



Speaker:  
**Paul Forrest**

## The Armour of Satan

5/12/2022 (THU) | Bible: **Ephesians 6:10-24**

**W**e come today to a very familiar passage. There have been innumerable sermons and books based on it.

Paul is speaking *metaphorically*. If your school days were many years ago, you may have forgotten what you were taught in English class. So as a reminder, using a *metaphor* gets us to think of something in a different way. For example, I might say “Northwood Chapel is a hive of Christian activity”. By comparing your church to a beehive, I’m trying to say you’re all as busy as bees, working hard for God.

And these metaphors are seen throughout literature, including the Bible. Here, Paul says that a full range of Christian qualities is like a suit of armour. He does this to encourage you and me to remember each day to be ready for that day’s battles.

To use one of them as an example, Paul says we should have in our hands the sword of the Spirit. He’s talking about the Bible. So how do we take up this book like it was a sword? Well, it’s not about picking it up and swinging it around to hit people with. We arm ourselves with **this** sword by reading the Bible, by being familiar with it. We use this sword when we apply the Scriptures in our lives.

Today, I’d like to approach this passage from a slightly different angle. I’d like to start by showing that man in his natural state could **also** be said to wear a suit of armour. It isn’t the armour of God, but a suit of armour *he made himself*. And the one who helps him on with his armour is none other than Satan.

During a person’s life, Satan makes subtle suggestions. Every one of us has heard his voice, yet none of us will ever have been aware of it. How he influences us isn’t clear, but he has some way of communicating to our minds. This is how he encourages us to sin. He might say, *Are you going to let her speak to you like that? Answer her back. Go on!* And he’ll even provide the content of your reply. If he can get you to say something nasty, he’ll have had his victory.

So I want us today to imagine Satan whispering in the ears of man about a different suit of armour. Just as Paul encourages the believers to put on the armour of God, so we can think of Satan encouraging a man to put on **the deceptive armour of Satan**.

Of course, one of the great strategies of Satan has been to hide himself. So he doesn't make known his involvement with this faulty armour.

I'd like you to follow with me in your Bibles as I read from the passage again. This would be the version Satan might use to persuade a man to put on this other armour:

Finally, be strong in *yourself* and in the strength of *your own might*. Put on the whole armour of *your own*, that you may be able to stand against *those who'd hold you back*. For we wrestle *against flesh and blood, not against so-called* spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of *your own making*, that you may be able to stand *proud every day*, and having done all, to stand *prouder*. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of *your own* truth, and having put on the breastplate of *self* righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by *carnal reasoning*. In all circumstances take up the shield of *unbelief*, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of *an accusing conscience*; and take the helmet of *false religion*, and the sword of the *flesh*, which is the word of *your own wisdom*, *hoping* at all times *you'll get what you want in life*.

The man or woman who trusts in their own wisdom and their own goodness is fully kitted out in the useless armour of rebellion. Whether they like the idea or not, they've agreed to be in the army of Satan.

If we could inspect the multitude in that army, we'd recognise plenty of people we know. Friends. Best friends, even. People in our own families. And if we could see such a thing, we'd see that every one was fully armoured. Untold battalions of them.

But this must be the most unfortunate army ever to have existed. You see, this army finds itself in a war whose outcome has already been decided. In the long, long war against God and his people, **they are doomed to lose**. They may outnumber the Church of God a hundred to one. They may have a powerful captain who assures them they'll topple this King of Kings and instead rule with him for ever.

What he never admits to them is this King of Kings doesn't merely take part in history but *makes* it. All events in history have played out according to the purposes of God, and they always will.

None of us is born on the Lord side. Satan's army is not something you must consciously join. It's something you're born into. And you grow up in it. And there you are, standing with millions of others.

Imagine them as a great army camp. Occasionally, someone in this enemy camp hears a noise. As an example, let's think of a young man called William. It's as if someone is silently calling his name. And he leaves the camp and goes to investigate.

