

# 1 Samuel Chapter 17 v 1 - 11 & 32 - 50

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[ 0 : 00 ] Isaiah chapter 9, the first seven verses. And it will become very familiar to you as we read it, particularly the one aspect of it.

So on page 694, if you've got the church Bible, page 694, and to set and focus our mind upon the Lord Jesus as we come to worship him this evening.

So Isaiah chapter 9, beginning at verse 1, I'm going to read through to verse 7. Just follow through in your Bibles as well. Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations by the way of the sea beyond the Jordan. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light, and those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy. They rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.

[ 1 : 19 ] Every warrior's boot used in battle, every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.

He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace, there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. We read it at Christmas simply because it tells us a child is born, but actually it speaks about the whole of the life and the work of Jesus, and that incredible name, all names by which he is called, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, all one and the same person, our Lord Jesus Christ, the name high over all.

Let's stand and sing, 171, as we come to worship and praise, the name of Jesus, high over all. 171., high over all.

[ 2 : 53 ] Jesus, the name, my faith, my faith, O Lord, . . . .

For earth, the sky Angels have been before it fall  
And devils fear and fight  
And devils fear and fight  
Jesus, the name to sin us dear  
The name to sin us dear  
His status over, guilty fear  
It turns love to hell  
It turns love to hell  
Now hear me

My Jesus friend I may not ask this name  
Reach him to all that crying dead  
Behold, behold the land  
Behold, behold the land  
Well, let's pray together. In that name of Jesus, let's come to God in prayer.  
In prayer. Thank you, Father God, that you have made this wonderful way by which we can come to you. We thank you that you have made the entrance through the barrier and the wall of our sin. That you have constructed for us a gateway. That you have made for us this wonderful path by which we can approach you.

[ 5 : 16 ] Oh Lord, our sin cuts us off from you. Our sin erects a massive, unbreachable, defensive wall between us and you.

One that all the dynamite in the world could not blow up. That all the skills of the mountain climber could not conquer. A wall which can never be removed. That can never be taken down. That can never be scaled from our side.

But a wall, oh Lord, our God, that you yourself have chiseled through. Through a wall by which you have come to us in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A way to life. A way to light. A way to salvation. While we dwell in darkness, oh Lord, you come to us and bring us light.

And that light is your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The wonderful Counselor. The mighty God. The everlasting Father. The Prince of Peace.

[ 6 : 21 ] We thank you, Lord Jesus, that you came to us because we could never come to you. And so for us, there is no name which is so delightful, so joyful, so inspiring as the name of Jesus.

It's the name that you took to yourself. Yourself, oh Lord, our God, when you came into our world of darkness. When you came as a man to us, you came as Jesus.

Though truly Son of God, though everlasting and eternal, you became a man. Yes, more than that, you became a babe. Born in Bethlehem and grew into that man.

That human man, that human being who shares with us in all things apart from sin. For that is ours and it is not yours. Our rebellion, our pride, our selfishness, our arrogance, our carelessness.

Lord, so many things. Our law-breaking. We thank you that, oh Lord, our God, were we to, as it were, grope around in the darkness all our lives. We'd never find that way of life.

[ 7 : 28 ] We thank you that, Lord Jesus, you came to be the way, the truth and the life. You came to us and not only did you make the way, but Lord, you brought us to the way.

You took us by the hand when we were in that darkness of sin and you drew us to yourself. You drew us, oh Lord, through the experiences of life, through the troubles, through the difficulties, through the hardships.

You made us see that this world is not enough for us. You made us see that this world is dissatisfying. This world can never bring us peace. This world and all that it has, you showed us these things, oh Lord, and you brought us tenderly and you called us lovingly to that very narrow gate, that narrow gate that leads to life.

We thank you for bringing us to it and bringing us through it by giving us repentance and faith that we might believe on you and be saved. And as we come to worship, as we come to sing your praises this evening, oh Lord, we want to come and praise you for Jesus, for who he is, for what he's done, for what he is doing and what he has promised to do.

Especially this week, we come to you, our God, and we claim that very promise of Jesus, that promise that he declared to his disciples of old, I will build my church.

[ 8 : 50 ] And so we believe, oh Lord, that even today and in the coming days, that promise will be taken forward another notch, more steps as men and women and boys and girls are brought into the kingdom of God through Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Help us now. Be with us in this time together, we pray. Speak to us. Give us ears to hear. For we ask these things, our Father, in the name of your Son. Amen.

Let's read together from 1 Samuel and chapter 17. 1 Samuel and chapter 17. That's page 288.

