



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Ephesians 6: 13-15

Ephesians

“The Christian’s Armor I”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We are continuing our study this morning in the spiritual warfare, specifically, this morning, the Christian's armor. We will not deal with the whole subject this morning, we will deal with the first part of it, we will look this morning at Ephesians 6:13-15. Follow along with I read beginning with verse 13 of Ephesians 6. '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 having put on the breastplate of righteousness and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. May the Lord bless this reading of his word and our time of study together.

And we want to remember, again, Merle Weaver, but also Maryanne Nichols grandson was in a car wreck yesterday. We prayed for him this morning, not knowing his condition. He was in a coma, he's a young boy. We have since learned that he is no longer in that coma, but he has a severe concussion, a broken nose and some other difficulties. So keep him in your prayers as well and now let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Gracious God and heavenly Father, we do thank you for the great privilege that we have to come together this morning and to open the scriptures to study your word, your inherent word, authoritative, even infallible. What a blessing it is to have this revelation from you, in all 66 books of it, Father, that inform us of what reality is. The seen and the unseen that reveals to us you and our own condition and our need of a savior and the grace that has been given to us and the gift of your son. An even that we give special attention to at this

time of year. We remember that he became a babe and he took to himself human nature and entered into this world and into history by becoming a man, in order that he might live a perfect life and offer himself up as the final and complete sacrifice for sin.

Father, we do thank you for that. We remember that, particularly, in the month of December, but it is a truth that we should and hopefully do remember every day of the year. Thank you for your grace and we pray, Lord, that as we consider the scriptures this morning, we will think very clearly about your grace, which is extended to us in the spiritual warfare that we face. We thank you that you have given us armor, with which to face the foe and it is successful as we put it on, it gives us the victory. We thank you, Father, for your strength and the weapons of warfare that you have supplied us with. Teach us about them this morning, Lord. Help us to see very clearly the nature of the conflict that we are in every moment of lives that we might be alert, we might be fully armed, we might be earnest in the fight of faith.

We thank you that it's all been settled for us, through your son and that you have blessed us infinitely through his work and you bless us in ways in which we are not aware. You bless us in all aspects of life. You bless us in the material as well as the spiritual and we remember those who have material, physical needs as well as spiritual needs. We pray for those who are facing difficulties at work or are without work, we pray you bless them, bless all of the men and women who are working that they would work earnestly. We thank you for the employment that you give. Bless those who are in need of physical healing. We pray for Merle, again, we ask your blessings upon him. Bless the doctors and nurses as they attend to him at this time. We pray that he would be raised up very soon, that they would locate the problem and that they would prescribe the right cure.

We pray for Maryanne Nichols' grandson and we pray that you would bless him with health and raise him up and for others, Lord who are in need. All of us, Father are in spiritual need, so we ask that you would bless us as we study the scriptures. May it be ____ and may we be built up in the faith through this time together and may we be used to view as we go out into the community in the week to come. May we be witness in word and in deed, at home, at business, in the neighborhood, wherever. May we be used of you to further the gospel in a lost and a dying world. And to that end, Father, we pray for our nation, we pray that you would

bless our leaders with wisdom at this time of great decision making, both in domestic affairs and international affairs.

We pray that you would give our leaders wisdom. We pray for special protection for our troops in Europe, we pray that you would bring them home soon and safely. We pray, Lord, for our nation, but particularly for its spiritual condition. May there be a great revival among the people of this land and may you use us. Bless your church in the midst of this world, not only in this country, but wherever your church is, may it grow strong, may it grow strong in the truth and may it grow strong in its determination to be a testimony and a good witness for you. Bless us to that end now and we pray you bless us again this even as we return to remember our Lord's death and his coming again. We thank you, Father, that you sent him into the world to purchase us, purchase us out of a realm of darkness and bring us into the kingdom of light and we thank you that that kingdom is coming upon the earth when he returns. May we live in light of that and live as soldiers for your truth in the meantime. We pray these things in our savior's name, we pray, Amen.

