Armored with Christ

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Preacher: Shawn Woo

`[0:00]` Ephesians chapter 6, verses 10 to 24. If you're wondering why we're in Ephesians 6 when we should be in Matthew 22, it's because! Todd Bourne, one of our pastoral interns, was supposed to preach today from Matthew 22.

He was scheduled to preach. But all of our pastoral team, we were at the Regional Assembly of Elders, which happens twice a year in Pennsylvania with our denomination. And I think he caught some kind of stomach bug because he was hurling on the way back yesterday, and he was not able to make it to church today.
So I am pinch hitting. I had to pull back from an old, old sermon maybe seven, eight years ago that probably most of you have never heard. I looked through it, and I was like, okay, this needs a lot of work.
Unfortunately, I wasn't able to put in as much work as I would like, but the Lord's going to help us in my weakness. He's going to speak to us. So Ephesians 6, verses 10 to 24.
Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word. Amen. Heavenly Father, Heavenly Father, Heavenly Father, it's so easy, we confess, Lord, to be conditioned by our surroundings, by this simple world, to think like the world, to live and believe as if this world that we see with our eyes is all there is.
`[1:51]` But we ask, God, that from your Word in Ephesians 6 this morning, that you would expose to us spiritual realities, that you would open up the eyes of our hearts so that we might live with the urgency, with faith, with hope and love that your Word calls forth from us.

For the Lord who have done that from us who have his word, Ephesians chapter 6, verses 10 to 24. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand firm. Stand, therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness and as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints. And also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly as I ought to speak. This is God's holy and authoritative word. Please be seated.
In wartime, everything changes. During World War II, many everyday industries and institutions and civilians were all redirected toward wartime needs. Automobile companies like Ford and General

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Motors stopped making cars and started making tanks and bombers instead. Typewriters and cash register companies started producing rifles and ammunition. The clothing industry, instead of putting out fashion items, started focusing on making military uniforms and parachutes and tents. Food companies started focusing on making combat rations, powdered eggs, canned goods for the troops. Civilians participated in a number of austerity measures. They collected tin cans and pots and pans so that they can be used to make ammunition. They collected bike tires. Rubber was hard to come by. Gasoline was rationed out, and people conserved their fuels in their homes, lest the tanks and the fighter jets and the naval ships run out of fuel. Volunteers held blood drives all over the city. Schools and universities became research hubs for military technology and theoretical physicists who were working previously on abstract quantum problems like J. Robert Oppenheimer started working on the Manhattan Project, which produced a nuclear bomb.
The British luxury ocean liner, the RMS Queen Mary, which used to ferry 1,000 people at a time on cruise trips in spacious, luxurious suites, was converted into a troop carrier with cramped bunk beds up to 10-story high and ferried Allied soldiers, sometimes over 16,000 soldiers at a time.
The United States became what historians often call a total war economy, total war society, where nearly every aspect of the civilian life was transformed and harnessed toward war efforts.
[6:46] In wartime, luxury gives way to austerity. A profit mentality gives way to sacrifice mentality. And complacency gives way to readiness and alertness.

Do you know that we are in the middle of a spiritual war? At the end of his life, Paul says in 2 Timothy 4, 7, I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.
Why does he talk like that? Because keeping the faith in this life is a fight. It's a battle. If you think he can scurr through life while avoiding conflict with the enemy, you're gravely mistaken.
We are surrounded by enemies without and assailed by enemies within. Paul also says in 1 Corinthians 9, 26, I do not run aimlessly. I do not box as one beating the air, but I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.
The Christian life is a boxing bout. We're ducking and weaving. We're stepping in and throwing jabs. We're punching and being pummeled.
[8:08] And if we're not paying attention, we will get knocked out cold. 17th century English theologian John Owen wrote in his famous book, The Mortification of Sin, There is not a day but sin foils or is foiled, prevails or is prevailed upon.

Let no man think to kill sin with few easy or gentle strokes. I think I have this next quote up there to project for you. You must always be at it while you live, killing sin.
Do not take a day off from this work. Always be killing sin or it will be killing you. Does that sound extreme to you?
He's just echoing Romans 8, 13. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. Another 17th century English pastor, William Gurnall, similarly writes, The Christian must always be at war.
If he has peace with sin, he is at war with God. Does that sound extreme? He's just echoing James 4, 4.
[9:23] Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Brothers and sisters, we are at war. Do we walk in the flesh? It says in 2 Corinthians 10, 3. We are not waging war according to the flesh.
For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but have divine power to destroy strongholds. And that's what this passage is about. Those weapons of spiritual warfare.
And I want to remind you that this language of spiritual warfare, this is not a metaphor. It's not a metaphor. Therefore, there is a literal spiritual war going on.
It's not a physical war, yes, that much is true. But it's nonetheless a real spiritual war with invisible, evil, hostile forces.
[10:28] There are real casualties in this war. Real damage and death in this war. Some of us might not make it.