If you've got the church Bible, page 288. As a church here, you are extremely grateful. You are extremely patient with me.

And I'm going to use up your patience this evening a little bit. When I say that, because you allow me to do things slightly different from time to time, not to be just different.

[ 9 : 57 ] So I'm going to read the scriptures and then I'm going to preach now, this part of the service. And because what I want us to do is after the next, Tim, is to spend some time in prayer. We do have times of open prayer in church, usually in the evening, usually at the beginning.

But because of what I'm preaching on, I hope that we can respond to God's word in prayer here and now. I hope that works well and is okay with you. And I trust that you will participate in that too.

So we're going to read 1 Samuel 17. We're going to jump a little bit. It's the story of David and Goliath, that incredible event. But we're not going to read all of it. We're going to read, first of all, the first 11 verses.

And then we're going to skip over to verse 32 and following. So the first 11 verses, page 288. Now the Philistines gathered their forces for war and assembled at Soko in Judah.

They pitched camp at Ephes, Damim, between Soko and Ezekiah. Saul and the Israelites assembled and camped in the valley of Elah and drew up their battle line to meet the Philistines.

[ 11 : 05 ] Philistines occupied one hill, the Israelites another, with the valley between them. A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp.

His height was six cubits and a span. He had a bronze helmet on his head, wore a coat of scale armor of bronze weighing 5,000 shekels. On his legs he wore bronze greaves and a bronze javelin

was slung on his back.

His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod and its iron point weighed 600 shekels. His shield bearer went ahead of him. Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, Why do you come out and line up for battle?

Am I not a Philistine? And are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and let him come down to me. If he's able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects.

But if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us. Then the Philistines said, This day I defy the armies of Israel. Give me a man, let us fight each other.

[12:14] On hearing the Philistines' words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and trembled. Over to verse 32. Forty days have passed, by the way, between these verses.

And this man has come down each day and shouted this challenge. Verse 32. David said to Saul, that's Saul the king, Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine.

Your servant will go and fight him. Saul replied, You're not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him. You're only a young man. And he's been a warrior from his youth.

But David said to Saul, Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it, and rescued the sheep from its mouth.

When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it, and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear. This uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God.

[13:20] The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine. Saul said to David, Go, and the Lord be with you.

Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armour on him and a bronze helmet on his head. David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them.

I cannot go in these, he said to Saul, because I'm not used to them. So he took them off. Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag, and with his sling in his hand approached the Philistine.

Meanwhile, the Philistine with his shield-bearer in front of him kept coming closer to David. He looked David over and saw that he was little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome, and he despised him.

He said to David, Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks? The Philistine cursed David by his gods. Come here, he said, I'll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals.

[14:30] David said to the Philistine, You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.

This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel.

All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves, for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands.

As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly towards the battle line to meet him.

Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead and he fell face down on the ground. So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone. Without a sword in his hand, he struck down the Philistine and killed him.

[15:37] Of course, this story is very familiar to us, isn't it? David and Goliath. Their fight has become so much a part of our English language, really, that people who have no knowledge of the Bible will still refer to a contest, any contest, where it seems to be there are uneven contestants against one another, as a David and Goliath tussle or fight.

Now, here in Whitby Evangelical Church, we are but a very small group of believers. And we're beginning a week of mission evangelism.

And we could easily think of ourselves as being engaged in a David and Goliath tussle. For almost the whole of Whitby is made up of those who are unconverted, those who are not Christians, those who are, in one way or another, rejecting the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And here we are, we're just a few dozen. However, I don't want us to concentrate so much this evening upon the battle itself between David and Goliath, or picture that as a battle between us and the people of this town.

But I want us to think about particularly the final preparations of David before the battle began. Over the past several weeks, we've been preparing ourselves for this evangelistic mission, this Real Lives Week.

[17:13] Preparing ourselves practically. Arranging the speakers, producing publicity, making sure all things were ready and in order. But also we've been preparing ourselves spiritually.

We've had a week of prayer just recently. And particularly as well, we've been studying God's Word. Reminding ourselves of how through history, God used the weak, and more often than not insignificant people of his own, to bring about salvation to sinners.

We've seen that in the lives of many different sorts of people. Young and old, impressive, not so impressive. And we thought about the results that we should expect that God will produce as he works through us.

When we looked at the seed and the sowers. And now, here we are on the very threshold of beginning this week of evangelism. We might say on the very threshold of beginning this spiritual battle.

In just a few hours from now, it will all kick off. It will all begin. All the preparation, all the prayer, all our hopes.

