as the extension of Christ himself in this world. Jesus is the head, we are the feet and the hands and all the other parts.

And therefore, he equates, in some passages, the body of Christ with Christ. If you look over at 1 Corinthians chapter 12, Paul is using the metaphor of the human body. And initially, when he talks about the body in this verse, he means the ordinary human body, which he uses as a metaphor for what he's going to say.

But in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul says, For as the body, meaning any body, any human body, is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. Now, of course, what Paul is actually saying is, just as a human body has many members and is one body, so is the church. The church is a body with many members.

We would expect him to say, so also is the body of Christ. Or, so also is the church. But he says, as a human body has many members, so is Christ.

Christ is a body with many members. And Paul goes on to say, we are the members. Elsewhere, he says, do not lie one to another for your members.

Actually, in 1 Corinthians 6, he says that if a man goes to a prostitute, he involves Christ in sin with a prostitute because we are members of his body. And we are joining the members of Christ to a harlot. Paul takes this very seriously.

The body of Christ is Christ. Not in the sense that we are Jesus. Jesus is the head of the body of Christ.

Today, we are the members of the body of Christ. And this organism is one new man. Now, the Bible, especially Paul, repeatedly tells us to put on the new man.

To put on Christ. And also tells us to put off the old man. Well, what is the old man then? Well, over in Romans chapter 6, Romans chapter 6 and verse 6, we have the earliest reference in Scripture to the old man.

And it says in Romans 6, 6, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him. Okay, there's the old man. It was crucified with Christ.

Now, I realize that you may have been taught, I know I was taught, that the old man and the new man should be translated old self and new self. In fact, many modern translations have done the disservice to the body of Christ of rendering Paul's statement, new man and old man, as new self and old self. If you have the NIV, I think even the New American Standard has done this.

Maybe not right here, but in Ephesians and Colossians, where Paul says put on the new man and put off the old man. Many modern translations say put on the new self and put off the old self. Well, the word self is not the right translation.

Man is the right translation. Man, anthropos, is the word that Paul uses. It does not mean self, it means man.

And the reason that some translators have changed it to the old self or the new self is not because of any valid lexical meaning of the word, but because of their own theological assumption. They assume that we have two selves, an old one and a new one, and that Paul is therefore referring to these two selves when he talks of the old man and the new man. These two selves are thought to be natures, two natures.

One of them is our old nature and one is the new nature, and that these are in us. That the old man is in me and the new man is in me. And then there's this fight between the old man and the new man in me.

Well, let me tell you this. I will not deny that the Bible indicates there are two natures in the believers. We have our human nature.

We also have been recipients of the divine nature. So there are two natures, and certainly they are at war with one another. The spirit lusts against the flesh and the flesh against the spirit, and so forth, Paul says.

But that does not mean that when Paul talked about the old man and the new man that this is the particular reality he was talking about. When Paul talked about the old man and the new man, he did not talk about something that is in you. He was talking about something you are in.

You are either in the old man or you are in the new man. The old man and the new man are corporate entities which every person is in, one or the other. Now, Paul said in Romans 6.6, our old man was crucified, but he does not explain what he means by the old man.

He has never used this expression previously in his writings. How are we to understand this? Even the Romans to whom he wrote it had never heard him preach. He had never been to Rome when he wrote this.

He wrote this letter in anticipation of his first visit to Rome. So the readers had never heard Paul preach, and yet he comes out of his left field and talks about the old man without explaining what he means. We might expect that they would understand him in light of something that appeared earlier in the book of Romans.

What is the old man? Well, if you look at chapter 5, you will find that Paul has an extensive discussion about Adam and Christ in chapter 5. He talks about this man and

that man, one man and one man. For example, verse 14 says, Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned, according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of him who was to come. That is, Adam was a type of Christ.

But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by one man's offense many died, that's Adam, much more the grace of God and the gift of grace by the one man, that's Christ, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. And as the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned, that is, one man, for the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification.

For if by one man, that's Adam's offense, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the one, that is, one man, Jesus Christ. So he talks about one man and one man. He says in verse 19, For as by one man's disobedience, that's Adam, many were made sinners, so also by one man's obedience, that's Christ, many will be made righteous.

There's two men. There's one man in whom everyone is a sinner, and there's one man in whom everyone is righteous. The older man is Adam, that older in the sense that he appeared in history first.

The newer man is Christ, the younger, the newer, the more recent man. There are two men, and all humanity is in one or the other of these men. All are in Adam, or all are in Christ.

Adam is the older man. He's the old man. He's the one man in whom all sin.

Christ is the new man in whom all are made righteous. Paul does not use the terms old man and new man to refer to an old nature and a new nature in every believer. He's talking about a corporate entity that all people when they're born in this world are born in Adam.

When they're born again as Christians, they are born into Christ. They're now in him. They are now in the new man.

Now we are told, although we are in the new man, that we must put on the new man. Now, interesting that the term put on is used, it's like putting on a garment. A garment isn't something in you.

A garment is something that you are in, once you have put it on. But we read in Ephesians 4, and we read this a few moments ago, that Paul said in verse 22 that you should put off, concerning the former conduct, the old man. And in verse 24, and that you put on the new man.

He's actually instructing us to put on the new man and put off the old man. In Colossians, however, in chapter 3, Colossians 3, he says in verse 9 and 10, And do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man, which is deeds, and you have put on the new man, who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of him who created him. For there is neither Greek nor Jew, for that in the church, in the new man, neither circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, civilian, slave, nor free, but Christ is all and in all, in the new man.

There's no Jew or Gentile. In the new man there's no barbarian, civilian, bond, or free. Only in Christ, that is in the new man, in the church, in the body of Christ, there is just oneness, one man.

