

Ephesians 6 - Part 2

by Colin Anderson

To effectively engage in spiritual warfare and live a life of obedience to God, we must put on the whole armor of God, including the truth, righteousness, and faith.

Duration: 40:10

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:8, Ephesians 6:10-14, Hebrews 11:33-34

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being watchful and not allowing Satan to use us. He uses the example of Peter, who unknowingly became an instrument of the devil when he confronted Jesus and opposed the truth. The speaker highlights the need to be guided by the word of God and to speak the truth in all situations. He also mentions how Satan tries to discourage believers by questioning God's approval and allowing difficult circumstances. The sermon concludes with a reminder to put on the full armor of God in order to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

Transcript

Let us turn to the word of God again, to Ephesians chapter 6, please. Ephesians chapter 6. You will notice that the section that we have been studying is the section that ends with an appeal for prayer. We have been engaging in prayer, and our prayers only have value and power as we put on the whole armor of God.

I really believe that. Our prayers only have value and power as we put on the whole armor of God. This armor is our only defense against the deceit, the cunning wiles of the devil.

True praying is not possible to an armorless Christian. Our defense against the devil's wiles is the truth. The truth applied in several different ways, as indicated by each part of the armor.

First, that truth must be applied inwardly, to the one who is engaged in prayer. To the one who seeks to stand before the living God, who knows men's hearts. Our loins must be girt about with truth.

The truth must then be applied inwardly. The truth must affect not only the inner man, but the outward conduct of the believer. He is to act rightly before God, and to act rightly before men.

He is to put on the breastplate of righteousness. That truth will also provide him with a firm footing, that he may be effective, reaching out in the work of God, whether in the gospel, or in the teaching ministry,

whatever it is. Whatever our gifts may be, we must have a firm footing.

Our feet shod with the foundation, or the preparation as it's translated, of the gospel of peace. And then, there must be the shield of faith. In all circumstances, in every situation, the believer must be preserved from the wiles of the devil, and protected from all his evil ways.

And he is assured of victory in every situation. He wears a helmet upon his head, and he carries in his hand the sword of the Spirit, which again is the word of God. So the truth affects us inwardly, it affects our conduct, it gives us a firm footing, it protects us in all circumstances, it gives us assurance of victory in every situation, and it gives us ability, by the grace of God, to rout the enemy.

Now yesterday, before we read in Ephesians 6, let me say this. I referred to 2 Corinthians chapter 11, a passage which refers to false apostles and deceitful workers. Let no one think that I'm pinning that label on any individual or group of individuals in this audience, or among the assemblies.

I have no notion, no intention of pinning the thought of anyone here being a false apostle or a deceitful worker. Well then, why did I mention that passage? My intention was to show, and I trust that this was clear to all, that the devil works at his best, or his worst, whichever way you look at it. But the devil is most effective when he is using those who have the most obvious profession of faith in God.

Those who have the reputation, let me put it that way, the reputation of being servants of God. Those are the ones whom the devil likes to use, most of all, because he is a liar from the beginning. And if I want to poison you, I assure you I don't.

But if I want to poison you, I take a glass of clear water, and put in it some colorless poison. I don't give it any color. And when you are thirsty, I offer you the glass of water.

And you drink it because it looks good. And so Satan wants to use those who appear to be, who are transformed into angels of light. Now following that principle through, what I do apply to us, and to myself in particular, is that Satan would like to use us, and he can do it, if we're not watchful.

That he can take us like Peter, as he did in the case of Confronting the Lord, and say, be it far from you Lord. And actually it was Satan that was speaking through the compassion and the concern of Peter. A compassion and concern that overlooked the truth.

And what was the truth? You foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe, what? All that the scriptures have spoken. And what did they say? How that the Christ must suffer. And Peter unwittingly became an instrument of the devil, in that approach to the Lord.

And the Lord recognized it. It was anti-truth. But coming through one who was so close to him.

You see how we need to put the armor on. We see how we need to be guided in everything by the truth, and not by the amiability of our own nature. It must be the word of God that guides us.

We must speak the truth in us, of course. But make sure it's the truth that we're speaking. And that we're not, in what we say, violating what God says in his word.

Peter again was caught, not in the matter of what he said, but in the matter of what he did. And we saw that in that passage in Galatians. You will remember that there in Galatians, Paul had to rebuke him.

Because he was not acting in accordance with the truth. In accordance with the gospel. He was violating, by his conduct, the things he professed with his mouth.