[18:31] And so like David, I believe that this evening we must give ourselves time to think about the armour that we shall be wearing in the battle.

There in verse 38, Saul dressed David in his own tunic, put a coat of armour on him, bronze helmet on his head, and so forth. And I believe that we can learn a great deal from David's experience here, and also by understanding what it is that Paul has to teach us about the armour of God in Ephesians 6.

So we're going to be looking at that passage in a few moments as well. What can we learn, first of all, about armour in spiritual battles? Well, here we see that not all armour is appropriate.

Not all armour is effective. David was clothed with the armour of Saul, but he says, I cannot go in these. And all sorts of cartoons and imagery maybe in our heads of a small and lanky David with a great big armour of this very tall man, because we know that Saul was in fact a man who was head and shoulders above everybody else.

So he was well into the six foot size. Why was the armour of Saul no good for David? Ultimately, I want to put to you, it's this.

[19:53] The armour that Saul had was no good to David because it was man-made armour and not God-given armour. See, I believe that as we go into this mission, we must be very careful that we do not clothe ourselves with armour that is man-made.

That we do not go with, as it were, a protection upon us which is human and natural armour. All people wear armour, don't they?

We all talk about how everybody wears a mask. All of us wear armour. All of us wear armour. We wear, as it were, upon us that which we hope will protect us. Protect us from life's struggles and difficulties.

And in fact, many people do. You say, oh, he's put his shield up. He's put a barrier up. He's put a helmet on or whatever it may be to protect himself or to protect herself.

But that natural armour that we put on to protect ourselves from being hurt by others in the everyday things of life is as useless to us as tissue paper in the spiritual battle and the spiritual warfare that we are engaged in as Christians.

[21:06] So what armour must we avoid? What am I talking about when I talk about armour that is man-made and useless to protect us in the spiritual battle?

I'm talking about that armour which is a confidence in ourselves. A confidence in ourselves. And that sort of armour can come in all sorts of shapes and sizes for us as Christians.

It can be, of course, that confidence that we believe we shall win the day because of our natural gifts. It's just something we slip into very easily as churches.

Particularly when we say, oh, they're a young church. They've got young families. That must mean they're a thriving, blessed spiritual church. We're a weak church because we're old and we don't have young families.

We need young families. That's putting our confidence in people or rather in ourselves. And so when we come to this mission this week, we can say, well, we've got great organisational skills. [ 22 : 07 ] We've been able to arrange these speakers and arrange these events. And we've had great skills, excellent leaflets. I'm not saying this in a patronising way, Barry. Excellent leaflets, excellent publicity.

We can even say we're confident because we've done so much in the way of witnessing and giving out leaflets and distributing them. We've done so much.

And we've done it so well. Surely that must mean that we will be successful. That must mean that we can rest upon that. We can trust in that. We have confidence in the things that we've done. Worse than that, of course. And this is perhaps something beyond what we thought of already. We can surround ourselves with the confidence that we've been spiritual.

Of course, the reason that the church is going to be blessed and this mission is going to be blessed and this battle is going to be successful is because we have prayed and prayed and prayed. And we've been sincere in our prayers.

[ 23 : 08 ] And we've been godly in the way we've gone about preparing this. We've not tried to use worldly tricks or unspiritual things. We've tried to be as clear as we can in being spiritual and godly.

And as a church, we are godly people and prayerful people. And surely God will look upon us and he'll say, well, what a wonderful, godly church they are. I must bless them. I must see people saved and brought into that church because they've really prayed so hard and going to reward their prayers.

There's one last thing that we wear as a sword of armour. And it's the worst of all. And really we almost rely upon it as our artillery, our big guns as we go into this battle.

And that's this. Our confidence that we shall conquer because of our doctrinal correctness. We are a biblical church.

We cross the T's, we dot the I's, we have got our doctrine sorted. We are thoroughly paid up, Calvinistic people. There can be no doubt that with such good doctrine and such good biblical exegesis and these things, we must win the day.

[ 24 : 25 ] Because God's got to bless us, hasn't he? Because we've got it all right. You're smiling. But you know as well as I do that some of those things are there on our minds.

And the armour that we put upon ourselves is God you will bless this and you will give us the victory in this. Because we've done that. Because we've done this. Because we've prayed.

Because we seek to be biblical. Because we try to do things in a spiritual way. The other type of armour that we can take to ourselves, that we must not take to ourselves, but we often do.

And particularly in the situation that we're in this week is this. Confidence not in ourselves, but confidence in others, particularly Roger Carswell. But not just Roger, of course.

