

Put on the Full Armor of God

By Pastor Brian Gibbs

Hello Victory family.

The theme for this corporate fast is "Putting on the Full Armor of God." Putting on the full armor of God is so vital for us in this hour.

Let's begin in the book of Ephesians where the apostle Paul addresses this.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness 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.

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. (Ephesians 6:10–20 NKJV)

First and foremost, let's establish the reality that the armor of God is for every believer. It's not just for those in ministry; it's for every believer in Christ.

The armor of God is neither just a fun little metaphor that kids sing about in kids church camp nor something only new, immature, or struggling Christians need. The armor of God is for every believer because none of us are able to stand against the schemes of the devil on our own.

Paul explains in Ephesians 6 that we're involved in an invisible, spiritual battle against forces of evil, and that the only way we can be strong in the Lord and withstand Satan's attacks is to put on the whole armor of God. But what exactly is the armor of God? It's the profound benefits and blessings we have in Christ—things like truth, righteousness, and salvation. If we're in Christ, we're equipped with a full suit of spiritual armor.

You have to take up the armor.

Although all believers have the armor of God, Paul is clear that we must actively make use of it. He repeatedly uses the language of "putting on" and "taking up" the armor in Ephesians 6:11 and verses 13–17 as he describes each piece. Putting on or taking up the armor essentially means to make use of or apply the benefits and blessings of the gospel in everyday life. I can have a raincoat and know all about its waterproof technology but if I leave it hanging in my closet and don't wear it on a rainy day, I'm not experiencing the benefits it offers. In a similar way, we can know a lot about the benefits and privileges we have in Christ but not apply them in our everyday lives.

You need the whole armor every day.

While weather forecasts can tell us when to put on our raincoat, unfortunately, there's no forewarning when it comes to a spiritual attack. Paul instructs us in Ephesians 6:13 to "take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day" (NKJV). Some commentators understand "the evil day" to mean particularly intense episodes of spiritual attack and temptation, while others think Paul is referring to the whole era being permeated by evil. Either way, the only way for us to stand strong in the Lord is to put on the armor every day. So, let's consider each piece and how to take it up.

Truth is the first piece of armor. In Paul's metaphor, truth is a belt and the first piece of armor we're instructed to put on. The belt provides the necessary function of securing the rest of the suit and freeing the soldier's hands to wield the shield and sword. So, too, truth holds together the rest of our spiritual armor. In John 8:44, Jesus says the devil is a liar and the father of lies. He has been leading people astray by distorting the truth since he tempted Adam and Eve in the Genesis garden. He tempts us to question God's word, character, power, and promises with subtle lies that often seem plausible. The only way we can detect his deception is with the truth. Putting on the belt of truth looks like regularly reading and studying God's word so we know what is true, calling to mind and clinging to specific truths that pertain to particular areas of temptation, and asking other believers to help us apply the truth to our struggles.

The next piece of armor is the breastplate of Christ's righteousness that covers our hearts. On our own, we know that no one is righteous, not even one (Romans 3:12). Before we can put on righteousness, we must be made righteous through the imputed righteousness of Christ. The breastplate of righteousness covers our hearts because that's where our sin originates. Once we're covered by Christ's righteousness, we take up that righteousness by living in obedience to God. First John 3:4–10 explains that whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as Christ is righteous and no one born of God makes a practice of sinning. In other words, one of the primary ways we put on righteousness is to make a practice of doing what is right rather than to make a practice of sinning. When we choose to live in obedience to God's Word and commands, we're taking up the breastplate of righteousness. We are choosing to make sure our life choices are running congruent and consistent with His Word.

The armor includes shoes. I'm a shoe guy and those of you who know me, know that I'm a boot guy. We cannot forget the importance of the shoes of peace. The shoes of readiness given by the gospel of peace is certainly the wordiest piece of armor, and it's perhaps the most confusing as well. How does the gospel of peace give us readiness? What are we ready for? And what does any of that have to do with shoes?