The armor had slipped. And I say it, remembering who Peter is, and the wonderful work God used him to do. But those things are in God's word, showing us that those who are real godly leaders, those who have experienced the fullness of the Holy Spirit, can be instruments of the devil, if their lives are not being guided, their words, their actions are not being guided by the truth.

Well I trust that's enough on that. Let's go on to Ephesians chapter 6 and read the word of God for ourselves again this morning, from verse 10. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

Put on the full armor of God that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth. And now we come to the breastplate of righteousness. Let me say that I believe that the righteousness in view here is not to be confused with what we may call judicial righteousness.

The righteousness we have because we know and believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ. We are made the righteousness of God in him. He who was made sin for us, he who knew no sin.

It was in order that we might be made and treated as the righteousness of God in him. That is something we all have. There is no responsibility in that, except to receive the Lord Jesus of course.

But as believers we have no responsibility in regard to that, except to believe it, to be thankful for it, to live in the light of it. But that is something that is unassailable, something that we cannot lose, something that is ours because we are his, and he is made unto us. Wisdom from God, righteousness, sanctification, redemption.

Praise God for that. So it's not to be confused with that kind of righteousness, for this is something we are exhorted to take up, something we are exhorted to put on. And it is the practical righteousness of the believer.

Not our judicial righteousness, but a conduct consistent with any God-given role. You see, every situation into which God brings us demands certain conduct. Am I a child in a family? Then a certain kind of righteousness is required.

What kind of righteousness? Children obey your parents. There is a righteousness that belongs to that role which is mine as a child. Am I a servant? There is a certain kind of righteousness that I should manifest.

It's not really looking here only, though it would include that, it's not looking here only I would suggest at moral qualities, being right and being free from lustful thoughts and so on, but adopting conduct which is consistent with the role or the position that God has given to me. Have I come into an assembly? Then certain conduct is required of me, to recognize, for example, the elders in that assembly. And I can only be right in that assembly if I recognize what God has already done in that place, and I am to be submissive to God's work in that place.

And that's what righteousness demands of me. Now the example of this, perfect example of course, is our Lord Jesus Christ himself, who had no lustful thoughts to discharge from his mind. His combat was not in the area of the flesh.

He is impeccable, our Lord Jesus Christ. But he spoke about the need to fulfill righteousness. You remember, he came to John the Baptist, and John the Baptist said, I have need to be baptized by you, and you are coming to me? Suffer it to be so now, said our Lord.

For so it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Our Lord had come to fulfill a role of Savior, and that involved him in going into death for our sakes. And in image here, he takes that position, and he goes into the waters of death, in figure, at the beginning of his ministry.

And this was the fulfillment of all that was right for him, it was necessary for him, it was appropriate for him, as the Savior of the world, to take that position. So it is the truth regulating my conduct, so that I follow Paul's example. I always exercise myself to maintain a conscience, blameless conscience, before God and before men.

When we are wearing that breastplate, that is basic to effective praise. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, you have the breastplate on. There are no arrows coming in.

The enemy cannot accuse you. It is not that you are faultless, but we should be blameless. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have what? Confidence before God.

Whatever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do what is pleasing in his sight. That gives me power in prayer. It also gives me power in dealing with men and women.

Whether we are thinking those who are lost, believers who have strayed, those who may need rebuke, there needs to be spiritual courage in order not only to stand before God, but to stand before men. When I was a boy, I used to read much the Knights of the Round Table. I don't remember which knight it was, and I don't know whether he could even say it with truth.

But there was one phrase that gripped my heart almost as though it was the very word of scripture when I was a boy. And one of Arthur's knights said very nobly, my strength is the strength of ten, because my heart is pure. That attracted me, and I found myself inwardly desiring that which was expressed in that statement.

Or that we might be having the strength of ten, because our life, our conduct is what God would want it to be. Therefore, having received such ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not. Now what follows? We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty or shame.

We are not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully. But by manifestation, not only preaching, but by manifestation in the life, you know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. You became followers of us, and of the Lord.

What a life, what a ministry. We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty. That gives us power, men and women, here today.

If we want power with God, we must walk before him blamelessly. If we want power with men, we must be true men, true to God's word, true inwardly, true in conduct. We have renounced the hidden things of

dishonesty.

We are not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth. Listen, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. The man may believe, or he may not, but his conscience has been reached.

Why? Because the one who stands before him is manifesting the truth. His life exhibits what he teaches. All for a life like that.