The scope and consequence of this war far exceed any world wars history has ever known. It's a matter of eternal life and eternal death.
And even just getting this what's at stake this morning would radically change our lives. So if that's the case, how much more should we be vigilant in this spiritual war?

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And this is my main point this morning. We must put on the whole armor of God so that we can stand against the schemes of the devil. I'm going to address that in three main points. First, know your enemy.
Two, put on God's armor. Three, pray for your comrades. In order to be victorious, we must know our enemy. As the famed 6th century BC Chinese general Sun Tzu wrote in his book, The Art of War, If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles.
[11:39] If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained, you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.

Paul begins in verses 10 to 11. Finally, Paul is now tying the bow at the top and wrapping all of the epistle to the Ephesians together with this passage.
And this is his urgent, final closing exhortation. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Likewise, for that same reason, the armor that we put on is not our own armor.
It is described as the whole armor of God. So this is the main exhortation of this passage, verse 11 and verse 13. Take up the whole armor of God.
Put on the whole armor of God. And what's the purpose, the goal of that putting on? Verse 11 and verse 13 tell us that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. Verse 11.
[12:58] Verse 13, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand firm. That verb occurs again and again in this passage. Stand, stand, withstand. Stand, if we don't resist and stand firm, we will be swept off our feet by his overwhelming force.

And the devil doesn't merely rely on brute force. It says in verse 11 that the devil has schemes against us. Paul used that same word in Ephesians 4.14 and warned believers to no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.
Schemes of the enemy. Cunning, craftiness. The devil's designs on us are not haphazard. It is methodical. It's strategic. The devil is not some abstract force of evil.
He is a personal, intelligent being that is scheming against us. He ambushes us. He ambushes us. Catches us off guard. He waits for us to feel safe, secure, and complacent.
And then he pounces from behind. Isn't this why 1 Corinthians 10.12 warns us, Therefore, let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.
[14:24] Our enemy seeks to divide and conquer. He sows division within the body of Christ. He stirs up unforgiveness and resentment in our midst because he knows that we are stronger when we stand together and lock arms and stand against him.

So he divides us, isolates us, to pick us off one by one. This is one of Satan's trademark attacks. 2 Corinthians 2.10-11 says, Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive.
Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his designs.
What are the designs of Satan that we must not be ignorant of so that we are not outwitted by him? He makes us not forgive one another.
Have you ever thought of forgiveness in that light? Consider Ephesians 4.26-27. It's related. Be angry and do not sin. And do not let the sun go down on your anger.
[15:34] And give no opportunity to the devil. If we let the sun go down on our anger, if we harbor bitterness and resentment, if we refuse to forgive and release the offender from our hatred and vengeance, we give opportunity to the devil, he says.

And that word opportunity in Greek is literally a word that means place. We give him a place. John Calvin comments on this same verse, Ephesians 4.27, I have no doubt that Paul was warning us to beware, lest Satan should take possession of our minds like an enemy-occupied fortress and do whatever he pleases.
Sinful anger gives the devil a foothold, a beachhead in our spiritual warfare, where he could set up his base camp and from there to launch his vicious attacks.
Unforgiveness, unforgiveness, harboring anger and resentment, destroys relationships, divides communities, devastates homes and marriages, deadens our souls to joy and gratitude and mercy.
So are you aware of the schemes of the devil? John 10.10 tells us, the devil's aim is to steal, kill and destroy.
[16:53] And to that end, he employs various schemes and all of his schemes can be categorized into two overarching categories. One is deception, the other is accusation.

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That's what his name, devil or Satan, means. He's the accuser. He's a slanderer. Revelation 12.9-10 describes both of these satanic functions.
And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.
And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, now the salvation, 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.
Satan deceives us and accuses us. That's what he did, right, in the Garden of Eden, in Genesis chapter 3, when God tells him not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he slanders God's character, saying he's being stingy toward you.
[18:00] If you eat this, it's only going to do good for you. It's going to open up your eyes. You're going to see. Like God does, eat it. He lies.