[Message] In his play, Hamlet, Shakespeare said there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy. That's true for all of us but particularly so for many of the leading thinkers of our day who can and actually do influence the thinking of Christians. Men who are naturalists, who reduce reality to the material and believe that everything that is, is just matter and energy, that the universe runs like a great machine and that God exists only as an idea in the minds of religious people. The Bible teaches that there are more things in heaven and earth than that, that God does exist and that he subsists in three persons, that mankind is spiritual as well as material, that our souls are eternal and that there is an entire angelic realm, unseen but real and very active all around us.

It's that angelic realm that is the subject of Ephesians 6, specifically the unseen warfare that exists between us and the powers of darkness. Paul writes in verse 12, '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. There is an invisible war taking place and it is necessary that we know about it so that we can deal with it, so that we can deal with it, so that we can fight against it. Ephesians were not

ignorant of the powers of darkness, in fact, many in the church have trafficked in the occult before coming to faith in Christ, we know that from Acts 19, where Luke records the remarkable revival that occurred in that city due to Paul's ministry there.

Ephesus was a very religious city. It was the center of the worship of the goddess Artimus, a cult that involved great sensuality and great wealth. Her temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world and a source of commerce and employment for many in the city. There was connected to that great temple the guild of silversmiths who made and sold shrines of the goddess. So Satan had a very strong hold on Ephesus, when Paul began his ministry there. He held them with error, through false worship, he held them in passion, through their lusts and the love of money and when people began responding to the gospel and turning from darkness to light, Satan began to vigorously oppose the work of the apostle, the silversmiths rioted because they were losing business and Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:32 of fighting with wild beasts at Ephesus but the Lord was with Paul all through that time.

He established the school of Tyrannous in that city and ministered there, taught there for some two years and from Ephesus, Luke writes that the gospel went out through all of Asia. He writes that God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons or even carried from his body to the sick and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out. So they knew about spiritual darkness, they knew about demonic activity in Ephesus. In fact, there were professional exorcists there and when a family of Jewish brothers, known as the seven sons of Sceva had tried to duplicate Paul's success by casting out a spirit in the names of Jesus and Paul, the demon turned on them and beat them up and sent them running naked and wounded, Luke says. Now the result of that incident was fear, he says, fell upon the city and many came to faith and Luke writes in Acts 19:18-20 that when that fear fell upon the city, many also, of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices.

Many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in sight of all and they counted up the price of them and found it 50,000 pieces of silver. A piece of silver was about a day's wage in that time, so there are 50,000 pieces of silver, a very large amount of money so the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing. So

when Paul writes against struggling against rulers and struggling against powers, the spiritual forces of wickedness, they knew what he meant but if they thought that all contact with the devil was now over because they had thrown away their charms and their books on magic and turned to Christ, Paul informs them that it was not so. In making a break with the devil, they had joined the battle against him, they were now in a struggle against the rulers and powers. It is the struggle that all Christians are in. It is a great struggle and we need to fight, not in our own strength, not in natural strength, but in supernatural strength, the Lord's strength. God gives that.

Paul writes, finally in verse 10, be strong in the Lord and he emphasizes that in the strength of his might, so he has given us that strength and he supplies it, but also he has given us weapons, with which to fight and it's these weapons of spiritual warfare that Paul now describes in verses 13-17. They are the armor of God. Christians are soldiers and it's that picture that Paul now develops as he explains what we are to do in defending ourselves against the schemes and the attacks and the temptations of the devil and how we are to actually subdue evil.

The danger we face is great. We need to be aware of that, we need to be ready, the enemy is powerful, the enemy is evil. Therefore, he says, in light of this, in light of the invisible war that we are in take up the full armor of God. Prepare yourself to fight like soldiers. Paul lists six pieces of armor: the belt, the breastplate and boots, the shield, helmet and sword to which he adds a seventh weapon, prayer. So there are seven essentials for battle. The armor of God plus prayer. These are what will give us victory he says when the day of evil comes. It's an interesting expression that he uses. It's found really only here, in the New Testament. Now we could say everyday that we live in this fallen world, this cursed world, is a day of evil but this is an unusual day of evil, when we experience a day of special pressure, a time of severe trial and testing, not everyday is like that.