All the speakers that we've got here. We've got Robin Oak and we've got Fiona Castle and Steve Novak and Jamie Jones Buchanan and Paul Jones and Fiona Handley. These people, you see, we've got confidence that God is going to save people because these are such gifted evangelists.

[ 25 : 28 ] Roger, who's been preaching the gospel around the world for years upon years. They're going into battle with us and one sense for us. They're going to be our secret army in one sense.

They're our secret weapon. They've experienced battle after battle. They're seasoned campaigners. And in the past, they've seen victories over Satan.

They've seen people coming out of darkness and the prisons of the devil. So, we know that they can do it. We, confidence is in them. They're the guarantee that we too shall witness a great victory over the armies of the devil and carry home armfuls of booty and reward.

What did Roger preach on this morning? Psalm 146. Do not put your trust in princes, in human beings who cannot save.

The armour we take to protect ourselves, the armour we go into this battle is the confidence that what we have done and what were these people, what a combination, what a team, what a legion, what a crack troops.

[ 26 : 46 ] And yet, I would say to you dear friends, that to have such armour is to be as foolish as David wearing the armour of Saul.

It's no good. We can't wear it. It won't protect us. It won't accomplish anything. It is man-made armour. But if none of this armour can protect us from defeat, then what armour are we to wear?

Well, of course, as I said, the start not man-made armour, but God-given armour. The armour that God has provided us in Christ. Did you notice that? Even that comes out clearly when David speaks about how he defeated the bear and the lion.

He does not attribute his victories over them to his own skill or ability, does he? He says this, The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.

The armour that he wore was faith in the Lord his God. What he had done for me in the past, he can do again. I have no need to be afraid. I can go confidently and face this giant, this man who's killed people from his childhood, literally, without fear.

[ 28 : 01 ] Because it's the Lord. And when he stands toe to toe with Goliath, literally, face to face across that valley. What is it that he says to Goliath?

Goliath hopes to make him scared, doesn't he? I'm going to give your flesh to the birds, the air and the animals. Come on then, you know, come on, have a go if you think you're hard enough, is what he's saying to David. And David says, don't you worry, I'm going to put you down.

Why? Because he said this. All these gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves, for the battle is the Lord's.

This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands. I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel. David's armour was the Lord his God.

And when we turn to Ephesians 6, I'd like you to do that now, please, if you would. Ephesians 6 is page 1177. If you can keep your finger in 1 Samuel, that would be helpful.

[ 29 : 02 ] We will look back a little bit at the context there. But here in Ephesians 6, we have Paul introducing to us the armour of God. And I want you to notice how important it is that this armour of God is actually found in the context of gospel preaching and evangelism.

Look at verse 19. So, in the context of Paul's preaching of the gospel, we're called to put on the armour.

So, it's in that very context that we are doing. In the mission that we're engaged in now in this week of proclaiming the gospel and making the gospel known, it's there that the armour is necessary and the armour is provided for us.

It's so vital, dear friends, that we do not go into this week unclothed. That we do not go into this week naked and defenceless without the armour of God.

We must take up this armour. Why? Why, you may say. Why do we need this armour? We've done all this preparation. We've done all this prayer.

[ 30 : 19 ] We've got all these great preachers and speakers to come. Why do we need such armour as a church and as individual believers as well? Because the one thing above all else that we are called to do in this spiritual battle is here before us.

It is to stand. Look at it there. Verse 11. Put on the full armour of God so that you may take your stand. Verse 13.

Therefore put on the full armour of God so that when the day of evil comes you may be able to stand. And after you've done everything to stand. Verse 14. Stand firm then.

See the command of our officer. See the command of God. See what we are called to do. We are called to stand. We are not called to defeat the enemy. We are not called to knock down spiritual strongholds.

We are not called to gain the victory. We are not called to set captives free from Satan. We are called to stand. We are called to stand. All those activities of defeating the enemy.

[ 31 : 26 ] Of releasing captives. Of storming strongholds. That is God's work and God alone can do it. People of God knew all about that when they marched around Jericho.

Jericho. They didn't bring the walls down did they? They simply marched around in obedience to God. Did what he told them to do. He did the powerful demolition work.

Now our orders dear friends as believers is to stand. To take our stand. What does he mean by that? Well then we come back to this armour.

Why do we need armour? Because without the armour of God we are in danger of falling. That is the opposite of standing isn't it? Falling. Collapsing. Tripping. Not falling from grace.

That is not what Paul is talking about here. He is not talking about that we are to stand. And that we may without the armour fall and lose our salvation. No that is not the case.