2 Corinthians 11 tells us that he makes people preach a different gospel, imparts a different spirit, as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning.
2 Thessalonians 2, 9-10 teaches us that Satan's activity will be characterized by all power and false signs and wonders and all wicked deception, because he is a deceiver.
For he is a liar and the father of lies. He's also an accuser. He's our adversary in court.
He's our prosecutor, the relentless prosecuting attorney. In the book of Job, Satan accuses Job before God, contending that the only reason Job fears God and worships him is because God has pampered him with all these blessings.
[19:04] Deprive him of these things, and he will curse you to your face. So Satan takes away Job's wealth. He takes away his children. He takes away his health.

All of it in order to produce counter evidence that he can use to accuse Job before God. It's like what we read in Zechariah 3, 1-2, in the assurance of pardon earlier.
He accuses Joshua, the high priest, of his filthy garments. I found in pastoral ministry that many Christians don't know how to distinguish the accusations and the slander and the condemnation of the enemy from the conviction of the Holy Spirit.
Romans 2, 4 tells us, do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? Satan's condemnation always comes with this crushing sense of burden and condemnation.
The Lord's conviction, the conviction of the Holy Spirit always comes with an invitation, with the gentleness and the patience of the Lord, the kindness that leads us to repentance.
[20:25] Psalm 130, 3-5 says, if you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness that you may be feared. God does not make us cower in fear of him by his exacting righteousness and justice.

He makes us fear him by his forgiveness, by his grace and mercy. So if you're wallowing in your guilt and your shame and you're feeling condemned and you're not believing the promise of Romans 8, 1 that there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus and you're feeling that weight of condemnation crushing you, putting you down, that is not of the Lord. Know to distinguish the condemnation of the enemy from the conviction of the Holy Spirit. We must be knowledgeable about the devil's schemes.
For it says in verse 12, we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.
Notice the language that Paul uses to describe this fight. He uses the word wrestle, which is very intentional. That's the language of hand-to-hand combat.
[21:54] Don't think that this spiritual battle is happening far away. It's right at our doorsteps. It's right in our face. It's right in our hearts. If you watch old war movies, of which I enjoy those too much, there's a phase in the battle where you're done shooting arrows from afar or you're done shooting muskets from afar and now there's a command from the general to charge and then everybody is clashing with each other in free-for-all, hand-to-hand melee.

That's the kind of spiritual battle we are in. Wrestling. We're not playing video games. We're not controlling drone strikes from a safe bunker hidden under some camouflaged place.
We're in hand-to-hand combat war zone. And whom are we wrestling against?

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Paul says we're not wrestling against flesh and blood. That represents humans, mortals. Instead, we are wrestling against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.
He's referring to spiritual forces of evil in the invisible realm of spirits. The devil and his minions, they are warring against us.
[23:35] This is so insightful and instructive for us as Christians. Our world is full of antagonism and conflict between humans.

And of course, because we are physical beings, we do sometimes have physical, natural enemies. But the ultimate enemy that we face is not fellow humans, flesh and blood, but it is those in the realm of spirits, spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.
Our ultimate enemy is not Iran or China. It's not liberals or conservatives. It's not Jews. It's not Gentiles.
It's not men. It's not women. Our ultimate enemies are the rulers, the authorities, the cosmic powers over this present darkness, the spiritual forces of evil.
This spirit, this evil spirit, the prince of the power of the air, he is the spirit that is now at work in all the sons of disobedience, it says in Ephesians 2.2.
[24:43] This is such a subtle deception that we succumb to. How many marriages have fallen apart because husband and wife think of the other person as their enemy, not recognizing that they're fighting side by side against another enemy?

How many church splits have happened because church members don't recognize that they're fighting side by side against a common enemy instead think that they're fighting against each other? We wrestle against the rulers, the authorities, the cosmic powers over the...
I mean, think about it, because if our country is very divided, people with all kinds of different opinions, they fight and bicker over all kinds of things, but imagine if we just got bombed by somebody.
They're trying to wipe the United States of America out. You think we're going to be bickering about those things? No, we forget those things for the time being because if we don't fight this enemy, we don't survive.
We forget that as Christians sometimes. We have a real enemy. It's not us. But who would be so foolhardy to fight against the devil, the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places?
[26:04] So we need to put on God's armor. This is the main point, and sometimes people, I've seen people go into really detailed analysis of the full armor of a Roman soldier, going into the details of, you know, that this is what this means, the belt of truth, this is what that means.