God wants us to have it. Put on the breastplate of righteousness. Our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Now, putting on armour is inconsistent with running as a herald. If you're going to run a race, if you're going to carry a message and be a herald, you'd strip yourself of weight, and you'd run. That's gospel ministry.

When it says the preparation of the gospel of peace, I know that so often it's taken to mean, and I beg that you just allow me to take a different slant, it's so often taken to mean that we are to be prepared to preach the gospel. But let me quote W.E. Vine here, who points out that the meaning of the word preparation may also be firm footing. A firm footing supplied by the gospel of peace.

Not the gospel of peace to be carried to others, but the gospel of peace known in my own life, in my own experience. In the Septuagint of Psalm 89 and 4, these words appear. Righteousness and justice are the foundation, same word, of your throne.

So it is a firm footing, a firm foundation. How firm a foundation he's made for the Lord. He's laid for your faith in his excellent word.

That, I take it, is meant by the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. I cannot reach out to others in this troubled world unless I'm at peace. One of the things I pray for in dealing with troubled people, and I don't want to sound as though I'm a very important person, when you start talking about your own ministry, I fear sometimes that we try to make ourselves out to be more strategic and important in God's work than we really are.

But nevertheless, we do, my wife and I, have a lot to do with counselling. And we've had a lot of troubled people come to us, people with all sorts of difficulties. We've seen some terrible failures in our counselling ministry, and some joyous and happy successes as well.

But what I've learned is that if I'm not at peace myself, I can't help anybody else. If something's troubling me, it may not be at all the same thing that's troubling the person who's coming to me, but I have to be secure in my own soul. My feet have to be shod firmly.

I am founded and grounded in the peace that God grants to us as his people. I must have a secure footing if I'm to reach to a man who is slipping in the mud. I must be able to help him, and I take it that that's what is in view here.

Satan will do his utmost to disturb you when you're going to serve God. And that's when you need to have your firm footing. Have you ever noticed when you're just going to get up to the platform, you're suddenly reminded of something that you did or said or thought? Often it's something you've already confessed and

put right with the Lord, but the enemy whispers, how can you stand up before people when you did that or thought that? He brings such things to mind.

As I say, even though they may have been confessed, he tries to trouble the Christian. I well remember when Satan had me for about a year when I went to Emmaus Bible School. You would think that when you go to Bible School, you would be just living in heaven.

Well, it was almost a hell for me, and that was not the fault of Emmaus Bible School. That was the fault of this man here. I didn't know how to put the armor on.

Now, the sooner I got to Bible School, I'd come over from England purposely to go to Bible School. I was penniless, more or less, but that was all right. We were seeking to trust the Lord.

But the sooner I got there, because I really didn't know the wiles of the devil, and things were not working out well for me. You know, a lot of people say, well, we know this must have been the will of the Lord because, you know, we were able to sell our house for twice as much as we paid for it. And we know that was the hand of the Lord.

Wonderful. That hasn't always been my experience. We know that the Lord was in it because he smoothed our way.

Wonderful. But that's not very comforting to a brother who's finding the very opposite. Sometimes in the work of God, you find that the wind blows against you, and everything goes wrong when you're being most right.

Our circumstances are no proof at all that we are in the will of God, as I judge. But what Satan did was, he suggested to me that I was out of the will of God. And that really troubled me because I was wanting to do the will of God.

And sometimes the more earnest we are in the things of God, the more trouble we get into. And I was so earnest I was in deep trouble. Oh God, I've messed up my life.

Here I am at Bible School and I shouldn't be here. And I struggled with that. And I struggled with that.

Because things weren't working out. I wasn't able even to buy the books at the school that I needed for my study. I had to borrow them from the library.

I didn't want to tell anybody. And that wasn't the only problem. Just when I wanted to pay attention to the ministry that was going to be given to us on the Christian life by Mr. Harold Harper, I got an attack of the mumps.

And in those days they isolated you for it. They don't do it now, but they used to in those days. So for a whole month during his ministry at the school, I think I heard about one lecture.

The rest of the time I spent in a room when I had about three books to read, plus my Bible, and a very troubled conscience. Can you imagine going through a month of that? It was like being in a cell. I was utterly destroyed at the end of it all.

I got down on my knees, I said, Oh God, I've broken my life to pieces. I know I'm out of your will, but please take up the pieces and use them for your glory. And God in his mercy brought a thought into my

mind.