Think about what it's like to live without the peace that comes from knowing Christ has won the victory over sin and death. Suffering and struggle feel like having the rug pulled out from under us. The troubles of this life easily bring us to our knees or on our face, but Paul tells us to stand.

When life threatens to knock us down, the peace we have in Christ plants our feet firmly in place, making us ready to stand firm against the devil's schemes. We can put on the shoes of our armor by staying anchored in the truth of the gospel. Jonathan Edwards offered a particularly helpful summary that we can call to mind in moments of need: "In Christ, our bad things work for our good. Our good things can never be taken away. And the best things are yet to come."

The shield of faith repels Satan's attacks. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (ESV). But how can we have assurance and conviction of things we've never seen? The author of Hebrews, who I believe is Paul, goes on in chapter 11 to give us many examples of people who lived "by faith"; they all have something in common: they lived in light of God's promises, regardless of what they could see in the moment. Similarly, we take up the shield of faith when we live in light of God's promises rather than in response to our feelings or circumstances.

For example, when we suffer and feel alone and forgotten, we cling to God's promise that He will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). But in order to live in light of God's promises, we have to know what they are. Taking up the shield of faith begins with learning what God has promised us in His Word. Keeping our focus on God's promises shields us from Satan's flaming darts that tempt us to discontent, despair, unbelief, and disobedience.

The helmet of salvation guards our minds. In his letters, Paul makes it clear what we think about matters. He tells us to take every thought captive to obey Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). He tells us to consider what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, etc. and to think about these things (Philippians 4:8). Our minds are often a battleground, and no matter what distraction, deception, or temptation we face, our salvation in Christ provides protection. We're saved, not because of our own efforts, but because of Jesus's work on the cross.

We can put on the helmet of salvation by thinking about what Christ has done to save us and by setting our minds on things above. We are also to set our minds on the full supremacy and authority that Jesus holds over all the works of the devil. Dwelling on these things gives us motivation to resist all temptation and live faithfully in obedience to Christ.

The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, is the grand offensive weapon. You might have noticed that so far, all of the pieces of armor have been defensive. They protect us against Satan's attacks. But the final piece of armor—the sword—enables us to actively fight back with ultimate power. So how can we use God's Word as a weapon? We use it just like Jesus did when Satan tempted Him in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1–11). Satan presented a temptation, and Jesus answered with God's Word that cut through Satan's lie, revealing the truth. After three exchanges like this, Satan left Him. Satan knows that he is no match for God's established word and promise. When we wield it against him, he will flee, and he must.

Perhaps surprisingly, Paul doesn't associate prayer with a particular piece of armor. Instead, he suggests that it undergirds the whole suit. We're to take up the whole armor of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. Prayer reminds us that we use all of the armor of God in dependence on the Spirit. He is God's power at work within us, enabling us to put on the armor and stand strong in the Lord.

Prayer is also a practical way we can take up the armor. A godly man in our church who is now with the Lord used to pray through the armor of God each morning, asking the Lord to equip him with all that he would need to stand strong in Christ that day. In moments of trouble and temptation, we must remember that we are clothed in the nature of Jesus and that these pieces of armor are activated in our all-out fight against the enemy and in standing in Christ's victory. Remember, the truth is that the prayer of a righteous man and woman of God has great power as it is working (James 5:16).

Today, I remind all of us to suit up. The days are evil. Take up the belt of truth so that all that is fake and inferior cannot sift or trick you. Walk in the truth. Cling to the truth. Take up the helmet of salvation to guard the peace of your mind in Christ. May your faith-steps be sure in the shoes of peace and secured in God's presence to steady you. Take up the shield of faith so that you can keep defended from all the fiery darts of the wicked one. Take up the sword, which is the Word of God—believe it, speak it, decree it, and win with it. Pray always, recognizing that it is in Him we live, we love, and we have our being (Acts 17:28).

May this fast be a week of breakthrough for you all. You are called to the Lord's victory and triumph.