
“Put On The Armor of Light”

ROMANS 13:11-12 PT. 2

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AT A GLANCE

Every soldier is issued basic protective gear when they enlist. While it's necessary, it's not always appreciated. It's bulky, uncomfortable, and heavy. There's nothing worse than the protective mask, or gas mask. Soldiers hate to wear them. That's why the Army sends every soldier through the gas chamber. It demonstrates the effectiveness of the protective mask and builds the soldier's confidence in it. Its one thing to tell them their protective mask is effective and another for them to experience it themselves. In a similar way, Jesus gives every Christian spiritual armor. Is there anything that helps us experience its effectiveness? I see three things that I believe help us understand that the “armor of light” is effective in the spiritual battle. Check it out!

INTRODUCTION

I intended to preach this passage all last week, but I ran out of time half-way through. I'm actually grateful to have another week to address this text, because I think there's a lot more to add that I couldn't before. Let me refresh your memory for those who were here last week or bring you up to speed if you weren't.

In Romans 13:11-12 Paul strongly challenges our concept of the Christian life. If you think that the Christian life is about sitting back waiting for Christ to do all the work, you're mistaken. Jesus has already done the work of salvation for you in giving you His righteousness and making you alive in the Spirit. The point I made last week is the indicatives, what is true about you, in no way contradict the imperatives, what you are to do. The Christian life is proactive, not passive. Because of who we are in Christ, Paul calls us to do something. He gives us two imperatives. Namely, to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

I said last week that I rarely use other translations, but I love the New English Bible's translation of Romans 13:12, *“Let us therefore throw off the deeds of darkness and put on our armor as soldiers of the light.”* *Romans 13:12 (NEB)* I think this translation underscores what was on Paul's mind; how he conceived of us as soldiers.

Once again, I think it's necessary each time we see that we're in a fight to note that we do not fight flesh and blood. People are not our enemies. They are souls held captive by the enemy, just as we once were. Our fight is against our own flesh and against the ideologies and principalities of this dark world. It's a spiritual fight and as soldiers we have been given spiritual armor.

Just before I wrapped up last week, I asked, “Do you see that you are a soldier in a spiritual battle and you've been given spiritual armor?” Then I explained that one of the first fundamentals Army leaders drive into the minds of young soldiers is the importance of putting on their armor. It's heavy. It's bulky. It's hot. It's uncomfortable. It makes the top of your head hurt. It's no fun.

Even less fun than the standard Kevlar helmet and body armor is MOPP gear, our chemical protective gear. It's thick and lined with charcoal. In the summer, soldiers dread nothing more than to hear "don your MOPP gear." Especially, MOPP4, which includes your gas mask and thick gloves. Because its so miserable, it's important for soldiers to experience its efficacy so they believe they really need it enough to put it on when the time comes. As I explained last week that's why we send every new soldier through a gas chamber filled with CS gas, or tear gas. With your mask on you can breathe just fine, but when the instructor tells you take your mask off, its misery.

You can't breathe, you can't keep your eyes open. Snot starts running out of your nose. They leave you in there long enough that you'll never forget it! I showed a [VIDEO](#) last week and I have to show it again because you can't miss this! It's kind of hard to watch that. The compassion in me as a pastor rises and I want to swoop them out of there. But the soldier in me knows this training saves lives. It saves lives because it instills confidence in soldiers that their protective masks work.

It demonstrates, in a way that a PowerPoint slideshow never could, that when you put on your protective mask, you are protected from what would otherwise kill you. Lord forbid, when soldiers find themselves in a real-world chemical scenario, they'll instinctively and confidently put on their mask. That brings us back to where we left off last week. So let's read the passage again and pick up by exploring what it means to put on the armor of light.

ROMANS 13:11-12

¹¹ Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

WHAT IS THE ARMOR OF LIGHT?

What is the **armor of light** we're told to **put on**? We can glean from Paul's other uses of the analogy in Ephesians 6 and 1 Thessalonians 5 that the armor is meant to protect us spiritually from the forces of darkness. There is a breastplate that protects our hearts and a helmet that protects our minds.

