

Using Our Six-Part Armour Prayerfully!

Eph 6:10-20 (text: vv.14-20)

Reformed Church of Wainuiomata, 31 March 2019, 16:30

(Sermon put together by Pieter van Huyssteen with due acknowledgement)

Intro

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

This morning's sermon covered verses 10 through to 13!

It explained that the Christian's battle is ultimately not against human beings – even if, at times, we are unable to think otherwise!

It says our struggle is against the author of all evil – satan!

So, the Apostle Paul urges us to be strong in the Lord!

How?

Well, by taking up our spiritual armour – an armour which God Himself has given to the heartfelt follower of Jesus Christ!

What does this armour look like?

Well, here are six pieces of this armour as they're listed in verses 14-17...

Belt

We know what a belt is used for – i.e. to keep your clothes in position and out of the way, so that your movements are not hindered! And, if this is true for the *worker*, then it's even more true for the *soldier*!

The function of a belt is to ensure unhindered, fast movement!

However, a soldier's belt (or a policeman's belt) is also used to tie some other parts of his armour – the bulletproof vest, and the sword or pistol!

Thus, the belt is a vital part of a soldier's (policeman's) armour.

Well, that's the *physical* belt worn in *physical* warfare!

But the Christian's war is *not* physical. It is *spiritual*! I mean, has verse 12 not reminded us of that (as we have seen in this morning's sermon)!?

So, what, then, should the Christian's belt be?

Well, v.14 says (that) it should be *truth* (or rather, *truthfulness*).

In other words, the true Christian is a man or a woman or a child who has no deceit in him/her! Yes, it's a person who is not a hypocrite – so, he/she is a what-you-see-is-what-you-get person!

And how lovely – just as a soldier's belt sits tight to his body, and just as a soldier's breastplate (a policeman's bulletproof vest) and his sword (pistol) are fastened onto his belt, so too are other spiritual qualities tied to the Christian's truthfulness!

For what other reason should the Christian have truthfulness tightly strapped to his character?

Well, because the Christian has the greatest truth – the Gospel of God! It is vitally important that such a life-giving message be spread truthfully, i.e. with no false doctrine, but fully on God's terms and for His glory!¹ Life has seen too many churchgoers, preachers, pastors, and seminary professors whose words & actions were not truthful to

¹ "I know no religion without sincerity. Some understand it of the doctrine of the truths of the gospel: they should cleave to us as the girdle does to the loins, Jer. 13:11" (cf. Henry, M. (1994). [Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume](#) (pp. 2318–2320). Peabody: Hendrickson).

the Word of God – who allowed popularity and liberalism to infiltrate their teaching! New Zealand has seen enough of that in the likes of Professor Lloyd Geering!

So, it makes absolute sense that *that* piece of armour, which sits tightly against the Christian’s body, be truthfulness!

And how could it *not* be truthfulness!? I mean, was truthfulness not also the spiritual “belt” of our Lord Jesus Christ!? Just hear what Isaiah prophesied about the Messiah whom Israel was craving to see! Says Isaiah (11:5), “...*faithfulness* (rather, *truthfulness*)² **shall be the belt of His loins.**”³ And, surely, was Jesus not truthful to His Father – truthful without flinching before false religious leaders and the executioner!?

Question: In light of God’s great love for us in the giving of His Son so we can live, are you (am I) a truthful person – a man/woman/child stripped of lies; yes, a what-you-see-is-what-you-get person?

And when you (I) talk to people about Jesus Christ, are we doing it on His terms, or do we water down the message so that we don’t offend people of other faiths?

Remember: a truthful character moves others to receive his message!

Well, that was the first piece of your & my armour – belt which is truthfulness!

Breastplate

Imagine you have an ancient soldier’s breastplate on – or even a policeman’s bulletproof vest. Just think how safe you are! For, look, some vital organs of your body are now protected – your heart, lungs, liver...!

Well, a bulletproof vest is for a physical battle! But you & I are in a spiritual battle. So, what is your spiritual bulletproof vest?

Verse 14 says it’s your righteousness!

In other words, when the enemy’s bullets – yes, the devil’s arrow-sharp scheming whispers – rain on you, what will protect your faith? Is it not the knowledge that you’re right with God⁴ – that God considered you so precious to Him, that He crushed His Son for you! Now, you’re righteous – yes, right with God!

What comforting and reassuring knowledge when the evil one’s pressures on your life create doubt in your heart!