Now, Paul, interestingly, in Colossians says, we have put off the old man and we have put on the new man. And yet in Ephesians, which he wrote about the same time he wrote Colossians, he said, put on the new man, put off the old man. There's a sense in which we've already done this.

There's another sense in which we do this continually. In becoming a Christian, I shed the old garment of association with Adam and the heritage that he left to all those who were in him of sin and death. I've taken off that garment and I've put on a new garment.

I've put on Christ. I've put on the new man. And that new man is renewed in the mind and so forth, as Paul points out.

But on the other hand, I'm also told every day to put off the old man and to put on the new. Now, what I'm supposed to put off is the old man with his deeds. And what that apparently means is this, that although when I was converted, I put off my association with Adam, yet today I still have the problem, the tendency, to continue in the deeds of Adam.

I need to put those deeds off. I need to continually be putting off that association, putting off that identity. And I need to be continually putting on or associating myself fresh with the new identity, the new identity that I have once and for all put on as a Christian, but which I daily put on in terms of my choice of behavior and my course in life.

I have to remind myself from time to time, and of course this is the less so as you've been Christian for years and have been doing this habitually, but a new Christian especially has to remind himself, I'm not who I was. I'm not associated with that whole humanity. I mean, they can reject me.

It doesn't matter. I'm not them. I'm someone else now.

I'm in Christ. My identity is that of Christ, not of Adam. And my behavior must be that which resembles Christ, not that which resembles Adam.

I must put off the corrupt deeds of Adam and put on holiness and true righteousness, which is associated with my identity in Christ. Now, as I showed you a moment ago in Romans 13, Paul uses synonymously the term put on the armor of light and put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, I've tried to point out Jesus is the one who's wearing the armor.

Jesus is the armed one. He is the one who put on for a breastplate righteousness and for a helmet salvation. He is the one who smites the nations with the sword that proceeds out of his mouth, which is the word of God.

When I take up the sword or put on the breastplate, this is simply my putting on the Lord. As I put on the Lord Jesus Christ day by day, moment by moment, as I choose to walk in and count on and acknowledge my association with Christ and make choices according to that reality, I am experiencing righteousness, his righteousness. It's his breastplate, but if I'm in him, it's mine.

I'm experiencing salvation. That's the helmet that he put on, but I have it on if I'm in him, and so forth. We see that Jesus is the armed one, and this is why we cannot lose in the battle if we put on the Lord.

Now, Paul, when he exhorted us to put on the armor in Ephesians chapter 6, said, put on the whole armor of God so that you may withstand. This is, I want to read the actual words of Paul here rather than partially quote them. Verse 13, therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand.

That means to resist, to stand against. In the evil day, now some people think the evil day refers to a particular evil day, whether judgment day or some would apply it to tribulation or whatever, but I think probably any particular evil day, any day of great conflict, when the enemy, when the forces of evil are coming against you, that day, you need to be able to withstand those forces, that you may be able to withstand an evil day, and having done all, to stand. Now, when the dust settles and the battle's over, someone's going to be standing.

It better be you. And so Paul says, in order for you to be the one standing, having done everything, and when the battle's all over and the fighting is, there's a reprieve in the fighting, that you are left on your feet. You're not down.

You're not a casualty. So, Paul indicates that we have, in what he is calling the armor of God, we have tremendous security. We have tremendous reason to expect that we will not succumb in the fiercest of fighting, in the fiercest of spiritual conflict.

And, therefore, we need to take stock of what it is that is referred here to the armor of God. I mean, it's true that Paul is talking, in a sense, about familiar subjects, and just using an unfamiliar metaphor for them. When he talks about truth and righteousness and salvation and faith, these are familiar subjects.

They occur in all the teaching of all the writers of Scripture. Paul is simply using them in a less familiar association with how they protect us in the spiritual conflict, when he speaks of them in this way. But he does want us to pay attention to these specific items and to realize that they are our protection.

That's what armor is. It's protective. And so I want to look at each of these things that Paul mentions in Ephesians 6. I want to focus briefly on each one, and make sure we understand what Paul is saying and what it is that these do for us, what advantages conferred upon us in spiritual warfare by the possession of these items.

I want to say, before I get into the five items particularly, that all of them protect us in a spiritual way. We do not find any pieces of armor that are there to protect us physically. Remember, the battle is not physical.

Paul has opened the discussion by making that clear. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, he says in verse 12. This is not a physical fight, and therefore the armor is not going to be relevant to our physical safety.

A Christian wearing all this armor may die, physically. May be a martyr. May die in an accident.

There are no guarantees here that when you are standing, you are physically standing. The idea is that when you stand at the end of time before God, you will stand as undefeated by the enemy. But that doesn't mean you will not have died.

I want to make it very clear that the armor of God, and the protection of God, and the spiritual warfare that we are in, is not a war for survival physically. And I've said that earlier, but I want to say it again, because so many times people associate physical hardship with the works of the devil. And I think the devil can influence physical hardship.

But I don't believe that our spiritual warfare prevents this. Paul, for example, had a thorn in the flesh that was a messenger from Satan. He didn't just put on his armor and make it go away.

He prayed and asked God to make it go away, and God said, No, I'll give you something better. I'll give you my grace. Paul was not able, through spiritual warfare, to make this thorn in the flesh, which is a messenger of Satan, go away.

There were things Paul, through spiritual warfare, could not accomplish against the devil, but they had to do with physical things. If you look at 1 Thessalonians 3, I believe it is, Paul is talking to the Thessalonians about how he has desired to return and see them again. He had been, I think I'm in the right chapter here.

No, it's actually chapter 2. But Paul had been kind of run out of Thessalonica by the

authorities and had only been able to be with the church there a short time, so he frequently longed to go back and see how they were doing, but the same forces that ran him out of town rendered it unsafe for him to come back, so he was unable to visit them. But here's how he describes it. In 1 Thessalonians 2, 17 and 18, Paul says, But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire.