I'm not going to do that because I don't think the spiritual armor in view here is that of a typical Roman soldier. The armor that's in view here is rather God's armor, it says.
And there is extensive Old Testament background for learning about the armor of God. So I'm going to give you first a kind of bird's eye overview of these different pieces of the armor, and then we're going to go and see how the robber meets the road, what it actually looks like.
In verse 14, it says, to have fastened on the belt of truth. That comes from Isaiah 11, where the coming Messiah is described in this way. Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.
The word translated faithfulness there from the Hebrew is the same word that's translated as truth in Greek. It's the belt of truth that God himself wears, that God's Son, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, wears.
[27:24] Paul also says, stand therefore having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and in verse 17, tells us to take the helmet of salvation. Those two expressions come from Isaiah 59, 17, which depicts God, Yahweh, as the divine warrior who will deliver his people, and it says that he put on, God, a righteousness as a breastplate and a helmet of salvation on his head.

So it's, again, God's armor. In verse 15, Paul writes, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. Gospel, the word that means good news, likely in allusion to Isaiah 52, verse 7, which speaks of the messianic messenger of God's peace this way, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, gospel, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, your God reigns.

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Again, God's shoes, gospel of peace. Likewise, when Paul exhorts us to take up the shield of faith in verse 16, it recalls numerous occasions in the Old Testament where God himself is described as the shield of his people.
Fear not, I am your shield, God says to Abraham, Genesis 15, 2. 2 Samuel 22, 31, this God, his way is perfect. The word of the Lord proves true.
He is a shield for all those who take refuge in him. And finally, he mentions the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Paul's referring to Isaiah 11, 4, the same passage where the belt of truth comes from.
[28:56] He says that Messiah shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, or more literally, the word of his mouth. It's, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

The word of his mouth, the breath, the Spirit from his mouth shall strike the earth. That's the sword of the Spirit that God himself wields.
So the whole armor points back to God's armor. We are to put on God's armor that God offers to us his own armor that he wears as the divine warrior, the invincible God.
That's the armor we're invited to put on. And to put on the whole armor of God is akin to what Paul said earlier in Ephesians 4, 22 to 24, put off your old self which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds and to put on the new self created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.
So then to put on the whole armor of God is to be united with Christ in his life, death, and resurrection and ascension. How he's reigning and to reign with him in our faith and to cultivate the virtues in keeping with our new identity in Christ.
[30:22] So Galatians 3, 27 says, for as many of you as were baptized into Christ, you have put on Christ. To put on the armor of God then is to put on Christ.

That's the bird's eye view. Now let's see what it looks like when the rubber meets the road. Verse 14, Paul says, stand therefore having fastened on the belt of truth.
What is the belt of truth? In earlier in Ephesians 1, 13 to 14, he talks about the gospel. When you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation is the truth of God in his word but more specifically it's the truth of the gospel.
And it's the function of the belt or the girdle is to bind all of your clothing together. If the belt is loose, the whole thing falls apart, comes undone.
So it is imperative that we fasten this belt of truth around us. What is it that holds your life, your purposes, your priorities, and your preferences, and your opinions all together?
[31:37] What is it? Is it the belt of God's truth? Or is it the lies of the enemy, the falsehoods of this world?

Satan will often lie and say, yeah, God says that. Yeah, you've heard your pastor say that.
But it's really, that sin is not a big deal. That sin, that disobedience, it's not a big deal. Everybody does it.
It's okay. What that does is it loosens the belt of truth. And soon you find your armor coming loose, coming in undone, and there's all kinds of vulnerabilities exposed by it.
you've got to fasten on the belt of truth. Having done that, we must put on the breastplate of righteousness. Satan is the accuser, remember that.
[32:45] He's ever accusing us of our sins and shortcomings to drive us to despair. Oh, how many times in my life that the breastplate of the righteousness of Christ has saved me from mortal danger?

You can't rely on your own righteousness. 2 Corinthians 5, 21 says, For our sake, God made Christ to be sin who knew no sin so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.
We must put on the Lord Jesus Christ, as it says in Romans 13, 14, for He is our righteousness. Are you relying on your own righteousness?
Your own obedience. Remember that song that we sang, Come ye weary sinners. Weary sinners. Don't be deluded into thinking that you can make yourself fit enough to have righteousness enough to withstand all the schemes of the enemy.
You cannot withstand it. You put your own armor on and your own righteousness on, it's porous. All kinds of chinks and rust it through and He will thrust His spear right through.
[33:58] straight to your heart. You must put on the righteousness of Christ, the breastplate of righteousness.