[ 32 : 26 ] In this spiritual battle we as soldiers of Christ are primarily to carry out our orders. Without falling into sin. That is what I would put to you dear friends.

That the great temptation that we face. The great battle that we are engaged in. As Christians today in this day in this society. And in this battle that we are engaged in evangelism.

Is that we should stand as followers of Christ. And not fall into sin. Which would make us to be ineffective. And failing.

And failing. Soldiers. In an earthly battle of course. In an earthly war. Every soldier's primary objective is this. To not get shot.

That is his primary objective isn't it? That is the first thing he has got to do. Uncensored capturing a thing and doing this. And what. But his first thing is don't get shot. His captain is not going to be very pleased with him if he gets killed.

[ 33 : 27 ] Our primary role is to stand. And you say well how can that make any difference? If I fall into sin. If I fall. In any way. How will that influence the spiritual battle that I am enrolled in?

How can that make any difference? Well put it this way. When we fall into sin. We discredit the gospel we proclaim. We fall into sin. We give ammunition to the enemy.

To use against us. And to keep men and women from following Christ. How many times do we see it again and again in our media. This vicar. That retired minister. This Christian celebrity.

In child abuse. In immorality. In one way or another. Falling into sin. And what are we immediately doing? We are immediately giving to Satan the ammunition he needs. To say to people. Why believe in this gospel? Why believe in this Jesus?

It's clear that he is completely ineffective and powerless to change people's lives. You and I are under the spotlight constantly as Christians.

[ 34 : 29 ] We need God's grace. And we need his armor that we should stand and not fall. Also, of course, when we fall into sin, dear believers, it's inevitable that we will bring division within our army unit.

The church. In fact, if we're honest, one of the times we are most likely to fall into sin is between believers. That's when we're most likely to fall into sin. We say our wrong word.

We lose our temper. We act selfishly or unlovingly. Or we gossip. Or whatever it may be. We sin against a brother and sister. And when we do that, we not only make ourselves ineffective in the hands of the Lord, but we also injure and disable a fellow soldier of Christ.

It's inevitable. It's inevitable. Satan's desire is to divide and to conquer. We thought about this on Wednesday evening, particularly in our prayer meeting.

But I would say to you, above all else, the particular sin that Satan uses against God's people in the spiritual battle, the IED that is most commonly used against us as Christians, is the one that causes us to fall into doubt and despair.

[ 35 : 57 ] To so injure us with doubt and despair that we are removed from the front line of prayer and witness.

And as we look at the armor of God, I think we see that this is the case. We see that the very reason the armor of God is given to us is that our confidence, our faith, our trust will be in Christ and not ourselves.

Because when we lose hope, when we lose faith, when we lose trust, then we are lost. We are lost. Absolutely lost. This is why the enemy has worked so hard in the UK and in the West to sow doubt in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Hasn't he? Where has he been most effective? Just think about this for a moment, dear friends. If we look over to the East, take particularly the country of China. Terrible, awful persecution.

All missionaries removed 50 or 60 years ago. But no, as I can put it this way, teaching, pulling the Bible down or discrediting the Bible.

[ 37 : 12 ] And there what has happened? Wonderfully, God has revived his church and many millions are converted and many millions are saved. Look over on the West, the UK and America and Europe and so on.

No persecution. Really, is there? No, no, no, no being put to death for being a Christian. No attack against this. A church which was strong upon the things of God. A church which was vibrant and mission-centered and sending.

And what did Satan use to decimate, decimate the church of Jesus Christ? He sowed doubts about the Word of God and the work of Christ. And what do we see, dear friends?

We see a nation here in the United Kingdom which only a hundred and so years ago probably had an attendance of 50 to 60 percent. The population on a Sunday were in a place of worship down to 5 percent.

And of that, probably only 3 percent actually born again believers. What's been the most powerful and most effective force? Persecution or doubt?

[ 38 : 13 ] Doubt. Doubt in the Word of God. Doubt in the God of the Bible. Doubt in the person of Jesus Christ. And as we look at these aspects of the armor of God, it's clear, to me anyway, it seems that what Paul is saying again and again is he reaffirming our faith.

So how do we put this armor on? How do we apply this armor? Well, clearly it's not physical. We know that. It's spiritual. Therefore, with all God's provisions, we put it on with faith and thanksgiving, with prayer.

And there is action to be taken. Be certain of this. It isn't something automatic because Paul uses verbs, active words. Look at what he says there.

Verse 13. Put on. Not that you're already clothed with it. Put it on. Verse 14. Buckle the belt of truth. It actually literally means buckle around your waist truth. That's what he's literally saying. So they buckle something. Fit your feet, verse 15, with the gospel, readiness of the gospel.