Therefore we wanted to come to you, even I, Paul, time and again, but Satan hindered us. Satan hindered us? Well, why do you ever have to be subject to Satan, Paul? Can't you just ignore Satan? Can't you overcome Satan? Aren't you armed with spiritual armor? How could Satan hinder you? Well, what he's referring to, of course, is the fact that the satanically inspired enemies of the gospel, the authorities, particularly the Jewish authorities in Thessalonica, who stood up the Roman authorities against him, they have rendered it unsafe. Satan is using these people, and physically Paul is not able to overcome them.

There are no guarantees in spiritual warfare that we will have the physical advantage over Satan's people or what Satan seeks to accomplish through his people. Now, Satan can afflict somebody spiritually and physically. Job was afflicted both... well, his faith was challenged, that's a spiritual attack, but physically we see that his children were killed, his livestock was captured, his servants were killed, his body was afflicted with sickness.

All of these things the devil was able to do, and we never read that Job's real problem was that he didn't know how to do spiritual warfare. If Job had just known how to reduce the devil, all these problems would have gone away, right? Wrong. The test that Job was under was not to see whether he would do spiritual warfare adequately, the question was would he curse God or not.

And as long as the test was on, there was nothing Job could do to relieve himself of it, except to remain faithful. It was God who released the devil to come against him. Job did not have the authority to tell the devil to go away.

Now, some people think, well, since we're in Christ, that's different. There certainly is a difference, but I don't read anywhere in Scripture that the difference is found in our ability to make physical trials go away, that are brought by the devil. The devil can bring physical trials, only with God's permission.

But our spiritual armor is for spiritual advantage. We may physically be sick, we may physically be pursued, we may physically even die and still be victorious, because our armor is in place, and we have won the victory through notwithstanding having died or being physically afflicted. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4, in verse 16, 2 Corinthians 4, verse 16, Paul said, Therefore we do not lose heart, even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. Paul says, Our concern is not with the outward things, the visible things, those are temporal only.

Our concern, what we're looking at, is the things which are spiritual, the unseen world. And even if the outward man is perishing, that's no problem, spiritually, the inward man is being renewed day by day. That's our concern.

Our concern is not with our physical health, physical safety. Our concern, or comfort, our concern is with the inner man. And our light affliction, the physical affliction we experience, can actually work for us, an exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we focus not on the things seen, but the things not seen.

Paul is saying that our concern is not to fight off physical maladies and physical afflictions and physical persecutions and physical death. That is not the warfare we're in, and that is not what our armor protects us from. But what our armor protects us from is spiritual harm, moral defection and loss, and being conquered, and losing the test of faith.

These are the things our spiritual armor is for. Now, before I talk about the armor specifically, you might ask, Well, is there no protection physically then? Is there nothing in Scripture? That indicates that we can be physically defended from the attacks of the enemy? Well, the Bible does have a great deal to say about that. A lot.

There are many promises of God's protection of us physically and meeting of our physical needs. However, they are not related to our spiritual warfare, as near as I can tell. At least they are not anything like the focus of our spiritual warfare.

We cannot, by resisting the devil necessarily, prevent our being martyred. But the Bible does say that there are other spiritual forces, not us, that protect us from physical harm. And those forces are the angels.

Let me just take a moment for this excursus to show you scripturally that as far as our physical safety is concerned, that's God's charge. And He has charged the angels with our physical safety. We do not have to concern ourselves in spiritual warfare with our physical safety.

That is God's concern. And if He wants us physically safe, He's got more than enough resources in the form of the angels to keep us physically safe. And the Bible specifically says that's what the angels are there to do.

In Psalm 34, in verse 7, Psalm 34, in verse 7, it says, "...the angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him and delivers them." I called your attention the other day to 1

Kings chapter 6, and Elisha and his servant who were surrounded in the besieged city of Dothan. The Syrians were there. They were actually besieging the city for the specific purpose of capturing Elisha.

And Elisha's servant was terrified. And Elisha said, Oh, Lord, open his eyes. And supernaturally, the servant's eyes were opened and were permitted to see not only the armies of the Syrians, but behind them and around them and above them.

All around the hills, there were chariots of fire, the angelic army encamped around Elisha. And you know what? He didn't get hurt. They were there to protect him.

They were there to defend him. Now, you might say, well, then that would almost seem like there's no way that we could ever come to physical harm. Well, there is no way that we can come to physical harm unless God wants us to.

You see, the dispatching of the angels is God's task, not ours. I realize a lot of people pray angels in here and pray angels in there. And perhaps that's something that's been encouraged largely from having read Frank Peretti's novels or something.

But I don't really know that... I don't find anywhere in the Bible that we're told to command the angels to go and do this or that or the other thing. The angels are God's servants. They're sent to minister to us, but they're sent by God to minister to us.

Perhaps in response to our prayers, I should probably include this because I do believe this, that in response to our prayers about certain things, angels may well be dispatched. When we pray for the protection of somebody or even of ourselves, if God chooses to honor that, then he will probably defend us by angelic power or defend the persons we're praying for. I believe in that.

The thing is, we are guaranteed victory and protection of the spiritual part if we are faithful in walking in the ways that the Bible tells us to walk in our warfare. But we are not guaranteed physical safety at all times. That is really in God's hands.

God knows that each of us must die someday, and he knows when. But until such a time as God sees fit to let us be afflicted, and God may at any time see that as advantageous to us and allow it to happen, but at such times as God does not wish it, the angels defend us from all attack in that area. They encamp around us and deliver us.

In Psalm 91 verses 11 and 12, Psalm 91, 11 and 12, we are told, He shall give his angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways, as to guard you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot.

Obviously this is a cast in the idea of spiritual warfare, but we are told that God gives his angels charge over us so we don't dash our foot against a stone. This is a physical kind

of protection. I count on it that I cannot come to any physical harm except what God permits.

