

YOU DIDN'T START THIS. BUT YOU'RE IN IT.

The old war in the new world, and how to stand in both.

PART 6: THE ARMOR A Devotional by Pastor Carl Toti

Date / Day: _____

Trinity Church | Lubbock, Texas

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:10–18 (NLT)

KEY VERSE | EPHESIANS 6:11

“Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.”

10 A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. 12 For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. 14 Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. 15 For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. 16 In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. 17 Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

THE BIG IDEA

The armor was God's before it was ever yours. He lends it to you, so together we can hold the line until the King returns.

Paul is writing from a Roman prison, with a Roman guard chained to his wrist. He has just spent six chapters on the greatest theology ever put on paper: election, grace, the church as the body of Christ, the mystery of the gospel. And when he reaches the summit, he does not hand us a theory. He hands us a uniform. This is the top of the mountain, church. Everything before this was the climb.

What the Words Teach Us

A few small details in Paul's wording carry the whole message of this passage:

- **“Be strong” is something done to you.** In the original language, the command is passive. You are not told to produce strength; you are told to *receive* it. The strength comes from outside of you.
- **“Put on” means to be dressed.** You do not forge this armor, you wear it. A man being dressed is not doing the heavy work. The One who made the garment did.
- **“Stand” appears again and again.** Paul uses it four times in these verses. He never says charge and he never says conquer the hill. He says hold your ground, because the war has already been decided.
- **Almost every command is plural.** Paul is not writing to “you.” In West Texas we would say he is writing to *y'all*, every single time.

Reflection: Three Truths About the Armor

POINT 1 It's Not Your Armor

A story. You can buy an Iron Man costume online for \$79.99. You can look like Iron Man, take pictures like Iron Man, and post them like Iron Man. But jump off your roof wearing it and you will meet Jesus a whole lot sooner than you planned! There is a difference between *looking* equipped and *being* equipped.

Reflection. When Paul tells us to put on the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation, he is quoting the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 59:15–19). Truth had stumbled in the streets, justice was nowhere to be found, and the Lord looked and saw that no one was willing or able to step in. So God Himself stepped into the battle, putting on righteousness as His body armor and salvation as His helmet. The Divine Warrior was not a spectator. He was the first one in the line.

I remember putting on my dad's work jacket and stepping into his shoes as a little boy. The sleeves hung past my hands. The shoes were too big to walk in. But I didn't care, because they were my dad's. Wearing his jacket didn't make me as strong as he was, yet there was something powerful about wearing what belonged to my father. Our Heavenly Father does the same thing. He doesn't just tell His children to be strong. He invites us to be clothed in what belongs to *Him*. And one day, in Revelation 19, the same Warrior returns on a white horse, called Faithful and True, wearing every piece in full. The armor you wear today is a down payment on the victory He wears forever.

We live in the age of the self-assembled life: self-help, self-care, self-made. Hustle culture says if you are tired, you didn't grind enough, and many of us have carried that straight into church: “*I just need to try harder to be holy.*” No. You have been trying to assemble what you were handed.

BIG TAKEAWAY | POINT 1

Stop manufacturing. Start receiving. You put on His armor because you are not strong enough without it.

POINT 2 Standing Ground, Not Advancing Ground

A story. Picture a first-century Roman legion on an open field. Each soldier carries a four-foot shield, curved like a half-pipe, made of layered wood covered in leather. When the arrows begin to fly, the order comes: “*Tortoise!*” The shields lock at the front, the sides, and overhead. Arrows rain down and bounce off. The wall holds. The objective was never to run away and never to charge off alone. It was to hold formation under direct assault so the whole line would not collapse. A soldier who broke ranks, whether in panic or in glory-seeking, opened a hole for everyone beside him.

Reflection. Paul does not say charge. He says *stand*. Why? Because Christ has already won. Colossians 2:15 tells us He disarmed the rulers and authorities and triumphed over them at the cross. Your job is not to win the war. Your job is to hold ground in territory that has already been won.

But standing is not passive. Try standing when your marriage is breaking, when the diagnosis comes, when the people you love are fighting battles you cannot fight for them, or when the cultural wind blows against you every day. Anybody can charge for five minutes. Anybody can flee when the pressure comes. It takes a warrior to stand faithfully for five years. We are a generation quick to flee our marriages when things get hard, our churches when we're offended, our responsibilities when the pressure mounts, and our commitments when the feelings fade. There are times when leaving is necessary, but sometimes what we call “moving on” is really just running away.

BIG TAKEAWAY | POINT 2

Charging takes courage. Fleeing offers escape. But standing requires endurance. You cannot hold the line if you are always looking for the exit.

POINT 3**The Whole Church Wears This, Not Just You**

A story. We love the picture of the lone Christian hero: the solo warrior on the hill, a sword in his hand and a sad song playing in the background. It makes a great movie. It is terrible theology. A Roman legionary with a shield was a decent fighter. A legionary locked into the shield beside him was an unbreakable wall. His shield covered his own left side and the exposed right side of the man next to him.