[ 39 : 20 ] Take up the shield. Take the helmet, verse 17. So there are verbs, there's actions, there's things to be done that we might be clothed in the armor of God.

Let's look at them very briefly together. First of all, the belt of truth. I don't know about you. When I get dressed, I put my belt on last to keep my trousers up. But here, Paul puts it as first.

It's the belt held together, the tunic, it was what the sword hung upon. It enabled the soldier to be unrestricted, to move freely in the work that God had called him to do.

Jesus tells us that the truth, the truth of Christ is that which gives us freedom. John 8, 31. If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples, then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

We have no freedom, as it were, to move in Christ's service without the assurance of the truth of who Jesus is. And we cannot afford to lose that truth.

[ 40 : 26 ] We cannot afford to take off that belt of truth and put on, as it were, a belt of affection. Or a belt of sympathy. Or a belt of care. Or a belt of something else.

We must have the belt of truth. And that is confidence in what we have believed concerning the Lord Jesus. We are looking at 1 Corinthians in the evening. 1 Corinthians 15. Just listen again to these words at the opening up of that chapter.

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. There is the word again, isn't it?

Your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you.

Otherwise, you have believed in vain. And here we have. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

That he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. The first importance is the person of Jesus. The truth of who Jesus is, what he has done, and what he has accomplished.

[ 41 : 33 ] If we don't know that, then we have got nothing. We have got no strength. So we need to gird ourselves with that, reminding ourselves, Jesus died for my sins. Jesus is alive and risen from the dead.

Jesus is the Son of God who has come into this world. That is our strength. And that is on that place we begin. The belt of truth. Secondly, the breastplate of righteousness we are told to put on.

We can perhaps imagine that picture. Have we seen El Cid and other of these great films? With a breastplate, this metal breastplate across the chest.

But notice it is a breastplate of righteousness. It protects our hearts. What from? It protects our hearts from self-confidence. Our righteousness is not our own righteousness, but Christ our righteousness.

1 Corinthians 1.30. Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God. That is our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.

[ 42 : 32 ] You see, without that assurance that we are right with God, because of Jesus' righteousness and not our own, then we will fear and we will fly when Satan attacks and when we are faced with trials.

The assurance that we are accepted by God, that we are loved by God, that we are pleasing to God, because of the righteousness of Jesus, that keeps our hearts safe. Once we begin to doubt that, once we begin to think, well, it's up to me. If I don't keep up my prayer life, and if I don't keep up my Bible reading, if I don't keep up my church attendance, if I don't keep up this, and I don't keep up that, then God will stop loving me, or God will stop accepting me. It's where we fall, flat on our faces. The breastplate of righteousness protects us from condemnation. As Paul goes on to say, 1 Corinthians 1.30, he says, Immediately after the fact that Christ is our righteousness, holiness, and redemption, let him who boasts, boast in the Lord. Our confidence is in the righteousness of God in Christ, our acceptance before God, him keeping God's law, him fulfilling all righteousness. Not me, not me, not us, not what we've done, can save us or keep us.

[ 43 : 52 ] It's all Christ. And then we have the shoes, as it's described here. Feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. What does that mean?

Well, the gospel of peace prepares us for what we shall face in their battle. That's what it's meaning. We're fitted with the readiness. We're fitted with preparedness from the gospel of peace. It prepares us. It equips us. That is to say, the gospel, God's salvation, which secures peace between us and God, is the rock upon which we stand.

There's no other place to stand. Our security comes from the experience we have of knowing peace with God. How did we know that peace with God? When we believe the gospel.

That's the wonderful thing, is it's the good news of peace. At one time, we were in a battle. In fact, there's the reality. Whoever you are this evening, you are in a spiritual battle.

[ 44 : 48 ] Either you are on Christ's side, or you're on Satan's side. Because the Bible makes it very, very clear that without Christ and outside of Christ, we are at enmity with God and he is at enmity with us.

We fight against him because we say, no God, I don't want you to be the king of my life. No God, I don't want to keep your commandments so that you are the one who rules over me. No God, I will do what I want.

I have rebelled against you. That's a revolutionary talk, isn't it? We will not have this king over us. We will be free men to do what we want.

It's a revolutionary. You're either battling against God or you're battling with him. When you become a Christian, immediately you swap sides. Immediately you become someone who is fighting for Christ and standing against the enemy who is Satan.

You're in a spiritual battle, friend. Whether you know it or not, whether you like it or not, you are called up and conscripted into an army. But here's the wonderful thing. You don't have to stay in the army which is against God.