Satan wanted to afflict Job long before he was able to do so, and when he was finally permitted to, he afflicted him physically and took his property from him, but remember prior to Satan doing this, Satan had to complain to God, I can't touch anything that he's got. You put a hedge around this guy and all that is his. Satan complained.

And therefore that hedge, no doubt, was the protective ring of angels that God has encamped around the righteous, but when it suits God's purpose for the Christian to experience affliction and testing, even death, then God apparently makes a break in that ring and allows such attacks to come through and hit us physically. That should not concern us or scare us. Our lives are in God's hands and it should be very reassuring to know that we will die or suffer harm when God wants it to happen and not at any other time.

And we do have, in the angels of God that are given charge over us, we do have adequate power available to protect us physically from all things that God may wish for us to be physically protected. But there is the spiritual. That is our task.

That is our responsibility. Our physical protection is God's responsibility. Our spiritual safety and security is very largely upon our shoulders.

And that's why we are told to put on the armor and to fight the war and to withstand and so forth. Well, let's look real quickly at the pieces of armor and see what we can learn about Paul's thought here. Paul says, in verse 14 of Ephesians 6, Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth.

Now, it would appear that the armor that Paul speaks of probably has its counterpart in the Roman armor, though that may not be the case. Remember the idea of a breastplate of righteousness and a helmet of salvation actually comes from Isaiah, who wrote long before the Romans were ever in the scene and therefore we don't know to what degree Paul, for the sake of his metaphor, borrowed from the Roman armor that was right there with him in the prison. I mean, he was chained to Roman guards when he wrote this.

And he had plenty of opportunity to look at the equipment that the man was wearing, but the image also comes from the Old Testament. But in the Roman armor, from what I am told, the girdle or the belt was a wide leather affair to which other parts were sometimes attached. Of course, the sword would hang from the belt.

Also, the breastplate was secured in place, in part, by the belt. In other words, the belt wasn't just there to keep the belly in or to give back support, like a weightlifter's belt. It was there partly to hold things in place.

Now, Paul says that our belt, as it were, is truth. And it's not entirely clear, because Paul

doesn't elaborate exactly what aspect of truth he's referring to here. On the one hand, he could be talking about truth in the abstract, true things, true doctrines, true teachings, as opposed to deception and lies and heresy.

The fact that we have the truth about God instead of misconceptions about God. The fact that we have in Scripture awareness of reality that we would not have awareness of without it. That may be what Paul has in mind here.

On the other hand, truth is also used in the Scripture as a character trait, like honesty or integrity. David said of God, You desire truth in the inward parts of a man. God desires a man to be a man of truth, a man of integrity, a person who is faithful, truthful, honest.

And it's not clear exactly how Paul means this. The word in the Greek that is here translated truth literally means not concealing. It's kind of a negated word.

It's from the word conceal, and it negates it. It means not concealing, which might suggest a personal trait of honesty and transparency. So it's not all that clear.

One thing we can see is clear. First thing on the list in the armor is truth. And I have said before that truth and deception are the issues in the battle.

It is our possession of truth, our walking in truth, our commitment to truth, our binding ourselves to truth, and binding truth to us like a belt that holds other things together, holds our whole life together. It keeps the whole protective structure in place. If we compromise on the truth, then we lose protection against the wiles of the devil, whose wiles are those of deception.

Now, compromise on the truth, we can take it any and all ways that it would be scripturally applicable if you begin to deny the truth, the doctrines of scripture. If you begin to accept false teaching, if you accept some authority above that of God or above that of scripture, then you're likely to end up believing things that are not true. And to the degree that you believe things that are not true, you are vulnerable.

It is the truth that makes you free. Therefore, make sure you've got it firmly buckled about you, and you do not let it slip away in any form. If we think of truth as a character trait in the believer, then we would say that a person's embracing of truth and representing truth flawlessly or seamlessly is what is here in mind, that we do not get ever caught in a lie.

That is, no one catches us lying. That we are people of integrity so that our testimony is never called into question. That we don't even have to swear by heaven or earth or by any other oath, but our yea is yea and our nay is nay, and people have seen our character to be honest people.

In a world where most people are suspicious and cynical about the trustworthiness of

their fellow man, Christians should shine uniquely as people who will not compromise on the matter of truth. They will not lie. And they love the truth.

They will not try to defend a favorite doctrine or a favorite idea if they find that it is not in accord with truth. It is when we begin to slip and compromise on the area of truth that everything else in our armor begins to get shaky, begins to be out of place, and if the truth is not in place, if it is not firmly attached to us, then the enemy will gain an advantage there because it is only by commitment to truth that we can be quite assured that we will not succumb to error. It is those who have not received the love of the truth to whom the strong delusion is sent.

It is those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, according to Paul in Romans chapter 1, those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness are the ones that God's wrath burns against, and he gives them over to a strong delusion and gives them over to their own lusts, and gives them over to the enemy. You cannot win a battle if you have been given over by God to your own ways and to your own lusts and your own depraved mind. You need the protection of God, and he gets angry, the Bible says in Romans 1, at those who suppress the truth.

That is, they know the truth, but they are not valiant for the truth. They may buy the truth, but they may sell it too. Proverbs 23, 23 says, Buy the truth, but don't sell it.

So Paul, as a first emphasis, mentions that the truth that we possess as Christians is the first thing to consider having in place and having firmly bound to ourselves and binding ourselves to it, making sure that we are people of truth, because as soon as you slip a little bit from truthfulness and from the truth, then to that degree, deception and error has crept in, and it's like the small end of the wedge. The devil, once he gets a little error into your life, a little deceptiveness, a little compromise in the truth, then there's really, it's a slippery slope. Yes.

Okay. All right. Good.