Who told you you were out of the will of God? And I learned something that day. Never accept any suggestion of your being guilty of anything unless it is in the light of the word of God properly interpreted. Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

You must have a firm footing. We must move on. In addition to all, verse sixteen, shield, helmet, and sword were not attached to the soldier, you see, all the time.

They were taken up when needed for a specific skirmish or battle. But he wore the first parts of the armor constantly. But these were things that were to be taken up in view of the evil day.

We're to put on the whole armor of God. It includes the shield of faith. Now this is not, I would suggest, the gift of faith as spoken of.

The gift of faith to undertake, say, some Christian project. Thank God for those people who are raised up by him at certain times in the church's history who have a discernment and the faith to carry through a vision given to them by God. Thank God for those people.

But I don't believe that that's what's in view here. This is for every Christian. It is the faith to maintain in a practical way, and in our generation, the unchanging truth of God as climaxed here in Ephesians.

We are to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. Now, let me talk about Christian projects for a little while. I want to say some things that might be a little provocative on this, but they're said in love.

Some Christian projects undertaken in faith are not God's will at all. At least if we use those words in faith in the way that some people use them. Statements like this.

We went ahead with this project in faith that God would supply our needs, and we're counting on you for a thousand dollars this month. My dear brother, where are you? Is that faith? I'm frankly, I don't understand it. That to me just doesn't add up.

If I am doing something in faith that is God's will, what is the principle in God's word that guides me to do that? And if I'm just doing it because it's my vision, my idea, my plan, and you know, I feel that something should be done, so I'm going to go ahead in faith, and then I expect other people to come in and support my faith. We must be very careful what we undertake in the name of the Lord. The Lord supports his own work, not mine.

And just because the thing is good, doesn't mean it's always of God. There are some good things that God may be wants done by somebody else, not by me. I must be very sure when I say that I'm doing something in faith.

I'm thinking of an example my wife told me about, a man she knew who bought a huge castle. He was going to have it as a convention center for Christians, sounded like a good scheme. He went into very serious debt and dishonored the name of the Lord in that regard.

You see, we've got to be careful when we say we go ahead in faith. Sometimes people are ready to label anything that looks, what shall I say, legitimate, acceptable, right. That's the will of God for them, and they expect everybody else to go along with it.

That's not fair, it's not right. You must be sure of what you're doing. First Timothy, or rather 1 Corinthians 16:10 says this, if Timothy comes, see that he be among you without fear.

For he works the work of the Lord, even as I also do. Now that's a very simple statement, but it's profound. Let me just change the preposition and see if it sounds as good, and if it's as acceptable to you.

Now watch it. If Timothy comes to you, see that he be with you without fear. For he does the work for the Lord, as I also do.

Do you see the change, subtle change? Is it as truly God's will that I should do a work for God, as that I should do the work of God? What's the difference? Supposing I say to my son, son I'm going away for an hour or two, and I'm going to come back, and I want you to mow the lawn. And my son says thanks dad, and he starts off, he starts off mowing the lawn, and boy, he says to himself, I wish dad had bought a power mower. It's true, our lawn is kind of even, but pushing this thing is just a lot of hard work.

So he stops for a moment, and he looks at the hedge. Boy, dad needs that hedge clipped. And you know, he's just bought some new hedge clippers.

Wouldn't it please dad if I trim the hedge? So he gets the hedge clippers out, and he spends the hour trimming the hedge. And you know, people passing by say, look at that boy, you know, he's just a youngster, but he's trimming the hedge, isn't that great? He's doing a real work for his dad. And when I come home, I'm thoroughly displeased with my boy.

Why? He was doing a work for me, but he wasn't doing my work. You see, it's possible to do a work for the Lord without doing the work of the Lord. Doing the work of the Lord is being submissive to his will.

And doing things, notice in that text, the way Paul did them. He says, he works the work of the Lord as I also do. So the pattern of working the work of the Lord is working after the pattern of the apostles.

As we have it in the book of Acts. Now, we're not talking about practices in detail now, we're talking about principles. We know that Paul, for example, never had an aeroplane.

But there's nothing inconsistent, I hope, because I used one just recently. Nothing inconsistent in traveling by air from here to there, but Paul never had an aeroplane. But we have the principle of Paul traveling from place to place as needed.

That's covered in scripture. So there's nothing against the work of God or the will of God in traveling by a different method than the apostle could ever have known or experienced. We're talking not about such things as that.