[ 45 : 55 ] You don't have to stay against him, fighting against him. If you are willingly receiving him as your king, if you will willingly surrender to him and say, God, I will not fight against you anymore. Forgive me.

Let me become part of your kingdom. Let me come into your army. Then immediately he takes us over. He takes us on board. And we are immediately brought into a fight. And if you've been a Christian for any length of time, you know that you're in a fight.

It is not easy. It is hard. But the reality is that you are fighting on the winning side. The gospel of peace that brings us into peace with God makes peace, makes a peace agreement between God and us is a place where we can stand with confidence and hope.

Without that peace with God, without that assurance that the gospel has brought us peace with God, again, we shall easily fall into doubt and fear. Here's Romans chapter 5. Therefore, since we've been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we've gained access by faith, listen, into this grace in which we now stand.

We're standing in a place of grace. We're standing in peace with God. We are standing justified, forgiven through faith and faith alone. Therefore, we are secure.

[ 47 : 17 ] The shield of faith. The shield of faith. Notice that... Yeah, sorry.

In addition to all this, verse 16, take up the shield of faith. Paul is highlighting this shield. It's something very important about it. It's part of the major part of the soldier's defense.

In fact, faith, of course, is what we find as the common theme all the way through the Bible. Hebrews 11 tells us, doesn't it, about these great men and women of faith. What is it that

distinguished them in their generation?

It was always faith. By faith, they crossed the river. By faith, they triumphed. By faith, they were victorious. By faith, by faith. The Lord God said to Abraham, when he called him to himself, Abraham, I am your shield.

I am your shield. So when he says, take up the shield of faith, in one sense, take up... faith as a shield. Faith in God is our shield because God is our shield.

[ 48 : 23 ] That's exactly what Satan wants us to stop believing. He wants us to doubt God. He wants us to stop trusting in him. He wants us to doubt that he will care for us, or provide for us, or fulfill his promises to us.

He wants us to turn to other means. This is what has happened in our society, if I can put it this way, amongst the majority of churches that we know of. Because they have lost faith in God, and hope in God, and the gospel of God, they have turned to every possible means.

Perhaps we can win people by being far more entertaining. Perhaps we can get people into church by being far more generous. We can be more socially caring. We can bring everything down. We'll open the doors of Christianity and say, whatever your sin, just come with your sin. Don't leave your sin behind. Don't leave your sin behind. Come with your sin. Because they've lost confidence in the Lord their God.

They doubt him. They doubt his promises. They doubt his word. And that's exactly what Satan wants you and I to do. He wants us to go into this week doubting that God will save. Doubting that God will keep.

[ 49 : 33 ] Doubting that God will build his church. Doubting that he is faithful in our lives and the lives of others. But that's exactly what David did not do, wasn't he?

He said that already. What does he come to do? He comes to, and this is lovely. You come against me with all your armor and all your weapons. That's what he's saying. Your sword, your spear, your javelin.

But I come against you in the name of the Lord God, the Almighty. Faith in God is taking God as my shield. Relying upon him.

Trusting in him. Renewing our faith in him. That's why, dear friends, it's so important that we spend time with Christ in prayer every single day. Because we are not only reminding ourselves of what he's done for us, but we are reaffirming our faith in him.

When we pray, we are saying, Lord, I'm looking to you and I'm trusting in you and I'm relying upon you. I can honestly say to you, and please don't think, there have been times when I do not pray.

[ 50 : 39 ] And I know it. Within a day or two, I'm unbearable. Just ask Anne. She'll tell you when I've not been praying. And it's because I'm caught up, busy in doing other things, busy in this and busy in that, and busy with the family and busy with...

And I do not spend time in prayer, and I know within a day or two immediately, things in my heart and my life are not as they should be. Dear friends, we've got to keep up trusting, relying, believing. Trusting in my strength, your strength is utterly futile. Only absolute reliance upon Christ will douse those arrows, those fiery darts, before they can take hold.

Are we getting on? We're not doing too badly. We've got the helmet of salvation nearly there. The helmet of salvation. Paul refers to this piece of equipment in 1 Thessalonians.

He speaks about us taking up hope of salvation as a helmet. The hope of salvation as a helmet. Helmet covers the mind, doesn't it?

[ 51 : 44 ] But it also covers the eyes. It covers the brain. It's our thoughts. The helmet, it protects the head, that vital part of the armour.

What are our thoughts upon in the midst of the battle? What are our eyes to be upon? How can we keep our heads in the midst of the battle?