The second item, he says in verse 13 is, or verse 14, Having put on the breastplate of righteousness. Now, again, I don't think that Paul is telling us to go through the motions of putting on a breastplate. I think what he's telling us is that righteousness is part of being in Christ.

We are righteous in him. We have put on Christ, and as such, we wear a breastplate. Better make sure that we maintain it, make sure that we walk in it, that we live in it, and that we do not neglect it.

Now, what is righteousness? Well, there's two ways in which the Bible teaches us about righteousness. One is quite simple. How can you be righteous? You be righteous by being righteous.

Now, that might sound like, you know, like I'm not serious, but that's exactly what the Scripture says. In 1 John chapter 3 and verse 7, 1 John 3, 7 says, Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as he is righteous.

If you practice righteousness, you are righteous. Now, I might clarify what I think John means by this. I don't think he means that you become righteous in your standing with God by practicing righteousness, but rather, the person who is practicing righteousness demonstrates that he is one of those who is made righteous by God.

What John is talking about in 1 John again and again is how we know which category we're in. How do we know we're saved? How do we know we're children of God, not children of the devil? Well, one way is that the person who practices righteousness, that person is righteous, meaning those who have been made righteous by God are evident by the fact that they practice righteousness. And those who don't practice righteousness are of the devil, he says.

Now, what this means, of course, is that righteousness is seen in practice. Righteousness is seen in behavior. To do a righteous thing means to do that which is just and right.

To do the thing that is the good thing to do, as opposed to the bad thing to do. Whenever you sin, you do unrighteousness. And, therefore, to maintain righteousness as a breastplate, or even without the figure of a breastplate, to maintain righteousness involves us in seeking not to sin, seeking to do righteousness, to make choices of a righteous sort and to live righteously.

And this is something that the Bible calls upon us to do. The problem is, though, that we don't do it all the time. We all have moments where we are weak or unsuspecting or whatever, and we succumb to a temptation and we do unrighteousness.

And, therefore, the Bible says there's another way, another aspect of maintaining our righteousness. In addition to seeking to do what's right at all times, there is the need to repair our righteousness when we have done unrighteousness. It's like a breastplate that's got a hole in it.

Now, a breastplate covers the heart. I'll talk a little bit in a moment about why I believe Paul used the breastplate as the image for righteousness. But if the breastplate has a hole in it, it's not going to protect very well.

And, therefore, when we have done unrighteousness, there is a need to repair and become righteous again. In 1 John 1, verse 9 says, If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we have succumbed to unrighteousness, then our breastplate is damaged.

However, that can be cleaned up. That can be fixed up. That can be repaired.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from unrighteousness. To repair the damage done. Therefore, we must, A, if we're going to wear righteousness as a breastplate and have some advantage in warfare about that, we need to, first of all, avoid sinning.

If you are living in sin, or if there is a sin that you frequently succumb to and you're kind of lazy about resisting that sin, and you don't think it's any real big deal, after all, you can always repent, you'll find that sometimes you can't always repent. Repentance is something the Bible says God grants. And He grants it to those who are humble and who please Him and so forth.

But if you just figure, well, I'll just sin and I'll repent, I'll just sin and I'll just repent, I'll just sin and I'll repent, you may find that the very attitude is a hardening against repentance. And you may not be able to just repent. I have heard of cases of individuals who have tried to cast demons out of individuals only to have the demons begin to point out to that person their own present unrepentant of sins.

Now, I realize we don't have an instance of this in the Bible, and so some might say, well, that's just an anecdotal story, we don't know if that's really legitimate, but does not the Bible say that Satan is the accuser of the brethren? And it is in fact the case that the devil seeks to condemn us. And for a demon to be aware of your sin and to reveal it at a time when you're trying to wrestle with them and beat them in a conflict is not very advantageous for you. And there are times when the accusations are true.

Christians do sometimes sin. Therefore, one of the first things to do to make sure that you don't get mortally wounded or simply made ineffective in your conflict with the enemy is that you do not allow unrighteousness in your life. And when you do, you quickly, truly, genuinely repent and confess it and allow God to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

Now, in general, we have, fortunately, a righteous standing before God by faith. This is what the doctrine of justification by faith means. Our righteousness is in Christ.

Our righteousness is to be found in Him. Abraham believed in the Lord and it was counted to him for righteousness. It says in Genesis 15, 6, a verse that Paul liked to quote frequently in Romans and Galatians and it was quoted in Hebrews.

Even James quoted it. That Abraham believed in the Lord and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Righteousness is something that God counts to be ours if we are trusting in Him for that.

So, fortunately, even if we are struggling against sin and occasionally stumble, and there are times where we are aware of our own unrighteousness, if we are counting on the forgiveness of Christ, if we have confessed our sin, if we have asked for forgiveness from

God, we are counted righteous, not because we are now different people than we were before and incapable of falling anymore into sin. That is not the case, but simply because God counts us righteous. We have met the conditions of faith, repentance, and we are found in Him.

He is righteous and His righteousness is attributed to us. We have this as Christians, but if we take it for granted, if we say, oh, well, I'm accounted righteous by faith, therefore I've gotten sin, and that's okay because I'll still be righteous, I'll be imputed righteous, you see, a person is deceiving himself when he does that. The fact is, if a person thinks like that, then they aren't saved, or they're not at least counting on Christ's righteousness, really.

They don't know what they're talking about. To trust in Christ means a total committal of oneself to Christ. A person cannot be committed to Christ and say, well, I'll just go out and sin.

Christians don't think that way. That reflects a non-commitment to Christ when you figure out, I'll just go out and sin. Faith in Christ refers to a total commitment, and that faith does count for righteousness.

Even though we have defects in our righteousness, our faith and our total commitment to Christ is counted as righteousness for us. But the person who says, oh, good, then I can just go out and sin, shows that they don't fit in that category. They are not there.