May you/I always remember our Lord Jesus also had the breastplate of righteousness – yes, He also knew that His Father loved Him and that He’s still right with His Father – even there where His sweat turned into blood and there where He cried out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?!” Yet, so real was His awareness of His righteousness (yes, so strong was His breastplate of righteousness) that even God-forsakenness could not rob Him of saying in confidence, “Father, in Your hands I commit My Spirit!”

Also remember Job who, because of his awareness of his righteousness, was able to call out amidst his greatest agony, “But I know that my Redeemer lives...”⁵

² The Hebrew word *’emunah* (אֱמוּנָה), used in Is 11:5, means “faithfulness; trust” (of human conduct, and as divine attribute), but it can also mean “truthfulness.” In fact, the Greek version of the Old Testament (i.e. the Septuagint) has used the same word in Is 11:5 as is used by the Greek New Testament in Eph 6:14, i.e. the word *alētheia* (ἀλήθεια), which means, “truth,” in which case *en alētheiai* (ἐν ἀληθείᾳ), as in Eph 6:14, means “in truth” or “truthful” or “truthfulness.”

³ Is 11:5 ***Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins*** (ESV).

⁴ Just like M Henry, I believe that one cannot exclude this meaning of righteousness: “The righteousness of Christ imputed to us is our breast-plate against the arrows of divine wrath. The righteousness of Christ implanted in us is our breast-plate to fortify the heart against the attacks which Satan makes against us” (Henry, *ibid*).

⁵ Job 19:25 ***For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.***

Well, that's the one meaning of righteousness, but look, righteousness also means that the Christian will speak – and act – righteously!

My brother & sister (young person), how will you & I ever win people over for our Lord, if our actions are not in sync with our lips – if we say one thing yet live another!?

Indeed, righteous conduct is a mighty weapon in your hand when you defend the Gospel, or even when you proclaim it! Look, is that not how Francis of Assisi won the hearts of both poor and rich when he *lived out* what he preached: “Preach the Gospel always, and, if necessary, use words!”?

Righteousness & righteous living – second piece of armour

Here's the third piece...

Boots

Actually, v.15 does not use the word “boot” or “shoe” or “sandal;” no, it says, “...***and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.***”⁶

Why is it important for a soldier to have something on his feet?

Well, because, from ancient times, the enemy has been throwing obstacles in the way of foot soldiers – things like logs of trees, or thorns and prickles, or even hot coals.

This has made the Roman military clever. So, they upgraded their footwear. Yes, the Jewish historian, Josephus, tells how the Roman soldiers put on boots thickly studded with sharp nails!⁷

Such boots made them run faster than their enemies expected!

And, it's so true! A foot soldier needs his feet fitted with something that can take any hindrance which the enemy might throw at him – i.e. a good *physical* boot for *readiness* in a *physical* war!

But the Christian's war is *spiritual*, for his enemy is not a human being – it's satan who must be warded off and fought with *spiritual* weapons!

So, with what kind of readiness will you & I fit our “feet” when we want to proclaim & defend the gospel!?

Verse 15 says, our feet should ***be fitted with readiness of the Gospel of peace!***⁸

How ready are your/my feet for the spreading of the Gospel? Against what kind of stumbling-block should you & I fit our feet – against fear, embarrassment, timidity...?

I once had to fit my spiritual feet against selfishness!

You see, some 13 years ago in West Auckland, my daughter Renda and I gave a 15-minute ride to a 50-year old woman, a migrant from Morocco. She was downhearted and in need of the Gospel of peace. Well, through initial small talk, the Lord led us to talk to her about Jesus and what peace she could have through knowing Him. It came out that, years before, through her contacts with some Roman Catholics, she did hear about Christ. Well, I asked her whether she had a Bible. She said, “No!” So, I asked her, “Would you

⁶ All-in-all, the NIV has the closest rendering to the Greek text (καὶ ὑποδησάμενοι τοὺς πόδας ἐν ἐτοιμασίᾳ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνης).

⁷ Josephus, Jewish Wars, VI. i. 8, “Accordingly he rushed through the midst of the Jews, as they were dispersed all abroad, and killed those that he caught. Nor, indeed, was there any sight that appeared more wonderful in the eyes of Caesar, or more terrible to others than this. (84) However, he was himself pursued by fate, which it was not possible that he who was but a mortal man should escape; (85) for as he had shoes all full of thick and sharp nails, as had every one of the other soldiers, so when he ran on the pavement of the temple, he slipped, and fell down upon his back with a very great noise, which was made by his armor” (Josephus, F., & Whiston, W. (1987). *The works of Josephus: complete and unabridged* (p. 731). Peabody: Hendrickson).