Not everyday is a day of special trial and testing. Some days are particularly difficult. We may go along experiencing some ease, some comfort, feeling rather triumphant and victorious and then suddenly we come into great trial or a particularly severe temptation. I can't predict when that's going to come. A day of great temptation, though, comes, a day of

great testing comes and so we have to be ready at all times, we have to be fully fitted out in our armor, we have to be committed to the seven essentials in order to stand and Paul puts a lot of emphasis upon that, upon standing. He mentioned it in verse 11, he speaks of it again here in verse 13 and then in verse 14. The reason is Christians aren't always left standing after the conflict, many fall into temptation and fall into sin and Paul was very much aware of that.

We see that in Paul's later epistles after many years of experience, Paul knew the dangers. He knew very well the schemes of the devil, the wiles of the devil and he had seen the casualties. In 1 Timothy 6, he speaks of the danger of Paul's doctrine and a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, the danger of men who minister out of a desire for material gain are many of them. He warns against the danger of money for all believers and the pursuit of it. It causes people to fall into temptations, he says, in a snare and many foolish and harmful desires. It is a root of all sorts of evil, Paul says, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many a pang. The love of money has a strong temptation in all that it seems to offer us and many have wandered away from the faith because of their pursuit of money.

2 Timothy 4 speaks of Demas, who'd deserted him and returned home to Thessalonica. He abandoned the mission, having loved this present world. Worldliness, the love of money, of pleasure, of ease, the lust of the flesh, sensuality, sex, all of these and more have caused people to stumble morally and spiritually with tragic consequences for them and for their families. Christians cannot lose their salvation by falling into sin but sin leaves lifelong scars, it destroys ministries and it brings great dishonor on the name of Christ and his people. It happens all too often and Paul knew that. He knew the intensity of the devil's attacks and the subtlety of his temptations and that is why he puts emphasis on this subject of the Christian's armor because with it on, we can stand in the midst of the greatest dangers, the most intense attacks and we can win. In fact, we will win. That's the promise, that's the assurance that Paul gives us in this passage.

In verse 11 he says, 'put it on, put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand.' And stand we will with that armor on. In fact, not only will we stand against the devil, but the devil will flee from us. William Gurnall was a Puritan minister, who wrote a massive

work on this passage, 1472 pages on eleven verses and in it he points out that in the future, in heaven, we will appear in robes of glory but now, on earth, we must wear armor and we must wear it at all times. We are to be standing, ready for battle. He writes, 'the saints sleeping time is Satan's tempting time.' So we need to be alert, clothed in God's armor.

As I said, there are six pieces of equipment. This morning, we will consider the first three, the belt, the breastplate and the boots, but first the belt we see in verse 14, 'stand firm, therefore, having girded your loins with the truth' or as the new international version translates it, 'with the belt of truth buckled around your waist.' A soldier's belt was usually made of leather and was not actually part of the armor, but it was an essential piece of equipment that was worn under it. A Roman soldier wore a short tunic that was sometimes rather bulky, that was his clothing and over it he would wear his armor. So the belt was used to gather this loose tunic together and keep it from getting in the way and hindering his movement, tripping him up somewhat, but the belt also kept the soldier's armor in place because the breastplate and the sword were also attached to it so the belt was an essential piece of equipment. It kept everything in place and allowed the soldier freedom of movement.

For the Christian, the belt is truth and we should not miss the significance that of all that Paul mentions here, truth comes first. Not truth in general, but the specific truth of the bible. The truth is our belt, it holds everything in place. Before we can ever act, we must think correctly, we must perceive the problems correctly. We must have truth buckled on. We must understand and believe the truth. This is how we keep from being entangled or hindered in our ways and in the things that we do. So first of all, we are to gird on truth, know and believe the word of God. Now there's another possible meaning because this word truth can also mean the attitude of truthfulness. For example, in Ephesians 4:25, Paul says, 'laying aside falsehoods, speak truth.' That could mean speak the word of God, speak about the doctrines of God, speak God's truth, but because it's in parallel with falsehood, he probably means don't speak falsehoods, speak truthfully, have an attitude of truth and many commentators take this as Paul's meaning here and of course, it is important for us to be truthful, for us to be sincere in all of our dealings with people, all of our relations with men, we must not be hypocritical.