They are not committed to Christ, else they wouldn't be thinking that way. Nobody who simply goes out and lives in sin is accounted righteous by faith, simply because they don't have faith. If they did, they wouldn't be out living in sin.

Faith shows. It's interesting that when Paul talked about the breastplate in Ephesians 6, he called it the breastplate of righteousness, but in 1 Thessalonians 5, which we read in verse 8, he calls it the breastplate of faith and love. Remember that? He didn't call it the breastplate of righteousness there, but he called it the breastplate of faith and love.

In a sense, faith and love are the two parts of righteousness. Imputed righteousness comes by faith. And active righteousness, or lived-out righteousness, is when we walk in love.

When we walk in love to one another, we'll always be doing the righteous thing. Our breastplate is righteousness, but it breaks down into two components. Our trusting God, our total committal of ourselves and our faith into his hands, and trusting in him for our justification, that is our righteousness, faith, and then walking in love.

Doing the loving thing is always doing the righteous thing, because righteousness is defined by doing the loving thing. So, on one hand to say, our righteousness is a breastplate, and in another case to say, well, our breastplate is faith and love, is really

kind of just breaking down the same statement into two components. It is, in fact, the case that if we are righteous, if we're walking in righteousness, if we're counting on Christ to cover and cleanse our unrighteousness, if we stand before God without any unrighteousness, then we are protected as a soldier is protected by a breastplate.

But why is a breastplate used as an image here? I believe it is for this reason. If you will look at 1 John 3, 1 John 3, verses 20-22, 1 John, John said, For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.

And whatever we ask, we receive from him. Because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. Notice he speaks of our heart succumbing to condemnation.

A breastplate covers and protects the vital organs, most especially the heart, from blows and wounds that would kill a person. Spiritually speaking, what is death to the Christian is condemnation of the heart. If the heart condemns you, and that is what the devil wants to do, he wants you to experience condemnation in your heart.

Now notice he is not speaking of actual condemnation in the sense that God condemns you, it is that your heart condemns you. If your heart condemns you, well fortunately God is greater than your heart. You don't necessarily stand condemned before God just because your heart is condemning you, just because you are accusing yourself to your own conscience.

But what John says is certainly to your advantage to not have your heart condemn you, because if your heart doesn't condemn you, you have confidence toward God, and when you pray you get what you ask for because you have confidence toward God. Now, condemnation in the heart is what righteousness protects from. Even if God forgives you, even if God has nothing against you, even if God views you as righteous, if you do not see yourself as righteous, if you feel guilty, if you feel unforgiven, if you feel unrighteous, your heart is condemning you.

And you know what? I really believe that the devil gets as much advantage out of having you feel condemned as he gets out of you actually being condemned. What I mean is this, the devil of course would like to make you sin, but I believe the reason he wants you to sin is so that he can exploit your sin to make you feel condemned. Condemnation is what alienates you from God.

The idea that God does not receive you, that God condemns you, this sense, this thought that God will not have me, I cannot speak to God, or if I can, I cannot do so with confidence that he has any interest in answering my prayers. I'm a rebel, I'm a sinner, I'm not clean before God, I dare not even go before God. If my heart condemns me, I will not pray confidently.

If my heart doesn't though, I will. And I'll get what I receive, I'll receive what I ask for I should say. Now, the heart therefore needs to be protected from the sense of condemnation.

Even though there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, that is something that we have a hard time believing at times, when we know ourselves to have done great wrong, when we feel tremendous conviction, first of all, of sin. But there is a difference between conviction and condemnation. I suppose many Christians have never yet figured out what the difference is.

It feels very much the same. Essentially, conviction and condemnation feel almost just the same, in the sense that both of them are a sense of guiltiness, a feeling of having done wrong. But, here is how we know the difference between conviction, which comes from the Holy Spirit, and condemnation, which comes from the devil.

For one thing, many times, condemnation is rather vague. A lot of times when you are feeling condemnation from the devil and not conviction from the Holy Spirit, it is sort of just a vague feeling that you are really rotten. A vague feeling that you are kind of worthless, that you are kind of unacceptable to God.

But there is no specific thing that you have in mind of any particular sin that you feel convicted of. You just feel vaguely guilty, dirty, unacceptable to God. Now, that would be condemnation from the enemy, because the Holy Spirit doesn't want you to feel that way.

If he has something against you, if there is in fact something you have done that he wishes for you to repent of, he will convict you of that specific thing. The Holy Spirit has nothing to gain by just making you feel vaguely dirty. The Holy Spirit's interest in convicting you of sin is to elicit repentance, and to do that he has to make you feel specifically guilty about a specific thing of which you must repent.

If you only feel vaguely guilty, but you can't think of any particular sin that you feel that you have committed, then you should realize this is not the conviction of the Holy Spirit. This is the condemnation of the devil. Another difference between condemnation and conviction is that conviction is a strong feeling that you have done wrong, but it is not a hopeless feeling.

It is not a feeling of rejection. It is a feeling of correction. When you feel convicted by the Holy Spirit, he is seeking to induce you to return, to repent, to confess, and the Holy Spirit will never bring with it a sense of rejection.

The Holy Spirit will convict you of sin with a mind to make you feel like, I can get right with God, I need to get right with God, this thing stands in the way, and I need to repent of this thing. Conviction will never be a hopeless feeling, a hopelessness that God has

rejected me and there is no way I will ever be able to be a Christian again. That is not what the Holy Spirit will tell you, because that is not the truth.

The fact of the matter is, if you have sinned, the Holy Spirit will convict you. He will let you know that you have sinned, because he wants you to repent. But he wants you to repent because you are accepted in the Beloved.

