

Christian Armour

<i>Text</i>	Ephesians 6:14-15
<i>Readings</i>	Isaiah 59:9-21; Luke 12:35-40
<i>Theme</i>	In this spiritual battle Christians are to arm themselves with truth, righteousness and peace.
<i>Purpose</i>	To explain the Christian armour of truth, righteousness and peace and to urge you to put it on.

Most of us have some interest in what we should wear. We want to wear what is appropriate to the climate or to the situation.

When it is hot we want to dress in light summer clothing; when it is cold we want to dress up warmly.

If we are going to some function we want to know whether the dress is supposed to be formal or casual.

It's usually women who are most concerned about these matters. I'm sure most of the husbands here, at least once, have seen your wife standing in front of her wardrobe and heard her say; "I've got nothing to wear!" We know that is not true, not with all those clothes in front of her; the real problem is, "What, of all this selection, should I wear?!"

But men too want to have the right clothing and footwear, especially for their workplace. Men in trades will go looking for the right jacket or trousers or boots for their job. Men working in offices will want the right suit or tie for the situation they are in.

The Christian too wants to be properly dressed. We could talk here about our *ordinary* clothing – and that would be a worthwhile discussion as we consider what is appropriate to wear to worship on Sundays; but that is not our concern today – the focus of these verses is on our *spiritual* clothing.

We are engaged in a spiritual battle. Our enemy, the devil and his evil angels, is powerful and cunning and full of evil schemes. We need to find our strength in the Lord and in his mighty power, and we need to put on the full armour of God, which he supplies.

These verses describe this armour. Six items are listed. The first three were fixed firmly to the body – a belt, breastplate and shoes – and the next three were carried or sat more loosely on the soldier – a shield, a helmet and a sword.

Paul wrote this letter around 60 AD when he was in prison in Rome. A Roman soldier stood by him at all times, and Paul had plenty of time to observe what the soldier wore and to think about how this applied to the Christian. His list is not meant to cover every possible piece of armour nor should we press the

details of the comparison. Rather the armour describes how we can protect ourselves in this spiritual battle and fight against the enemy.

In verse 14 he urges us to stand firm (using the same word for stand as in verse 11). We can stand firm because the Lord Jesus has already won the battle and gained the high ground.

And we can stand firm as we arm ourselves with this spiritual armour.

1. Put on the belt of truth

a. The belt: In the first century culture most people wore long flowing robes while soldiers wore a short tunic. When a man was about to do some activity he would put on a belt to tie up his robes. Today we talk about tightening our belt.

In Luke 12:35 Jesus urged people to be ready for his coming and used the same words Paul uses here; literally, "Let your loins be girded." The NIV reads; "Be dressed ready for service." The idea is that of readiness – be prepared, be ready for action.

Isaiah pictured the Messiah, the Servant of the Lord, as ready for action; "Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist and faithfulness the belt of his loins." (Isaiah 11:5) He would judge his enemies and evildoers with righteousness.

When a soldier was preparing for battle he would put on a leather belt to tie up his tunic. From that belt he would hang his sword.

When he came away from the battle and went off duty he would take off his belt. Yet the Christian is never off duty; we always need to be on our guard and ready for action.

b. We are to keep on the belt of truth.

This is not our own truthfulness but rather the truth about God. It is the truth about ourselves and sin and salvation and the world.

It is the truth revealed in the Bible, the written Word of God, and in the Lord Jesus, who is the Living Word of God.

We need this truth because it will protect us against the lies of the devil. One of Satan's schemes is to try to deceive people with half-truths and errors and heresies.

The way to protect ourselves as individuals and as a church is to know the truth – and not just bits and pieces of it. Some people latch onto one aspect of the truth – such as prophecy, or evangelism, or spiritual gifts, or the second coming. But a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. What you need is a solid and broad grasp of the truth of the Bible. You get that by reading the Bible regularly and systematically, by hearing sermons, by reading Christian books, and by attending Bible studies. Put on the belt of truth so you can stand firm against the attack of Satan.

2. Put on the breastplate of righteousness

a. A **breastplate** was a piece of armour that covered the soldier from his neck to his thighs and protected him front and back. The poorer soldiers had a breastplate of iron, but those who were wealthier had a coat of mail. This breastplate guarded the vital organs including the heart, the kidneys and the stomach.

In the *Lord of the Rings* Bilbo gave Frodo a chain mail vest of mithril which had been given to him by the Dwarven king Thorin. That protected him when he was stabbed by an orc in the mines. His friends thought he was dead, but he jumped up, a bit sore, but alive and well!