In Psalm 51:6, David writes that God desires truth in the innermost beings, desires us to be sincere, he desires that we be truthful. Unfortunately, that's not always the case. Christians aren't always truthful in their dealings with others. The other day I was discussing this passage with a friend, with a man who goes to church here, a businessman and he told me about a situation that he was aware of, in which a Christian organization was selling a portion of land that they owned and they agreed to sell it to a Jewish businessman. They agreed on a price and they were all set to sign the contract when the day before the contract was to be signed, they got a better offer from another party and so they backed out of their original agreement and asked for more money.

As my friend pointed out to one of the individuals involved in this, he said, 'there's more involved here than just making money.' After all, we have a Christian witness at stake and this is a failure, to be honest, a failure in truth and it may very well have ruined your witness with this businessman. God desires truth in the innermost being and when it's not there, he's very displeased. He dealt very seriously with those who lacked it in the early church. In Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira lost their lives because they lied. The Lord's attitude hasn't changed toward truthfulness. The attitude of truthfulness is essential if we are to wage war successfully against the devil and his schemes. You can't adopt his schemes if we're going to fight against them.

Now that, I think is a true point and I think that is an inevitable result, truthfulness of putting on the truth, but I don't believe that's Paul's meaning here. We really can't be truthful in the fullest sense of the term if we don't know the truth. The truth and understanding of it must come first, it's what shapes our character, not only in terms of truthfulness but in terms of love and faith and all aspects of the Christian life. So when Paul says put on the belt of truth, he means commit yourself to God's truth, take it in, understand it, believe it and know doctrine. Let it shape your life. The greatest thing a man or woman has is his or her mind and that's what the devil attacks and so that's where Paul begins. He is saying master the truth and be mastered by it. It's what gives us understanding, it's what gives us perspective, it's what gives us conviction and courage when the battle is very hot, when the temptations are very

strong, when the love of money begins to take hold, it's this knowledge of the truth, mastering the truth and being mastered by it, that enables us to stand.

So that's where we begin and if we fail to begin there, then we are defeated before we begin. We are easy prey for the devil's schemes. We become subject to the danger that Paul mentioned earlier in chapter 4 of being carried away by every wind of doctrine and being tricked by craftiness and deceitful scheming. When Paul met for the last time with the Ephesian elders and his farewell address, which Luke records in Acts 20, he reminded them, first of all, of the truth. He reminded them that he did not shrink from declaring to them the whole purpose of God, that he taught the whole of God's council. He taught all of the doctrines of the word of God and he didn't mince his words and he didn't edit what he would say, he spoke about all things in the council of God. He gave them truth and then having reminded them of that, he warns them that after his departure, savage wolves will come in among them, not sparing the flock. False teachers would arise in their midst and the only way they can fight them is with the truth. So as he ends that farewell to the Ephesian elders, he commends to God and to the word of his grace, to the scriptures.

What Paul said to the Ephesian elders is true of all of us is true for the church, down through the ages. Satan is continually introducing error into the church. In fact, the history of the church has developed along the lines of its response to heresy. The doctrines of the church have almost always been worked out in response to a great heretic. In the early church, the heretics were legalists. The first ones to come on the scene and you know, what happened, they came to Galatia and they said, 'yes, it's important to believe in Jesus Christ' and we believe everything that Paul said about Christ but he didn't go far enough. One more thing is needed, there must be obedience to the law, faith plus law. So Paul wrote the book of Galatians to correct that error. Later, somebody said there's no resurrection, so Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 15, to establish that there is a resurrection, there was in Christ and there will be in his saints to come later. Men denied the true humanity of Christ and then the true, a full deity of Christ and so councils convened and men worked out doctrine and they defined the truth and they defined error.

In the later fourth century, Pelagius came to Rome. The very moral monk and a very influential man, denying original sin, denying free grace and so Augustan arose and he dealt with that error and defended the truth and further defined the truth. So it has gone down through the ages. Satan is continually trying to undermine the truth and when the truth falls, conduct soon follows. Truth matters and we are to gird our minds with it, be committed to it, take it in, understand it, believe it, hold it with conviction. That's how we are to begin, truth is our first piece of equipment. The second piece of armor is the breastplate of righteousness. Breastplate was a metal piece that covered the front of a soldier's body and the back as well and it protected his vital organs, protected the heart, the lungs, the liver, the kidneys, from a sword or a spear or from a flying arrow. It was an essential piece of protection and righteousness is the Christian's breastplate.