If you were not his, if you were not acceptable to him, if he had no further interest in you, he wouldn't bother convicting you. Conviction comes because God wants to keep you on his side and there has been a defect that needs to be corrected. And therefore the conviction of the Holy Spirit is always corrective and feels corrective, whereas condemnation is rejected.

A feeling of rejection, that God doesn't love you anymore, God rejects you, you are not capable of measuring up and not capable of really ever being acceptable to him. You might as well give it up. Condemnation has that distinction from conviction.

Another thing too, is that conviction of the Holy Spirit will always go away once you have truly repented. If you feel convicted about a certain thing that you have done wrong and you humbly repent to God about it, ask his forgiveness, he won't bring it up anymore. The conviction of the Holy Spirit will not continue, though condemnation might.

If after you have repented you still feel dirty, guilty, unacceptable, unconfident about coming before God in prayer, then the feeling you have is not from God, it is from the devil, it is condemnation. Now you see, the devil gains a great deal by feelings of condemnation. And it doesn't really matter to him too much, I suppose, whether you have ever really sinned or whether you have been forgiven.

As long as you can still feel condemned, you still won't pray with confidence, and that's what he fears. What he fears is the power of your prayers, your faithful prayers and confident prayers are what put him out of commission. If he can disable your prayer life by making you feel guilty, it doesn't matter to him whether you really are guilty of anything or not.

In fact, he may try to make you feel guilty of things you never did, or things that you did that aren't really sin. This is, I think, why the devil has so much pleasure in legalism. Because legalism manufactures sins that aren't sins.

It manufactures a list of behaviors which are labeled as sin, which are not. And when a person commits sin, they feel guilty of sin, even though they haven't committed a sin. But that's okay, as far as the devil is concerned, as long as he can find something to make you feel guilty about.

If you think it's a sin to eat white sugar, and then you break down and have a donut, then you'll feel condemned. Well, it isn't really a sin to eat white sugar, but if the devil

can convince you that it is, that's good enough for him. It's not so much that the devil cares whether you really sin or not.

The question is whether he can alienate you from God by a sense of condemnation. Of course he wants you to sin, because when you sin, he can exploit that to bring condemnation. But if he can't get you to sin, he may yet try to make you feel condemned about things you've done that are not sin, or by things that you did not do that are sin, or about sins you've committed but have repented of, and it's no longer an issue between you and God, but he wants you to think it is.

As long as the devil can have you feel alienated from God by a sense of condemnation, he wins. And you are ineffective, you're powerless, you're useless. Therefore, your heart needs to be protected against being condemned.

If our heart condemns us, that's a bad thing. It's disabling in the warfare. So we need to have a heart protected, we need to have a breastplate on.

And what is it? Our righteousness. If you don't commit sins, then there won't be awfully much to feel guilty about. And if you do commit a sin, and you confess it to God and repent, then he cleanses you from all unrighteousness.

Your righteousness is intact, your breastplate has no breaks. It's essential to maintain righteousness. We need to see a new emergence of clean conscience Christianity.

Christians are very sloppy about the conscience, and yet the Bible indicates that the conscience is a gift of God to let us know when we are going the wrong way and when we need to change. It warns us. The conscience is nothing else but the awareness of right and wrong.

And many Christians compromise their conscience. And once they compromise it a little bit, it's numbed a little bit. And they can compromise it more, and it gets numbed a little more.

And this happens, it's a normal human condition. Everybody observes and knows it's true. We need to have a commitment to maintain a clean conscience.

Not compromising a little, figuring, well, nobody's perfect, I can get away with this after all, God does forgive. I mean, that kind of attitude is going to put you on that slippery slope where righteousness will never be anything you feel very firmly in place. Your heart will always be under low-grade or high-grade condemnation because you know you're not really living right.

Your conscience tells you so. To have on the breastplate of righteousness in such a way as to give you advantage over the enemy means that you walk day by day with a close awareness of whether you are doing what pleases God or not. That you have a firm

commitment to doing righteousness.

And where righteousness is defective in your life of repenting and getting back on the path and keeping your righteousness standing before God and the righteousness of your heart before God intact. Now, the shoes that Paul tells us to wear, having our feet shod, shod means shooed, like having shoes on. In verse 15 he says, having shod your feet with preparation, the preparation of the gospel of peace.

This expression, the preparation of the gospel of peace, is not entirely, it's not the clearest phrase we could imagine. What does it mean, the preparation? The word preparation to me translates to readiness. It apparently has something to do with preparedness to preach the gospel.

An attitude of eagerness or being ready to share the gospel with people. Now see, even this isn't, strictly speaking, an activity that has to only be seen in terms of warfare. Sharing the gospel is a normal part of the Christian life.

Paul is just showing its relevance here to warfare. However, I don't think it's merely the preaching of the gospel that Paul has in mind here, because preaching the gospel is more of an offensive against the enemy rather than a defensive, and Paul is speaking of armor in this case. He has not yet turned to the subject of weaponry.

Armor is for self-protection, so what is it that is the protective footwear of the readiness or the preparation for the gospel of peace? I think there's an attitude here that Paul has in mind that protects us from failure in our advanced march. You know, if soldiers march, they often don't march on paved roads. They march over rough terrain.

They need stiff, tough footwear. As you well know, you're probably familiar, army boots are pretty heavy-duty stuff because they have to put up with some rough terrain. Having your feet shod for the battle means that you've got to be prepared for the hardships of the march.

If your shoes are not adequate, you will not be able to keep it up. You will not be able to endure. The preaching of the gospel to all nations is not a task easily and quickly accomplished.

It requires sacrifice, hardship. There's a rough road. It's actually this idea of the gospel of peace, the expression of the gospel of peace Paul takes out of Isaiah 52, where it says, How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who publishes the good tidings of the gospel of peace.