⁸ Eph 6:15 καὶ ὑποδησάμενοι τοὺς πόδας ἐν ἐτοιμασίᾳ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνης – literally: “...and having fitted the feet (i.e. your feet) with readiness/preparedness of the Gospel of peace.”

like to have a Bible?” To my joy she said, “Yes!” However, to my sadness she said, “But I’d like to have a *French* Bible, for my French is better than my English!”

I was sad.

Why?

Well, because I did have a French Bible at home – only *one*, the one over which I had lots of sentiments, because it was given to me by my former French professor in South Africa.

I wanted to keep it!

See the stumbling block satan threw in the way of my spiritual “feet”? It was the stumbling block of selfishness which threatened to unready my feet for the Gospel of peace!

Well, I’m glad to say that, half-an-hour later, my daughter & I returned to that lady’s address and handed over the precious Gospel of peace – in French, just as this lady wanted it!

And I?

Well, I felt at once great & small, because I knew it was the Holy Spirit who had fitted my feet with readiness for the Gospel of peace – a readiness that made my spiritual “feet” strong enough to trample upon *selfishness* and *sentiment* that had stood in the way of the Gospel of peace.

How can the Christian who has tasted God-given peace – a peace that passes understanding; yes, a peace even amidst suffering – how can the Christian hesitate to fit his feet with readiness to pass on this Gospel of peace!?

Well, here’s the fourth piece of armour...

Shield

We all have seen on TV those shields used by anti-riot police. The ancient Roman shield was about the same size – about 120x760cm! The only difference is: the Roman shield was made from thick leather. And, it almost looked like a little door⁹ behind which the soldier could hide.

Yes, the *breastplate* (or bullet-proof vest) can protect the vital parts of your body, but look, the *shield* can protect almost your whole body!

Of course, in Paul’s days, the soldiers used their shields when the enemy threw all sorts of objects at them. The favourite object was an arrow dipped in pitch, then set on fire and shot at the soldiers. When these fiery darts then collided with a soldier’s shield, their points were blunted and their flames extinguished.

Well, the Christian, too, has dangerous objects thrown at him/her. I’m talking of *spiritual* “missiles,” “arrows” and “darts!”¹⁰ This is satan’s work!

What are these spiritual “missiles”?

Well, the Apostle Paul mentions some of them – things like: tribulation/hardship, anguish, persecution, famine, and sword.¹¹ But temptation and lures are not excluded!

And you may remember a time when it was *you* who got such “arrows” thrown at you. That time might even be now! And these arrows have the capacity to drive you to doubting your Lord; or to envy, or greed; or even to lust!

⁹ In fact, the Greek words *thyra* (θύρα) “door,” and *thyreós* (θυρεός) “shield” come from the same word-root.

¹⁰ Verse 16 calls them “flaming darts” – in Greek *bélē* (βέλη), Neuter Plural Accusative of *bélos* (βέλος), “a missile, including arrows (propelled by a bow) or darts (hurled by hand)—‘arrow, dart.’ In the NT βέλος occurs only in a highly figurative context, τὰ βέλη ... πεπυρωμένα ‘flaming arrows (or darts)’ Eph 6:16, and refers to temptations by the Devil” (Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 57). New York: United Bible Societies).

¹¹ Cf. Rm 8:35 **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?**

How will you extinguish these absolutely powerful arrows?
 By using your God-given *faith!* *That's* your spiritual shield – faith!
 But how does your faith get fed? How is it kept strong?
 Well, how was the Apostle Paul's faith kept strong?
 Was it not by him focusing on Christ, his Saviour!?
 You see, there's one thing Paul could never forget – something that kept on strengthening his faith in times of severe trial, i.e. that he once saw the risen Christ!¹²
 How often do you/I “see” our Risen Lord?
 How often do you (do I) have personal devotions?
 You want to keep your faith strong?
 Read your Bible with a keen spirit! This is the way the Holy Spirit works/strengthens faith in your heart – a faith like that of those so-called “heroes of faith” in Hebrews 11, a faith which *is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*¹³

Well, that was the shield of faith!
 Here is the second-last piece of armour...