Paul frequently uses the term righteousness of imputed righteousness or of the righteousness of justification, being declared righteous. It is a legal term, being declared as by a judge to be just, to be innocent before the law and that occurs through faith alone. That's how he usually uses this term righteousness but since it's exhortation is for the Christian to put on righteousness, many think that here is referring to righteous conduct, to moral rectitude and he's already used the word righteousness with that meaning in chapters four and five in 2 Corinthians 6:7, he speaks of the weapons of righteousness, for the right hand and the left which seems to mean moral righteousness and that is a possible meaning here.

Christians need to be moral. When we fail in our morality, when we fall into sin, we open ourselves up to all kinds of attacks. But since Paul generally uses righteousness of the righteousness of Christ that is imputed to the believer of justification and since the armor, nowhere consists of merely moral virtue. I think it's probably best to understand Paul's meaning here in that way of justification of an imputed righteousness. We put on the breastplate of righteousness then by reckoning ourselves to be righteous, by remembering that we are justified in all that that means. One of the simplest definitions of justification is God forgiving sinners and treating them as if they had never sinned, forgives all our sins and then he treats us as though we had not sinned or put in the positive, he considers us to be righteous, he accepts us as righteous in his sight, not for anything that we have done, not for our own

righteousness, because we have no righteousness of our own, all our righteousness is our filthy rags, but for the righteousness of Christ, for what he has done in his death and in his life. That is imputed righteousness, that's what justification is and the keyword there is imputed.

There's a very important term: to impute means to take something that belongs to one person and put it on the account of another. Let me try to illustrate this. Imagine that you are in debt, that's not hard for most people to imagine these days. We all have a little bit of debt, some kind but imagine that you're in great debt, you're hopelessly in debt, millions of dollars in debt, your credit is wrecked and your creditors are after you and just when things are bleakest, someone steps in. A man of immense wealth, he makes arrangements with the bank to have all of your debts transferred to his account, he pays them all off and then he transfers your name to his account, in effect, transferring all of his wealth to you so that you now share in his excellent credit rating, that's been imputed or transferred to you, as well.

Now, that's hard to imagine in the monetary financial realm but that's very much what happened at the cross. God imputed our debts, our sins, transferred them to his son and then he paid for all of those debts, he punished all of those sins in his son on the cross and so all of our sins have, as the Psalmist said, been removed as far as the east is from the west. They had been cast into the depths of the sea but that's not all, it's not as though we are simply without sin, but he has also transferred the righteousness of Christ to every believer so that we now have his righteousness as well, his perfect righteousness, his perfect compliance to the law. The reformers called it an alien righteousness, a righteousness that is not our own, but that has been transferred to us. As a result, God now considers every believer in Jesus Christ to be like Christ, sinless and perfectly righteous.

That is justification, that is imputed righteousness and because of it, we have what the reformers called imparted righteousness and that is a reference to our conduct, the new affections that we have, the new desires, the new conduct that results from regeneration and the new life that every justified sinner has and we are justified sinners, we are righteous sinners. We've continued to sin, we continue to fail and whether we fail publicly or not, we certainly fail privately and it is at this point, this place, that Satan, very often attacks us most severely. Revelation 12:10, he is described as our accuser, who accuses us before God day and

night. He is relentless in his accusations. The word devil means slanderer and that's what he does, he slanders us, he accuses us, attacks our conscience by reminding us of our failures, of our sins and by doing that, he attempts to weigh us down with a sense of guilt and sorrow that would lead to doubt and discouragement.