There's a shield that protects against the flaming arrows of the enemy, accusations from the accuser. It's all held together by the belt of truth, not sentiment and emotion. Our feet are protected as we move about the battlefield by the sandals of the gospel of peace. Our only offensive weapon is the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

And as I consider these things, I start to draw some connections – Jesus said I am the way, the *truth*, and the life. Jesus is our *righteousness*. Our *salvation* is by *faith* in Jesus. We have *peace* with God through the blood of Christ. In the beginning was the *Word* and the Word was God...and the Word became flesh.

So as I think about putting on truth, righteousness, salvation, peace and waging war with the Word and the shield of faith, what I come to see is that the armor of light is Jesus. And then I look down two verses, and I'm affirmed because Paul says, "*Put on the Lord Jesus Christ...*" *Romans 13:14* We'll examine that more next week. But what is clear is in the spiritual fight, we must be clothed in Christ. No, armored in Christ. And the thing Paul tells us to do in Ephesians 6 is not storm the gates of hell, but stand and pray.

Pray for the lost, pray for people taking the gospel to the lost. Be willing to go where He sends you. Hold the ground, preach the gospel, and pray constantly. That's our job, Christian, because Jesus already won the war. The enemy is already defeated. But, until Christ returns, the enemy's goal is to discourage, distract, and derail us from Christ's mission in the world any way he can. This really is a

war for your heart and your mind. Thus, the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, and the shield of faith as defenses, and the Word of God as our offensive weapon.

IT AIN'T AUTOMATIC

Paul tells us to put this armor on which suggests it's not automatic, we shouldn't presume upon it. We shouldn't presume that because we're saved, the enemy can't discourage us, distract us, or derail us from faithful living. In Christ, the armor is ours, but we must put it on. And continually put it on. And if we're not putting it on, how can we think we're going to stand?

But I think that as with soldiers and their protective mask, we have to learn that our armor is effective. I think a lot of Christians don't realize their armor works and so they never think to put it on. The bible sits on a shelf. Prayer is neglected. Righteous living is seen as legalism or out of reach. And they suffer the consequences the bible warns us about – like falling into sin and the hardship that follows. But I want you to come to believe that the armor of light is effective so you'll put it on!

THREE TRAINING AREAS

I see three things that help us believe in the efficacy of the armor of light.

Let's start with family. Fathers and mothers, it's our job to show our kids we believe in the armor of light and show them that we put it on ourselves. That we believe the gospel ourselves. That we prioritize our own time in prayer and reading and meditating on the Word. That we live a life of righteousness. That we guard our thoughts and we, *"Keep [our] heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life."* Proverbs 4:23

If our children don't see us putting on the armor of light, why would they believe they need to? We have the privilege of modelling for our kids the efficacy of the armor of light every day in how we engage with them and the world around us. With our job. With the stresses of our lives. With how we respond instinctively to the pressures of the world.

Do we cower, do we fold, do we retreat? Or do we stand with humble fortitude? Who do we turn to first when a crisis comes up? Is it the Lord and His Church? Or is it worldly solutions? Our kids are watching us handle the armor of light. If we leave it in the closet except for a couple Sunday's a month, what do you think they'll do when they grow up? It'll be a novelty. But if you're putting it on daily, your kids are going to notice. That's how God designed it to work.

Parents raise your children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. I believe this is the biggest factor in impacting our kids' faith. There are outliers and exceptions to every rule, but when I see young adults reject the Christian faith, I have to consider the parents' faith life. What I have observed over the last 18 years in ministry is that parents whose sincere faith in the gospel permeated their home and their whole lives, have less to worry about regarding their kids' faith.

The ones who occasionally showed up to church and put on a show, whose lives are characterized more by legalistic religion or sentimental believism than genuine saving faith, their kids are more likely to reject the faith. And I'd say they are right to reject the so-called "faith" they saw modelled for them and I pray they will be saved as an adult and walk in genuine faith and maybe bring their parents to saving faith.

But the parents that demonstrate they truly believe the armor of light is effective are training their kids to believe its effective. Parents, your home is ground zero for your kids to believe in the efficacy of the armor of light.

IN-THE-FIGHT TRAINING

Where else do we get training? On the job, or “in the fight.” Both Paul and James wrote about how suffering trains us in our faith and produces the fruit of steadfastness. Brother and sister, some of the most impactful lessons are learned the hard way. Some things you just have to experience.