William finds himself on a path. It's quite narrow. And as he turns round the bend, he sees an unexpected sight. Standing on the path, blocking his way, is the Captain of the armies of God. And William sees that, on the outside of his leg, there's an identifying mark. It identifies this fearsome warrior as "THE WORD OF GOD".

And this warrior stands in a state of battle readiness, his sword drawn. William realises this Christ he has mocked so often is more fearful than he imagined. It's clear that fighting this powerful God would be pointless. He understands that even if the whole of his mighty army were to take on this champion of the Lord, it'd be defeated.

What's more, William can see this Word of God in the flesh is threatening to destroy him. He's forced to admit to himself what he always denied: **that this Jesus, the Lord of hosts, will come after William in terrible fury because of his rebellion**—because of his allegiance to the army of God's enemy.

In just a few moments, William's made aware of the full extent of his rebelliousness. He's spent his whole life fighting on the wrong side. NOW HE STANDS UTTERLY DEFENCELESS IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD. He knows he's guilty and has no hope of being delivered from this fierce opponent.

What else can a man do in this situation? He begs the Lord not to destroy him. The Lord of hosts tells William he must SURRENDER. He must LAY DOWN HIS ARMS, REMOVE HIS ARMOUR, AND APPROACH THE LORD EMPTY-HANDED. CONQUERED. VULNERABLE.

This he does. And to his surprise, by the time he approaches the Lord, he finds his former enemy has taken off his helmet, sheathed his sword, and stands with arms wide, welcoming him. There follows an embrace of absolute forgiveness! William has changed sides. His new Master beckons for him to join the great army of saints standing behind him. Several of them show him his new military outfit. Now a member of the Lord's army, he's to put on the whole armour of God.

---

Our story then brings us to today's theme, which is **the armour not of man's own making but the armour of God himself**—armour he provides for our Christian warfare.

The younger me would've tackled these Scriptures quite differently. I'd have scrutinised each part of the armour, thinking of as many qualities of each item as possible, and trying to find some deep meaning in them.

That was my habit back then. But it's a mistake to put Scriptures under the microscope like that. These pictures, these metaphors, are not meant to be over-analysed. We shouldn't assume there's a connection between these characteristics, like faith and truth, and where they're located on the body.

I'll give you an example. I could've spoken today about this breastplate of righteousness. The breastplate protects a man's torso. So I could've related it to the protection of a man's heart or something.

But when Paul uses the armour imagery in his letter to the church at Thessalonica, he talks about the breastplate not of righteousness but of *faith and love*. Now that'd throw a spanner in the works, wouldn't it!

In mixing the pieces up like this, Paul shows he didn't intend us to try to make doctrines by matching bits of kit to parts of the body. A sinner needs the righteousness of God say, but we can't restrict its importance to certain parts of our being only.

And it's not about the individual pieces by themselves. **We're to instead think of the armour as signifying God's complete provision for our warfare.**

I'm going to now look at who our enemy is, then think about the armour God's provided for us, and finish by looking at how we put this armour on.

## The Enemy

I'd like to say a few things about our enemy, then. The armour is needed because we *have* an enemy to fight.

You could say we have three enemies. It's nicely summed up in the Church of England's old *Book of Common Prayer*, which describes them as (1) the world, (2) the flesh, and (3) the devil.

- **The world** refers to other people. Those who aren't in the kingdom of God are *enemies* of God.
- **The flesh** refers to our own sinful nature. Until the Christian is in glory, "clothed" with his new body, he remains a danger to his spiritual self.
- **And there's the devil**, also called "Satan" and "the Dragon". Usually, when the Bible names him, it means all the other fallen angels too. And these wicked spirits prowl about trying to get people to think and act in a way which brings dishonour to God.

Verse 12 tells us **our fight is really with a world of unseen spirits**. They're called here "rulers", "authorities", "cosmic powers over this present darkness", and "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places". Different descriptions of the same creatures, as I understand it.

So Paul's talking about just one of those three enemies. Maybe he wants to emphasise this one on this occasion. Or maybe he thinks the real power behind the other two *is* Satan. In other words, he's the number one enemy, but he works through other people too—including our own selves.