The idea of the gospel of peace is an expression from Isaiah 52. And in that very passage in Isaiah, it speaks of the feet of those who carry the gospel. Paul says, have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

The gospel of peace must be carried, but it must be carried over mountains. In scripture, in biblical times, mountains were a particular obstacle to travel, so that you would want to remove every mountain and hill and make the valleys rise up to make a straight path, to make an easy route for someone to go on. But to travel over mountains was to travel over rough terrain.

However, it does say in Isaiah 52, as I was referring to, Oh, I'm looking at, let's see here. Where is that verse? Where is that verse? Everyone see it? Here it is, verse 7. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet. Now, these feet are on the mountains.

That means they're not on the paved road. They're crossing mountain ranges. They're crossing terrain that's rough.

They overcome obstacles. But these feet on the mountains are beautiful feet. They're not getting all scratched up and torn to pieces and so forth.

Why? Well, they must have the right kind of footwear on, as Paul suggests. The feet of him who brings the good news, that is the gospel, who proclaims peace. The gospel of peace.

Paul says you need to have your feet shod with the readiness and the preparation of the gospel of peace. I think that what he's talking about here is that we need to be prepared, and this is more than anything I think a mental preparation, just like righteousness and truth have to do with mental states and spiritual realms. The mental preparation for the endurance of whatever hardship is involved in carrying the gospel of peace to all the world, over the mountains, across the seas, whatever, the sacrifices necessary, the toughness of resolve and the ability to persevere and so forth.

I see this attitude, I think, referred to in Peter, in 1 Peter chapter 4. 1 Peter chapter 4, verse 1 says, Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, the mind that is that you shall also suffer in the flesh. That's an armor of the mind. You can arm yourself with the same mentality that, well, Jesus suffered, I guess I'll have to suffer.

Being prepared to preach the gospel through hardship, through suffering, whatever it takes, is a form of armor. I think Paul is referring essentially to that attitude when he talks about having your feet prepared for the long march, over hard terrain, to carry the gospel, being prepared for that. And I think that that's what the shoes represent in Paul's analogy.

Paul says the shield of faith will quench the fiery darts or the fiery arrows of Satan. Well, what are the fiery arrows? Are they temptations? They might be. I suppose since faith is that which quenches the arrows, the arrows must be something that challenges faith or that faith puts an end to them.

And I would suggest maybe the fiery arrows must be doubts. Faith is a response to doubt. The devil, certainly, part of his deception is to get you to doubt what is true.

Doubt God. Doubt God's word. Doubt God's faithfulness.

To have doubts about God is something that needs to be responded to with faith. And faith, like a shield, quenches the fire of doubt. The damaging effect of doubt can be neutralized by faith.

And doubts come from all over the place, but the faith is a movable piece. The Roman's shield actually was a tall shield that he could stand on. A big rectangular shield stood about up to his shoulders from the ground, and he could actually hide behind the shield his whole body.

He could also move the shield, of course, and catch arrows as necessary, whichever direction they came from. As doubts come, the Christian has to respond with faith, and that quenches the doubt. How do you do that? Faith isn't just something you have or don't have.

It's not an endowment that some people are fortunate to have a lot of and some people don't have so much of. Faith is simply believing God. When you are tempted to doubt or to worry or to fear, faith is that which quenches these attacks of the enemy.

It's quite simple. You just say, I will believe God. Just remind yourself, God is not any less faithful than he was yesterday.

God has been faithful to all who have trusted him before. Whosoever believes in him shall never be ashamed, the Bible says. I will believe in God.

I will not be ashamed. I will trust him. I will not entertain these doubts, these fears, these worries, these anxieties.

I will rather trust God. It is a commitment that Christians are called to make. We could say much more about it, since faith is a very large subject.

Much is said about it in Scripture. I'm mainly at this point trying to point out how Paul applies these Christian assets to the issue of spiritual protection against the enemy's devices. You see, if the devil comes against you with sin, you respond with righteousness.

If he comes with condemnation, your breastplate of righteousness protects you. If he comes with deception, well, you're bound to the truth. If he comes with doubts, you've got a shield of faith to quench those doubts.

You also put on the helmet of salvation, the last piece Paul mentions. The head, I suppose, is the most vital organ. And our salvation in Christ is that which keeps us from

succumbing ultimately to the devil's devices.

The devil would love to cause us to lose our salvation. But that is up to us, very largely. We can wear the helmet if we wish.

Paul tells us to put on the helmet. Every day we put on our salvation afresh. Salvation isn't just something that you're given, you stick it in your wallet like a membership card, and then you have it for the rest of your life.

Salvation is a walk. Salvation is a life of trusting God to save you and deliver you in all areas of life. You wear this like a helmet.

As long as you are maintaining your relationship with God and the salvation, that is the benefit that comes from that relationship, you're protected. Your vital, most vital part, your skull, your head, your brain, that which is really who you are and the loss of which is the end of your life, is protected. The helmet is one of the most important pieces of armor.

There are even activities where people wear helmets where they don't wear any other armor. Football players wear armor and helmets. Motorcycle riders just wear helmets.

If you're going to dispense with all armor but one piece, don't dispense with the helmet. Salvation is the thing that is your security in the battle. If you are saved, your head is invincible.

Your life will not, you will not perish. But your salvation is something you have to work out, your salvation. You have to maintain your walk with God, your relationship with God, unbroken, because this is your salvation.

And it serves as the most vital piece of armor, it would appear, like a helmet on a soldier. Well, I would love to say much more about that particular point. Our time has run out.

I must have used too much time on some earlier points in this lecture. I usually spend a lot more time on some of these later issues. But I just wanted to acquaint you in general with Paul's meaning and his concept when he talked about the armor of God.

We will talk about the devil's devices, and we'll also be talking about our weapons at a certain point here. And we're going to talk about demonization. And these things remain to be talked about in this series.

At this point, though, we'll have to stop and come back to some of this later on.