You have to experience the grief of loss to understand the comfort of the shepherd in the valley of the shadow of death. You have to experience lack to understand God’s timely provision. You have to experience heartbreak to understand the Holy Spirit’s comfort.

Your faith is being purified and refined and you are being prepared for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. But this requires suffering. That’s the model, suffering and then glory. Suffering and then glory. That’s the Jesus model and Jesus said, “the student is not above the master.”

Suffering is where your learning moves from head knowledge to heart knowledge. It’s where you find out firsthand that the armor of light – righteousness, salvation, faith, God’s peace, the Word, etc. – is proven effective in real life.

THE CHURCH

You’re going to suffer, but the good news is you don’t have to suffer alone. That’s where the Church comes in and it is the third training area that comes to my mind. We believe that Christians are meant to be together; meeting together for bible study and prayer and fellowship in the church and in each other’s homes. *Proverbs 27:17 says, “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.”*

Wildwood can help you with this. We offer Sunday morning and Wednesday evening bible studies. We do men’s breakfasts and men’s and women’s retreats. Are you new here? These are good onramps. You should join us! We really do want you to get connected here because there’s danger in isolation.

From there we want you to move into what we call Connect Groups. Connect Groups are small groups that meet a few times a month for an extended time of fellowship, prayer, accountability, and bible study. These are the people coming beside you standing you back up on your feet like that soldier in the gas chamber. When you’re ready to take it a step further in your discipleship, triads are for you. These are groups of three people committed to spiritual and theological growth.

We believe Christians need to be connected to each other in meaningful ways. If you’re not, we’ve got a process to help you. Pastor Matt oversees our discipleship ministry and would be happy to help you get signed up.

MAKE AN HONEST ASSESSMENT

Soldier, take stock of your life. Are you asleep or awake? Have you put on the armor of light or are you stumbling around the battlefield oblivious to the fight? This is quite literally a wake-up call. What will you do with it?

Let me tell you what I think you should do with it. Today, if you hear His voice calling, do not harden your heart. Humble yourself. If you haven’t submitted to the Lord Jesus Christ, I invite you to do that now.

He died for your sin so you would live to righteousness. Repent and believe the gospel right here, right now. Everyone who calls on the name of Jesus will be saved. The helmet of salvation and the breastplate of righteousness are not pieces you create for yourself. They are given to you as a gift of God’s grace by faith in His Son. That’s where you begin. To those in Christ, humble yourself again. That’s step one.

Step two is tell someone you need their help; someone you believe will care enough to not coddle you and carry you out of the fight, but help you back to your feet. We call this accountability. You need someone who will tell you hard things and care when you fall.

You need to surround yourself with armor wearers, people who put on the armor of light themselves. It wasn't the other soldiers without protective masks that helped that soldier to her feet, but drill instructors with their masks on. People who are not wearing the armor aren't going to do anything for you except discourage or distract you from wearing yours.

People who are praying, studying, worshipping in their homes both personally and with their family, and also at church with the body, and who are actually living it out in their daily lives will encourage you to do the same. Do you notice people like this? If you want to grow in your faith, you need to surround yourself with people who are living like Jesus! Why?

Because You become like the people who influence you. When you surround yourself with people who are apathetic, you're going to be apathetic. Worldly...worldly. Spiritually lazy...spiritually lazy. People who treat the armor of light as a novelty will never motivate you to take it seriously.

When you surround yourself with people who are striving after Jesus, disciplined in their faith, growing in grace, committed to the mission of Christ, what do you think is going to happen to you? Growth! Gains! Progress!

DON'T YOU WANT THIS TO BE REAL IN YOUR LIFE?

As you prepare your heart for the Lord's supper, Christian, I encourage you to evaluate your life. Is it marked by light and life and victory over sin? Or by darkness and defeat? If you've been saved, you've got armor. But have you put it on? Deep down don't you want this to be more than a game? Don't you want this to be real in your life? To have a real impact? Don't you really want Jesus to change your life?

Thankfully, Jesus has already done everything necessary for you to live in the armor of light. He's already paid your sin debt. He's already overcome death and the grave. He's already defeated the enemy. And he's already given you the armor of light. The question is will you put it on?

As is so often the case, the difference between where you are and where you want to be is discipline. And your spiritual life is no exception. It's a discipline to consistently put on the armor of light. It's also worth the effort!

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