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Thomas Wilcox wrote this. I just realized I'm quoting a lot of 17th century English pastors today. It was not intentional. Yeah. He says, In all doubting, fears, storms of conscience, look at Christ continually.
Do not argue with Satan. He desires nothing better. Bid him go to Christ and He will answer him. It is His office to be our advocate, His office to answer law as our surety, His office to answer justice as our mediator, and He is sworn to that office, put Christ upon it.
Isn't that why He died on the cross? So that our sins can be imputed to Him on the cross and His righteousness can be imputed to us so that we could have a clear conscience, so that we could be forgiven, so that we could have an armor, a breastplate without any chinks in it.
The perfect righteousness of Christ. in the heavenly court, it's the same as it is in the earthly court. It's better for us to shut our mouths and let the lawyers do the talking.
[35:25] Let your undefeated lawyer defense Christ do the talking. You rely on your own righteousness and the devil will poke holes in your argument.

And His accusations will expose you as a hypocrite and a fraud. But behind the breastplate of righteousness of Christ, we are safe.
In verse 15, Paul writes, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. I mentioned earlier this is probably an allusion to Isaiah 52, 7. The peace that we have with God because of Christ, the peace that we have with one another Gentiles and Jews reconciled in Christ.
That peace is what enables us to go as messengers and ambassadors of the gospel with the gospel of peace as shoes for our feet. Having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace, we must also put on, it says in verse 16, in all circumstances take up the shield of faith with which we can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.
flaming arrows were greatly feared in ancient warfare not only because the arrow is sharp and can pierce but also because once it pierces and gets lodged it spreads the fire and the destruction is far greater than what a single arrow could do.
[36:55] And in response, well-constructed shields in those days were covered with calf skin on the front so that the flaming arrows would be doused by the moisture in the leather. in a similar way the shield of faith extinguished all the flaming darts of the evil one.

When we raise up the shield of faith we are taking hold, grasping hold of the promises that God has given us in his word and interposing those promises between the enemy's accusations and slanders and lies and us and our own hearts and minds.
when Satan accuses you of all your failings when he lies to you and says that you are good for nothing that God doesn't love you that he doesn't care for you if so, why are all these hard things happening to you?
When he lies you raise up the shield of faith and interpose the promises of God his care for you and his love for you and his protection over you and his sovereignty over you and put it right between Satan and his mouth and between your heart.
Don't let those fiery darts pierce and burn you. When you're paralyzed by anxiety and fear hold up the shield of faith and the promises of God that he is your heavenly father who provides for you and cares for you and that if you can cast all of your anxieties on him put that between Satan and his accusations and your heart.
[38:36] Similarly, verse 17 tells us that we must also take the helmet of salvation. Salvation is a gift we freely receive from God as it says in Ephesians 2.8.

It's not up to us but up to God and since we never merited salvation with our own righteousness we can never demerit it. we need this assurance of salvation in order to oppose the powers of darkness.
Put on that security that comes with that helmet of salvation upon your head to guard your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus. And finally in verse 17 Paul mentions the last piece of the armor the sword of the spirit which is the word of God.
The word of God and the spirit of God are inextricably connected because the word of God proceeds from the mouth of God and the spirit is the breath that carries forth the word of God. 2 Timothy 3 16 says that word of God is breathed out by God.
The special sword reminds me of Anduril the lord of the rings the special sword which only the king of Gondor can wield and the evil lord Sauron fears because he has been defeated by it in the past and it's the only sword that can defeat him again.

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[39:54] Similarly there is only one sword that can stand against the real spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places and that's the sword of the spirit is the word of God. This is the sword Hebrews 4 12 tells us is living and active sharper than any double-edged sword piercing to the division of soul and of spirit of joints and of marrow and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Think about it. How do you fight spiritual forces of evil? You need a spiritual weapon. A gun's not going to do it. You need something that can cut through the division of soul and of spirit and that is the word of God.
The sword of the spirit. William Gurnall in his book on spiritual warfare really maybe one of the best books ever written on the topic of spiritual warfare called The Christian Incomplete Armor says this a pilot without his chart a scholar without his book and a soldier without his sword are alike ridiculous but above all these it is absurd for one to think of being a Christian without knowledge of the word of God and some skill to use this weapon.
Do you know God's word? Do you read God's word? Do you meditate on God's word?
Do you memorize God's word? This is the only weapon in the arsenal. How do you expect to fight without it?
[41:37] How do you expect to defend yourself without it? How can we be Christians who go without reading God's word? In a spiritual war.