We're not talking about the actual method of doing things. The method, though, must never violate the principle. The principles by the great goals to which Paul was working.

There's room for all kinds of methods to be used, brethren. Believe it. Don't be too swift to jump on people who come up with a new method.

At first it won't be acceptable because, you know, we've followed the traditional way. Let's not jump on people because they've got a new method. But let us be careful that the method does not violate the principles that are given to us in the word of God.

That's the thing. So we have to take up the shield of faith. Now, Satan will threaten us if we do.

He certainly will. Turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 8. If you try to take up the shield of faith and do the work of God and seek to serve God as he wants you to, you will certainly need that shield. Verse 8 of 2 Corinthians chapter 4. We're afflicted in every way, but not crushed.

Perplexed, but not despairing. Dear servant of God here today, have you known affliction? Well, let me assure you, you will not be crushed, for the Lord is with you. Have you known what it is to be perplexed? Well, don't despair, for the Lord is with you.

Do you know what it is to be persecuted? Well, don't worry about it, for you will never be abandoned by the Lord. Do you know what it is to be struck down? Well, you will not be destroyed or completely handed over to the enemy. But you will know something of always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

This is part of the lot of the true servant of God. How do you approve yourself as a servant of God with such things? Isn't that remarkable? That's how we learn to bear the stigmata of the Lord Jesus. We have such things, persecution, suffering.

For we are constantly, we who live, are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake. The servant constantly being reduced by the pressure that the enemy brings to bear upon him. It looks as though he's going to be utterly crushed.

His work is going to be terminated, and his life is going to be ended prematurely. Satan threatens. And what does God do? Death is at work in us.

That's the principle which we're facing constantly. Well, what's the glorious result? Life in you. If we want to be fruitful, this type of thing will come to us.

I know we're living in a land where we don't suffer persecution. But we're going to know strong opposition and great difficulty if life is to work in others. If life is to be produced in others, then there must be the principle of death at work in us.

Satan will threaten, and God will use those very things that are threatening to us for his own glory. Now, of course, when you do that, Satan will also deride. When you're down, he loves to kick you.

If you were really faithful to God, he will say, you will see more evidence of God's approval upon your life. He'll serve that one to you when you're really at the end of your tether, and suggest to you at that time that if God really approved of you, he wouldn't allow you to be in a position like this. After all, in a rotten Roman jail, what are you doing there? And Joseph, if God really gave you those dreams, what are you doing down here in jail in Egypt? That's God at work, in spite of what Joseph and what Paul were going through.

It was death to them, but it was life for others. We have to learn, as it tells us. Please turn with me to Hebrews chapter 11, and I'm going to close with this thought, although I haven't covered all the other parts of armor except in a very sketchy way in my introduction to you, but time forbids me to go through it all too rapidly, otherwise if I, rather, if I go through it too rapidly, then I won't give you anything worthwhile.

But look at verse 33 of Hebrews chapter 11. Who by faith conquered kingdoms? Oh, I want to do that. Performed acts of righteousness? Yes, I want to do that.

Obtained promises? Yes, I want to do that. Shut the mouth of lions? Glorious. Quench the power of fire? Yes, I want to be Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Escape the edge of the sword? Isn't that a wonderful deliverance from the Lord? That's all a mark of the work of God, isn't it? Well, how about 35? Others were tortured, not accepting their release in order that they might obtain a better resurrection. Others experienced mockings, scourgings, chains, imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with a sword, they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated, men of whom the world is not worthy.

Now, which class are you in? Which class am I in? Do I want to be in the first class who, by faith, did these wonderful things? Well, God may not choose me to be in that class. He may choose me to be in the other class, to be stoned, sawn asunder. Or the equivalent of that in our society today.

People don't usually chop you up to death, but they may give you a very rough time, and God may choose to put you in that place. He may not choose to allow you to see the glorious, to experience the wonderful deliverance of God. Some servants of God, He may do that for them.

Thank God for them. By faith, they do those things. But you, by faith, may be called to suffer.

Be prepared for that. God is sovereign. Lord, what shall this man do? What is that to thee? Follow thou me.

We need the whole armor of God, don't we? We're engaged in battle, brethren. There's a war on. And the enemy is very subtle.

Let us be sure that we're clad in the armor of truth. I wonder if we could sing together, hymn number 333. If our song leader would please come, Jim, and lead us in that hymn, if you don't mind, in closing.

A mighty fortress is our God.

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