Reflection. Think about that. In the Roman formation, the shield on your left arm protected not you, but the soldier beside you, and the soldier on your left was holding his shield for you. You are covered by someone else's faith. That is not weakness. That is design. This is why Paul speaks to "y'all" and ends the armor with intercession for "all the saints." Prayer is not one more piece of armor. It is the atmosphere that holds all the pieces together. Even Paul, the great apostle, in chains, asked for prayer (Ephesians 6:19–20). If Paul needed his row, so do you.

Some of you have a shield that has been dropped. You stopped coming to small group. You pulled back from friends. You told yourself, *"I'll handle this by myself."* The enemy loves a straggler, and a wolf does not charge the flock. He waits for the one who drifts. If you have been out of formation, hear the word of the Lord: come back. Your row is not full without you. And some of you are the one who needs the shield. You have been fighting alone because you were ashamed. Let somebody lock shields with you.

BIG TAKEAWAY | POINT 3

One shield is good. Locked shields are a fortress. Each believer is both a soldier and a shield for someone else.

The Armor of God, Piece by Piece

There was not enough time in the message to walk through each piece, so here is a closer look at what Paul has handed us. Every piece is a gift from the Father, and every piece points us to Christ.

1. The Belt of Truth

Ephesians 6:14

The belt was the piece that held a soldier together. It gathered his flowing tunic so he could move freely, and it was where his sword and gear were fastened. Nothing else works without it. The belt of truth is a life anchored in what is real: the truth of God's Word and, above all, the truth of Jesus Himself. When the enemy lies about who you are and who God is, truth pulls everything back into place. This is also an inner belt of honesty and integrity before God.

John 8:32; John 14:6; Psalm 51:6

2. The Breastplate of Righteousness

Ephesians 6:14

The breastplate covered the chest and the vital organs, the places where one blow could be fatal. For the believer, it protects the heart. This righteousness is first of all God's own, given to us as a gift because of Christ. It is not a record of our good behavior. When the accuser says, "Look at what you've done," you answer with what Christ has done. And because we are covered, we are then called to live in the right way.

Isaiah 59:17; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9; Proverbs 4:23

3. The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace

Ephesians 6:15

Roman soldiers wore heavy sandals with studded soles that gripped the ground, so they could hold their footing on rough terrain. A soldier without good footing is a soldier who falls. The gospel is our footing. Because we have peace with God, we can stand steady while everything around us shakes. These shoes also make us ready to go, to carry the Good News to others.

Isaiah 52:7; Romans 5:1; Romans 10:15

4. The Shield of Faith

Ephesians 6:16

This is the large shield of the legion, the one that locked with the shields beside it. Paul says it stops the "fiery arrows of the devil," the flaming darts of doubt, fear, accusation, shame, and temptation that come at us when we are most tired. Faith is not a feeling; it is trusting the character of God when the arrows are flying. And remember, your faith covers the person beside you, and theirs covers you.

Psalm 28:7; Hebrews 11:6; 1 John 5:4

5. The Helmet of Salvation

Ephesians 6:17

The helmet protected the head, the place where battles are often won or lost. The enemy's favorite battlefield is the mind: discouragement, confusion, and the whisper that God has let you go. The helmet is the settled confidence that you belong to God. It rests on what Christ has done for you in the past, what He is doing now, and the hope of the full salvation still to come.

Isaiah 59:17; Romans 8:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:8

6. The Sword of the Spirit

Ephesians 6:17

Every other piece is defensive. The sword is the one piece you use to push back. It was the short, quick blade of the Roman soldier, built for close combat. Paul tells us it is the Word of God, wielded by the Holy Spirit. Jesus Himself answered every temptation in the wilderness with Scripture. To use this sword, you have to know it, and you have to be willing to let the Spirit bring it to mind in the moment.

Matthew 4:1–11; Hebrews 4:12; Psalm 119:11

Prayer: The Atmosphere of the Armor

Ephesians 6:18–20

Prayer is not a seventh piece but the air the whole uniform is worn in. It is how we stay in contact with our Commander and with the soldier to our left and right. Notice how many times Paul uses the word "all" in verse 18: all times, every occasion, all believers everywhere.

Philippians 4:6–7; 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You that this armor was Yours before it was ever mine. I confess that I have tried to assemble in my own strength what You have already handed me. Today I stop manufacturing and start receiving. Clothe me in Your truth, Your righteousness, Your peace, Your faith, Your salvation, and Your Word. Teach me to stand, not to charge ahead and not to run for the exit, because You have already won the victory. Show me who is in my row. Give me courage to lock shields with someone who needs me, and humility to let someone lock shields with me. Hold the line in me until the King returns. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Action Step

This week, put on one piece of the armor on purpose. Each morning, read the passage again and name the piece you most need that day. Then reach out to one person in your row. Text them, call them, or sit down with them, and say the words from the service: **“I’ve got your left side.”**

Reflection Questions

- 1. Where have I been trying to look equipped instead of receiving what God has already given me?
- 2. What is the “line” God has called me to hold right now, and where am I tempted to flee, or to charge ahead alone?
- 3. Which piece of the armor feels the weakest in my life today, and what is the fiery arrow I keep facing?
- 4. Who is in my row? Who has my left side, and whose left side am I covering?
- 5. Is there someone I have drifted away from, or someone I need to let in?

Notes & Journaling