You lose your temper at work or you lose it at home with your wife or your husband or with your kids and it's not the first time it's happened before. In fact, it happens frequently and that happens and you calm down and then this accusing question comes to mind. How could you act that way? How could you do that and call yourself a Christian? Improper thoughts enter your mind and you begin to wonder, can a child of God think these kinds of thoughts? Maybe I'm not a Christian at all. Maybe I'm fooling myself, maybe I never really believed and you get into this state of confusion and that's what Satan wants. Satan plays on our sins and our failures to raise questions in our mind, to raise doubts about our faith and our salvation. He tries to sow seeds of doubts to cause confusion because a confused, doubtful Christian, a joyless Christian is an ineffective servant of the Lord and one who does not give praise and adoration to the Lord, which is, perhaps, the most important thing that we can do.

That's why we need to put on the breastplate of righteousness, by realizing daily that as believers in Jesus Christ, we have been freely forgiven of all our sins, past, present and future and that God considers us to be just and he considers us to be righteous before him, clothed in Christ, fully accepted by him. That's how we deal with Satan's slander, with his accusations and attacks on our conscience. Our salvation is not dependent upon our conduct, it's not dependent upon our good deeds. It's not dependent upon our faithfulness, because we are not faithful, we are not good, we continue to sin. It depends completely upon the person and work of Jesus Christ, it depends upon his righteousness that has been imputed.

We deal with Satan's attacks with the assurance that justification gives the forgiveness of sin that God gives to us, the righteousness that we have, that's what Paul develops in Romans 8, the assurance that we have, as believers in Jesus Christ. He starts out in Romans 8:1, 'there is, therefore, now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.' No condemnation, none at all, for the believer in Jesus Christ and then he develops that more fully and the end of the chapter, beginning with verse 33, who will bring a charge against God's

elect. God is the one who justifies, who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is he who died, yes, rather, who was raised, who was at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us, intercedes for us because we sin, because we fail. He's constantly interceding for us on that regard.

'Who shall separate us' Paul writes, 'from the love of Christ, trial, tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword, just as it is written for thy sake we are being put to death all day long. We were considered his sheep to be slaughtered, we were persecuted, we suffer, but in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities,' the very things we're studying this morning, 'nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.'

A great theme of Romans 8 is the believers' assurance. Our complete forgiveness and the righteousness transferred to us is our breastplate. So we are to stand firm, belted with the truth, protected with righteousness and thirdly, with our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. This is the third piece of armor, or third piece of soldier's clothing, the war boot. Boots that the Roman legionnaires wore were half boots made of leather with an open toe that were tied to the ankles and shins with straps and had soles that were heavily studded with nails. They equipped the soldier for long marches and they equipped him to stand firm. We might think of the football shoe with its cleats when we think of this type of boot. The boot gave the soldier traction and it prevented him from sliding as he held his ground in battle.

Ancient battles were often fought in hand to hand combat and so firm footing was essential in order to stand firm and then in order to advance against the enemy. The Christian's boot is the gospel of peace, the peace that we have through the gospel. That is what allows us to stand firm and not lose our ground, not slip and we have peace in two ways. We have peace with God, which comes with justification with the forgiveness of sins. Romans 5:1, 'therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord, Jesus Christ.' Apart from Christ, men and women are separated from God, men and women are alienated from

God, they're at war with God and they're under the wrath of God, but through faith in Christ, that war ends.

That's the good news of the gospel. Christ had ended the war between men and God and we come into peace with God through faith in our Lord, Jesus Christ and at that moment, we are reconciled with him. We're not only reconciled with him, but we are exalted and elevated to be members of his family, children of God, sons of God, heirs with Christ, but secondly, because we have peace with God, we have the peace of God. We have personal peace. It's the kind of peace that our Lord had when he lay fast asleep in the boat during a terrible storm on the sea of Galilee, he was fast asleep and the thing that woke him up was not the raging storm or the thunder, but it was the cries of the-- Lord provides illustrations. It was the panic cries of his disciples that woke him up. Now that's the kind of peace that we have. That's the kind of peace that our Lord provides us.

Paul speaks of it in Philippians 4:7, when he writes, 'the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.' If we are at peace with God and we are girded with his truth and living consistently with it, what can harm us? If God is for us, who is against us? That's a rhetorical question and Paul's point is it doesn't matter who's against us if God is for us. You go back to Romans 8 and you see that many were against them all day long. They were suffering, but Paul puts it in perspective. God is for us, what does it matter who is against us and realizing that, we are able to face the dangers and the discouragements of life fully and confidently.