Helmet

Of course, a helmet works like a shield and a breastplate (bulletproof vest) – it stops, deflects and wards off missiles that get thrown at you!
 Paul says (that) the Christian's spiritual helmet is *salvation!*
 What does he mean? How can *salvation* protect you?
 Well, Paul gives us a clue – it appears in 1 Thess 5:8 where Paul describes our helmet as the “*sure hope of salvation!*”¹⁴
 See? What carries the Christian through in days when the devil throws persecution and doubt at him – as the devil is at this very moment doing with many a Christian worldwide?
 What will stop or deflect these doubts?
 Answer: a firm hope of my salvation – yes, *assurance of salvation*; that assurance that makes you say, “Gone with you, devil, because I do belong to Christ!” “I do have a firm assurance of salvation!”
 Perhaps you have had such moments! I had them at tough stages in my life! Yet, with much joy – and in the power of the Holy Spirit – I could every time say from the heart, “***But I know whom I have believed and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day***” (2 Tim 1:12).
 See the helmet of the *assurance of salvation!*?
 It makes the Christian stand his ground!
 Look, is that not why the Apostle Paul, from prison in Rome, encouraged also the Christians in Philippi, saying to them, “***And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ!***”
 My brother & sister (dear young person), are you going through a rough time?
 Remember, don't doubt, for, as Christian, you have *Assurance of Salvation!* It works like a helmet! It deflects the doubt-working arrows of the evil one!

Well, here is the last piece of armour...

¹² Remember how he kept on bringing this up before the Roman procurators, Felix and Festus, and king Agrippa (Acts 24ff)

¹³ Heb 11:1 ***Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.***

¹⁴ Cf. 1 Thess 5:8 ***But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.*** (Emphasis mine)

Sword

My brother & sister, most of the five pieces of armour which we have just described, are used as defence!

But look! In a physical war, the sword is not just a weapon of defence – it's not like the bullet-proof vest or the shield or the helmet – no, it's also a weapon of *attack*!

You see, with the sword, the ancient soldier would run into the battle lines and aim his sword at the enemy's heart!

Well, as citizen of God's kingdom, the Christian (you & I) are not in a *physical* battle!

So, the Christian is not out to kill any other person!

In fact, our Lord – in His greatest hour of agony – told Peter, “***Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword.***”¹⁵

Of course, our Lord was talking of a *literal* sword – that which we, in our day & age, will call “guns, missiles, nuclear heads, fighter jets,” and the like!

The Apostle Paul (in our text) says as much as, “No, I'm not talking about guns, for, dear Christian, your battle is a spiritual one!”

So, you will need a spiritual “sword!”

You know what that is?

It's the Word of God, also called, the “sword” of the Spirit!

So, hold in your right hand – yes, use with skill – this Word, yes, this Gospel of Christ Jesus your Lord!

And look, aim at the heart! Yes, the *heart* is the target!

See? Is that not why the Word is called “the sword of the Spirit!”? After all, if you, dear Christian, would use this kind of sword – this Word/Gospel; yes, if you'd use it actively and skilfully to reach the lost in the enemy camp, then the Spirit will make it hit its target – i.e. the heart!

Indeed, such a “sword” – the “sword” of the Word is ***living and active and sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.***¹⁶

My brother & sister, I have seen how this “sword” – this Word of God has brought the strongest men to tears – tears of joy, because it exposed their state of guilt before God.

And so were even hardened men cut to the heart and led to their Saviour in thanksgiving and praise!

Did Jesus use this Word!?

Yes, He used it with eternal success against the tempting darts of the evil one (Mt 4)!

My brother & sister, these are the six pieces of the Christian's spiritual armour.

But, look! Now, in v.18, the Apostle Paul finishes off by, what some have called a *seventh piece of armour*! But it's not, because it covers *all* the pieces of armour – and that is... *prayer*!

And, says, Paul, it's *all kinds* of prayer, i.e. cries for help, confession of sin, profession of faith, adoration, thanksgiving and intercession!

But more – for it's also prayer that's prayed at all times – not just at bed- or mealtime!

And it's prayer that's prayed with perseverance – and for all the saints, also for the pastor! Yes, and in this regard, I must thank all of you who have often said that you pray for the pastor every day! How heart-warming it was, too, when I saw in this week's

¹⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Mt 26:52). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

¹⁶ Cf. Heb 4:12 ***For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*** (NIV)

prayer list for Tuesday that it says, “Pray for the pastor that he would be sustained in the trials that come in his work in the church!”

So, let us pray for all in our church family, for if the devil did not spare even our Lord, why would he spare us? But remember the promise: “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you!” (Js 4:7). I have experienced this, and I pray that you will too!

AMEN (2909 words excluding footnotes)