Our modern equivalent would be a bullet proof vest which has saved many a police officer from death.

b. The Christian is to put on the breastplate of **righteousness**.

Isaiah described how the Lord put on righteousness as a breastplate (Isaiah 59:17).

The Lord also gives that righteousness *to us*. We are not righteous in ourselves; we must receive a righteousness that comes from God himself.

God did that by taking our sin and crediting that to the Lord Jesus who then died in our place, bearing our sin.

Then God took the righteousness of Jesus and credited that to us so that when he looks at us he sees us as clothed in the right living of Jesus himself.

This is one of the great themes of Paul's letter to the Romans; "In the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, as it is written, the righteous will live by faith." (Romans 1:17)

This is one of the crucial organs of our faith. Satan will try to attack you at this point. He will say to you; "The Lord will not accept you into heaven; look at what a sinner you are! Remember all the wrong you have done. Think of how much you have disobeyed his commands. What hope have you got? There is no way you will be accepted into heaven." In this way Satan causes us to doubt our salvation and makes us question our faith.

When Satan attacks you in this way you need the protection of the breastplate of righteousness – not your own – but that of Jesus.

We sing of this with these great words:

*My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.*

*On Christ the solid Rock I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.*

Do you trust in the right doing and dying of the Lord Jesus? Will you keep on that breastplate of righteousness? Will you put your hope in him? Will you lean on his name? Will you stand on this solid rock?

Earlier we talked about the importance of wearing the right clothing.

Sometimes schools will have a mufti day where everyone can be out of uniform; but usually at least one person forgets and arrives in their uniform. He feels out of place.

Or imagine a social gathering where a woman arrives dressed in completely the wrong clothes. She feels conspicuous and tries to keep in the background. She feels insecure and lacks confidence.

But if you arrive at school in the right cool gear, or you arrive at the party in the appropriate clothing, you feel confident and you are able to face people and talk to them.

In the same way if you have the breastplate of Christ's righteousness you can be secure in your relationship with God and you be confident as you face the attack of the enemy.

3. Arm yourselves with the belt of truth, with the breastplate of righteousness, and thirdly, with **the shoes of the gospel of peace.**

a. Soldiers needed shoes because the enemy would put sharp pieces of wood or metal into the ground with the point sticking up; if a soldier stepped on one of those he would be badly injured. So soldiers needed protective footwear.

Today you can buy work boots that have a metal plate in the sole to protect your foot if you stand on a nail. Or you can purchase boots that have a high-density ceramic weave in the sole that does the same thing but is light weight. The Romans didn't have this technology, but they developed a thick leather sole to protect the foot; that sole also had nails or spikes sticking out of it to give the soldier a firm footing.

b. You need to have "your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace."

(verse 15)

The word "**readiness**" can also be translated as "preparation" or "firmness". It describes the Christian as ready to fight, prepared to do battle. We can do that from a position of strength because we have a firm footing.

And we are also ready to advance against the enemy. Part of the success of the Roman armies, and the Greek army under Alexander the Great, was their good footwear. With their strong shoes they could travel at speed for long distances over difficult country.

This should be true of us too. We can go almost anywhere with the good news of the gospel. We are ready to speak about Jesus when and where we have opportunity.

Are you doing that? Are you speaking about Jesus at school, and tech, and uni, and at work? Are you advancing the gospel? Are you ready to tell others the message of the Bible?

This readiness “comes from *the gospel of peace.*”

One of the problems for soldiers in battle is fear. Men can be anxious and worried, concerned about their own safety and that of their mates. That fear can be so strong at times it can paralyse them; they can be ineffective, useless, and immobile.

This can be a problem for Christian soldiers. You can be anxious and worried, fearful and afraid. Satan and his evil forces of darkness could terrify you!

The answer is to arm yourself with the gospel of peace.

This is “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1)

This is the confidence we have knowing that we are fighting with and for Christ our Lord, who is the Captain of the armies of God. We are confident, not in ourselves, but in his mighty power.

This is the peace that transcends all understanding that will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7)

Sometimes we are going somewhere and we wonder what we should wear – what will be appropriate? What will be fitting for the occasion?

You who are soldiers in the army of Christ are going into battle. You need the right clothing: you need the armour of God. You need to be well prepared for the mighty conflict we are facing.

Put on the belt of truth – keep reading, studying, discussing the Bible so you have a firm and clear grasp of the truth of God.

Keep on the breastplate of righteousness, which is the righteousness of Christ – that will protect you against doubt and discouragement.

And protect your feet with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace so you can both stand your ground and advance with the good news about Jesus.

Go forward into the battle armed with truth, righteousness and peace.

Amen