Confident because God, we know, is working all things out for good in our lives and while we may not understand why difficulties come to us, health problems or family problems, we prayed about some of those hits morning. We can't say, exactly, why those come upon one person and not on another, but we do have the assurance of this, that God is our father. He is the father of every believer in Jesus Christ and he deals with us at every moment as a father and he only allows those things to touch that are for our good. We may not understand how they are for good but we can know this, they must be the very best way for bringing us into conformity with Jesus Christ and he never abandons us in the midst of those difficulties and he will always see us through the difficult.

Christians have peace, peace which surpasses all comprehension and that gives us incentive to stand firm, to fight on and fight on as good soldiers. If you're a Christian and you don't have that peace, if you are worried and you're anxious, and we all fall into that condition. We all let the circumstances overwhelm us to a bit, but if that's your experience now, if that's what you're going through, it is not because God has failed you. He cannot fail us. As one writer puts it, 'many of us who have peace with God, do not have the peace of God because we have pushed it away through rebellion and neglect and as a result, we are ever falling in battle.'

Josephus tells of a centurion, a very brave centurion and a very well-known centurion among the Roman ranks who was in a battle and in the battle he ran after the enemy, pursued them single-handedly and they fled from this warrior, this centurion. But because he was wearing these shoes that we have described, which Josephus describes as 'all full of sharp and thick nails,' he slipped on the stone pavement and he fell on his back with a very great noise, Josephus says and when that happened, the enemy, which was fleeing stopped, turned around and came upon that man and struck him with their spears and their swords. Those shoes weren't made for running, they were made for marching and for standing and we too can fail to use the boots of peace that God has given us and when we do, we will fall. We may panic in times of distress, run, rather than stand or we may act hastily rather than wait on the Lord because we forget of the new relationship that we have with him, this relationship of peace or may act hastily because we don't understand the great blessings that are ours in Christ.

God never abandons us and he will bless us as we trust in him. That's why we need to be standing firm in the truth, that's why we need to begin with the belt of truth, buckled around us. We need to know the promises of God, we need to know the character of God because then we learn that he is sufficient in his power and his love to provide everything that he promises and that he certainly will, because he's a faithful all-powerful God. And we need to know the truth of God because it informs us of the nature of the battle that we are in, that it is a spiritual battle directed against the mind by spiritual forces. There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy. We are in a struggle, not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, forces of wickedness but God has generously supplied us with all that we need to succeed. He's given us

his armor and we are to put it on, we are to stand firm in his strength and he will make us to stand, he will give us victory.

If you're here this morning without Christ, you have not believed in him, then you're in a very dangerous position, without security or hope under the wrath of God, headed for a terrible fall. You are, as John says, in the power of the evil one, but there is a way of escape and that is through Christ. His death, which pays for all of the sins of all who believe in him, his death is what gives us deliverance from the domain of darkness. Through faith in him, God has delivered us from that domain and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved son. So if you're here this morning without Christ, look to Christ, believe in him, trust in him, whom to know is life eternal. Believe in Jesus Christ, experience the forgiveness of all your sins, past, present and future. Receive his righteousness and life everlasting.

I'm going to ask us to stand and sing a hymn that I think is appropriate for what we've studied. It's Hymn 67 in the red book and I'm going to ask that we sing the first three stanzas.

[Hymn] Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness/My beauty are, my glorious dress/Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed/With joy shall I lift up my head/Bold shall I stand in Thy great day/For who ought to my charge shall lay/Fully absolved through these I am/From sin and fear, from guilt and shame/Lord, I believe Thy precious blood/Which, at the mercy seat of God/Forever doth for sinners plead/For me, even for my soul, was shed.

[Prayer] Thank you for your grace and for that blood, which was shed on our behalf. Thank you for Christ, thank you for the life we have in him. We pray that if there be any in attendance that do not know him, bring them to a conviction of their sins. They're in need of their savior, may they find that salvation in him, the only savior of the world. We thank you for him. It's in his name we pray, Amen.