Well, surely it must simply be by this, by fixing our eyes, not on what is passing and momentary, but what is eternal and everlasting. Notice it's the helmet of salvation, the helmet of your salvation and mine.

What is your salvation and mine? It's that salvation which is yet to come. That salvation of being in heaven. That salvation from hell. That salvation from death. From judgment. We fix our eyes and our thoughts upon heavenly things.

The certainty of our victory is that we shall enter into eternal salvation. Here's Paul. Paul was a man who knew many battles, many struggles.

[ 52 : 49 ] And what does he say as he contemplates them? He says this. We do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

For our light and momentary troubles, man who is shipwrecked, beaten with rods, stoned till they thought he was dead. Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

So, we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. What is seen is temporary. What is unseen is eternal.

And the temptation will be, dear friends, and the temptation which we must not give in to, the temptation which will trip us up and cause us to fall, is to look at people. Oh, there's not many here tonight, you know.

Ah, so many here this morning, wasn't there? It's very disappointing tonight. There's not so many as there was. And tomorrow night, well, tomorrow night, we expected about 100 and there's only 76.

[ 53 : 52 ] Oh, that's disappointing. What are we doing? We're looking at people. We're looking at the present situation. We haven't got the helmet of salvation which is looking up and seeing that God will bring salvation.

And that salvation is secure and it is certain and it is unwavering. And let me just slip into a bit of a, a bit of doctrine for a moment in this way, dear friends.

Who will be in heaven? Every single one for whom Jesus died.

Every single one that God chose to save before the foundation of the world. There won't be one missing. What is the point of looking at the numbers here when actually we need to focus on the numbers there?

Why is John always in Revelation, And I saw in heaven a multitude no man can number. And I saw in heaven this. And I saw the lamb. And I saw the throne.

[ 54 : 52 ] And I saw the city coming down. Dear friends, If in the battlefield in which we live we keep looking at the media and we keep looking at society and we look at the state of the nation and we look at the problems around about us and we look at our own hearts, then we shall definitely fall.

Definitely fall and be sunk by that IED of doubt and despair. But dear friends, as we keep our eyes upon the God of our salvation, then we shall not despair.

When our hearts and our minds and our thoughts are upon Him, the victor, the mighty God, the everlasting Saviour, then dear friends, we won't lose heart.

Because we are one day closer than we were before. Yes, the battle is fierce, but we're one day nearer the end of the battle. We're one day nearer going home. We're one day nearer being in the presence of our Saviour and seeing His smiling face and welcoming us and saying, Well done, good and faithful servant.

That's where we're headed. That's where we're going. That's the goal. That's the tape. That's the finishing line. The hope, salvation as a helmet. The hope of our salvation, that's certainty.

[ 56 : 11 ] And finally, dear friends, the sword of the Spirit. God's Word is where we find all these promises. God's Word is where we find all these truths. God's Word is where we go to again and again.

That's why it's so important that we pray and it's so important we read the Word of God every day. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Think about Jesus when He was in the thickest of the battles.

He is the master swordsman, isn't He? When Satan came in Matthew 4 and tempted Him, what does Jesus say? It's written, touche.

It's written. And with that final point of the sword, it is written and Satan flees. Dear friends, unless we know the Word of God, how can we use the Word of God?

Unless we're soaked in the Word of God and find in it all the promises and the assurance and confidence, then dear friends, we haven't anything to fight with, to stand with, to defeat with, to overcome with.

[ 57 : 17 ] I haven't got time to do verses 18 to 20, you'll be glad to know. But now we're prepared to go into battle. Our watch word, our battle hymn is simply pray, pray, pray.

And pray, says Paul. Pray in the Spirit on all occasions, all kinds of prayers. Pray for me. Pray for God's people. Pray that I may proclaim the Word fiercely.

Pray, pray, pray. That's what we're going to do. We're going to sing together and then just for a little while, come to God in prayer.

Those who feel able to lead us in prayer publicly and then do vocably. Those who, if you don't feel able to pray, that's fine. But bring your prayers to God, responding to His Word, setting out into battle with faith in Him.

Let's stand and sing then number 388. 388. It's wonderful. We had some tracts, leaflets about the life of Luther given out this morning.

[ 58 : 32 ] This is a hymn of Luther with slightly modern language, which is helpful for us. 388. A mighty fortress is our God.

A sure defence and weapon. We'll stand and sing this and then, as I said, come to prayer before our final hymn. Let's stand. 1 1 2 1 2 2 1 3 2 2 1 2 3 2 3 3 3 4 4 4 5 4 5 5 6