Psalm 119 11 says I have stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. The sword of the spirit is what protects us from the temptations and keeps us from sin.
It is the sword of the spirit that pierces through and exposes the errors and the lies of the enemy and of this world. We must put on the sword of the spirit so that we can stand against the schemes of the devil.
And then we come to Paul's conclusion in verses 18 to 20 that we now have to pray for our comrades. Paul says in verse 18, prayer is prayer is not merely the seventh armor or weapon in the Christian's armory, but it's rather that which enables us to put on the whole armor of God.
Look at verse 18. He tells us when to pray, how to pray, what to pray, and for whom to pray, when to pray at all times, at every opportunity to pray without ceasing. You can think of it like being on the phone with somebody. You might put them on hold for a bit. You might be distracted for a bit. You might do other things, but there's someone on the other line always.
[43:40] Be on the line with God always. Pray without ceasing. Pray whenever you have the opportunity. Set aside time to pray. Make it a regular habit to pray, and don't let anything else intrude with it.

Prioritize it. Second, how to pray. Paul says pray in the Spirit, because our prayers must be guided by the Spirit of God who alone comprehends the thoughts of God, who knows the mind of God.
Third, what to pray. Pray with all prayer and supplication, all types of prayers. Prayers of adoration, confession, thanksgiving.
Prayers of supplication, all kinds of prayers. And why to pray. Paul says to that end, keep alert with all perseverance. Because apart from prayer, we cannot put on the full armor of God.
In his book, Desiring God, John Piper writes this, he said, Prayer is a wartime walkie-talkie. It is not domestic intercom to ring up the butler to bring another comfort to the den where we are already more secure than we should be.
[44:55] Sometimes prayer malfunctions in our lives because we don't see its true purpose, that we are in a spiritual war and that this is our direct line to the command center, to the general who alone sees the full picture and who alone can send aid. Instead, we see it as another way to ring up the butler for what we want, for more comforts.

So persevere in it. He says, keep alert with all perseverance. If you've tried praying for five minutes, it didn't work, try again. If you tried praying for one day or one week and it didn't work and you couldn't, didn't last, do it again.
Persevere. Fifth, for whom to pray? For all the saints. Do you pray for the church?
For your brothers and sisters in the church? We need each other. To put on the whole armor of God. And then Paul finally asks them to even to pray for him.
In verses 19 to 20, also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly as I ought to speak.

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[46:20] Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. He wrote most of the New Testament. He's seen the Lord Jesus Christ personally in a vision. He's acted by this point.

He has been proclaiming the gospel for 30 years. He had been caught up to the third heavens and seen things that most men have never seen. Perhaps he's the most fruitful and productive missionary that Christianity has ever seen.
And yet he asks the Ephesian believers to pray for him. Because it doesn't come naturally for him to be bold in sharing the gospel.
He says, pray for me that I might open my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel. That I might declare it boldly as I ought to speak.
So if you feel not bold in sharing the gospel, you're in good company.
[47:16] But we need prayer. We need to pray for each other. Don't fear being judged by people who think that you are too bold to share the gospel with them.

Fear rather being judged by Christ for our cowardice and not sharing it. And not sharing it. Do you see the spiritual realities?
Do you see that there's no hope of salvation apart from Christ? That the whole armor belongs to God? Then let's put on Christ together this morning as a church. And not lose sight of this important truth as we battle together for the gospel.
Let's pray together. Heavenly Father. Lord.
Lord. Jolt us out of our spiritual complacency, Lord. Make us aware of the grave threats we face all around us.
[48:34] Make us vigilant. Equipped. With the full armor of God. Lord, I pray for those who feel weak.

Downtrodden. Heavy laden. Who feel beaten down in the battlefield and don't feel like they can get up again. Lord.
Encourage them. Fill them with your spirit. Help them to stand and persevere again in prayer. To rise with the armor of God.
Rise up, O Lord. Scatter your enemies. When you can do it. Help us to rely on you. In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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