But whatever Paul's thinking, we can see an important point. **It suggests our focus should be on the unseen enemy rather than the people and organisations of this world.** If we're going to enjoy a victorious Christian life, surely the first thing we need to know is who the enemy is and where he is.

So first we need to understand the tactical advantages Satan and his angels have over us:

- **Firstly, they've been around since the dawn of time.** They've had *thousands of years* to fine-tune their tactics. They're very good at bringing people down, and there's not a single person who's ever lived who they haven't had victories against.
- **Secondly, they're invisible to the human eye.** It allows them to go about their business unseen to us. They can keep us all under 24-hour surveillance, at home, at school, at college, at work and even at church. They can then use this intelligence they've gathered to know how to better tempt us or go to God with a list of the sins they've watched us do and make accusations against us.
- **Thirdly, they're powerful.** Their activity isn't restricted to the heavenly realms but takes place in our material world also. They can influence us psychologically, making us think and say sinful things. They can make us ill or render us disabled. They can affect the weather to cause natural disasters. They can even kill us.

Now it's important to always remember not a single one of these beings can *lift a finger* against us unless it's been given to them by God. No matter how victorious they seem to be, **our God still reigns.** Things are NEVER out of control.

I'll read just a few verses as examples of Satan's activities:

- 1 Thessalonians 3:5—For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow **the tempter had tempted you** and our labour would be in vain.
- 2 Corinthians 2:11—so that we would not be **outwitted by Satan**; for we are not ignorant of his designs [his plans].
- Revelation 12:10—And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, **for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down**, who accuses them day and night before our God..."

Tempting us. Deceiving us. *Slandering* us.

So we've reminded ourselves about both how dangerous an enemy Satan is and the great variety of ways he can wage war against God's people.

The Lord, however, in his mercy, provides an effective suit of armour for every one of us.

# The Armour

As I mentioned earlier, I don't wish to try to find connections between the helmet of salvation and the mind, or the breastplate of righteousness and the person's heart. again, it might be helpful if you don't think of the armour as individual items but as one thing with different parts. V11 makes it clear we're to put on the *whole* armour.

Let's have a think then about the different parts of this armour.

- Firstly (v14), there's the **belt of truth**. In our allegorical story earlier, the rebel soldier had to remove the belt he had on. It represented his own carnal wisdom. Throughout his life, he thought he knew best. But he had to abandon that idea and get rid of the belt of his own making. Following his surrender, he was presented with a belt of real truth. In coming to God, the sinful man or woman must acknowledge it's God who knows best. He is all wisdom.
- There's the **breastplate of righteousness**. The sinner thinks he's a good person. He looks at the people around him and considers himself at least as good as them. But if he comes to repentance, he must throw down the breastplate of his own goodness. He's to understand it's nothing but a piece of rusty old metal. Then the Lord gifts him with a shining new breastplate: Christ's very own righteousness.
- Then we have (v15) **the shoes of the gospel**. The soldier in the ranks of God's enemies marches to the beat of Satan's drum. And in all his journeying through life, he neither shares the gospel nor even understands it. He always has an opinion, but never has any good news for lost souls. But when the gospel comes to him, he kicks off his worn-out shoes and accepts these new ones. And they give him an ability and willingness to go and share the message of the gospel, the message by which he was saved.
- There's **the shield of faith** (v16). The people of this world are filled with unbelief. It doesn't matter if they believe in God. It doesn't matter if they believe Jesus died on a cross. If their trust isn't entirely in Jesus Christ, it's classed as unbelief. The one who's been persuaded to lay down their arms has to drop that thin, ineffective shield of their unbelief. Instead, they're presented with a sturdy new shield of faith in Christ.
- We then have (v17) **the helmet of salvation**. All opponents of God are involved in some kind of religious devotion. The most obvious cases require devotion to Muhammad or the Virgin Mary. There's a variety of cults and varying degrees of atheism, too. And there's the multitude of things people put before God, like sport, celebrities and money. But when God converts someone, they remove their offensive helmet and throw it away. Through Christ, they receive salvation, full and free, like a stunning new piece of headgear.
- Finally, there's **the sword of the Spirit**. The one who's been made an object of God's grace stands before the Captain of their salvation. They have nothing but a sword called, "The Flesh". They now see its utter worthlessness. The possession they were

so proud of is flung into a ditch. The General of the hosts of the Lord presents them with a new sword called, “The Word of God”. They now own a true treasure. And the saved man or woman not only benefits from the Bible’s truth themselves but commit themselves to a life of sharing this truth with others.

And so the new soldier in Christ’s army stands, fully kitted out in the best possible gear. And I imagine there’s nothing angers Satan so much as losing one of his soldiers to the army of the God he hates so much.

## Conclusion

Some of you might be wondering why Paul would be telling believers to put on this armour if it’s about things that are already theirs. If they belong to Jesus, they already have salvation. They already possess righteousness and faith. So how can they “put them on”? We need to know what he meant if this passage is going to be of any use to us.

I’ll take just one aspect of this armour to make my point, and I’ll do my best to make it clear. We’ll look at righteousness.

Imagine someone was in court because of tens of thousands of pounds in unpaid Council Tax. In this country, you could go to jail for this. Just when the court proceedings are started, the clerk of the court stands up and announces to the judge that all the person’s debts have been paid! The judge gladly declares that all the demands of the law on that person have been satisfied. The debt has been paid. And the person who was heading for jail finds himself declared innocent, and he’s told he’s free to go.

This is how it goes with the sinner who comes to God in repentance. **Since Christ paid the penalty for their sin, the judge of all the earth—God himself—pronounces the sinner innocent.** He’s declared to be *righteous*.

And this is the very righteousness of Jesus himself. It’s *perfect*. It can’t be lessened and it can’t be made better.

But in the Bible, righteousness is often spoken of in a different way. It’s used to describe Godly behaviour. How much our actions meet God’s standards. And that changes! If you’ve been a believer for more than a fortnight, you’ll know you fall into sin. And even though you repent of it, you soon sin again.

This brings us to the point Paul’s making. You have the righteousness of Christ, and you’ll always be accepted by God because of it. But God urges us to *fight hard to make our lives match* that perfect righteousness. Listen to what the apostle John said to his fellow believers:

[1 John 3:7—Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, \[just\] as he \[Jesus\] is righteous.](#)

So the apostles are saying to us: *If you're one of the righteous, then act like it!*

So how *do* we put this armour on? Towards the end of the section, it reminds us that **prayer** is **central** to all this.

- You put on the armour by praying that God would *deepen your understanding* in spiritual things
- You put on the armour by asking God to *help you live a Christ-like life*. To act like the righteous person you are.
- You put on the armour by *seeking courage* from God *to be bold in telling others* about what Jesus has done for you
- You put on the armour by begging God to *increase your faith*
- You put on the armour by *thanking* God for the *blessings in salvation* which it represents
- And you put on the armour by praying as you approach the word of God, that you'd not only be familiar with it yourself but would do all you can to spread the truth of it.

And having the armour on, you can fight the unseen enemy. You can better resist temptation, and you can march out into this world as a witness for Jesus Christ.

The victory in this spiritual war has already been secured. THE BLOODIED CROSS OF CALVARY AND THE EMPTY TOMB ARE EMBLEMS OF THE GREAT VICTORIES JESUS WON OVER SATAN AND HIS KINGDOM.

Christ our Captain has taken the high ground and secured it. Our duty as soldiers of his is to hold that ground in the power of God.

And if you're not a Christian today; if you're not a follower of Jesus Christ as the captain of your salvation, I urge you today to **surrender** to him. If you're not *for* Jesus Christ you are *against* him, and all who fight against him face nothing but everlasting destruction from the face of God.

I urge you to surrender. **Lay down your arms. Remove the useless armour you've made for yourself.** Admit your rebellion, and see how quickly Christ, that great man of war, embraces you as a friend and a brother or sister, assuring you of his great delight, when the war is over, at the thought of sharing everlasting life in God's paradise with you.

Amen.