

Ephesians 15-04-19a

This is Sunday, the 19th of April, 2015. We're in the book of Ephesians, chapter 6, resuming with the armor of God. We'll review up through verse 14 and then we'll review 15 and we'll start in 16.

16 is where we resume. Ephesians 6, 16 is our passage. Let's take a moment in preparation for our fellowship in the Word of God to go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, thank You for giving us the many expressions of Your grace and faithfulness over this past week. We thank You for the hard things, the challenges that provide for us, ironically, opportunities for benefit, for laying hold of righteousness by faith, for laying up treasure in heaven, for preparing us for future service, not just in this life, but primarily and mostly in the ages that are to come. We thank You for Your patience with us and Your gracious forgiveness when we fail and fall short.

We often have no excuse and yet looking at the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and our relationship to You through Him, You grant us restoration, renewal, cleansing, enablement and empowerment. You pick us up and You clean us off and You set our feet back on the path and give us a push once again in the right direction. We thank You for that.

We thank You for the tremendous privileges that we enjoy in the Lord Jesus Christ and we thank You most of all for Him, for what He has done, what He is doing and what He is about to do for us when He returns and takes us to Himself and we move into that new realm of opportunities and service and reflection of Your glory. We pray that as we look at this portion of Your Word this morning that God the Holy Spirit will minister it to each heart, will facilitate the communication and the reception of the things that the Apostle Paul wrote for all believers so many years ago that are so pertinent and so essential to our proper function and our useful and faithful service here in this life. We pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen.

We do not wrestle against blood and flesh, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spirituals of wickedness in the heavenlies. Spirits, spirituals literally, but it's basically spirits, wicked spirits in the unseen dimensions. It is a fact, it is a biblical fact that there are more than four dimensions, the three spatial dimensions in time.

Physics has pretty well established this as incontrovertible. All of their mathematics, all of their calculations, they are beginning to figure out that the reason quarks are linked and photons affect each other at great distances is that they are linked through dimensions that we don't have access to. And they could have found this out from the Bible without building the Super Hadron Collider or whatever the heck that big multi-million dollar thing is.

We've known this for centuries. The allegedly uneducated dusty old prophets and goat herds that set down God's truth and the Word of God knew what the physicists with all of their brainy endeavors are just now beginning to understand, and that is that there is more to life than what

we see. There's more to this universe than can be accessed with the limited set of human senses that God has put into human beings.

We are limited on purpose. We are engaged in a demonstration, and for the purposes of demonstration, we often use things that have limits and have boundaries. When you are working with, and of course this will immediately cause people to lose all focus, but animal testing, you know, we take animals and we try stuff out on them.

I don't know that they try out lipstick on pigs, but they do try out, you know, cosmetic things to see if they're going to produce irritation. They will inject, you know, rats because, you know, now that we're so smart, we know their genome is close to ours and so on. And so they do animal testing and say, well, before we crank out this new medicine and distribute it to millions of people and then find out that it makes your ears fall off or something, let's try it on rats and see if their ears fall off.

So they do animal testing. Well, these tests have limits. They have to circumscribe.

They don't just inject a rat and turn him loose, try to go find him later. You've got to constrain him. You've got to keep him where you can watch him.

You've got to limit the variables so that across a testing group, things are basically the same and you're testing for one particular thing. You've got a control group and you've got an active group. You've got a placebo that you're giving to some people when you do people testing and you've got the real deal that you give to others.

There was never a more famously despised test, I think, in the history of humanity than when at the Naval Academy they did the experimental reading glass program, which I was a part of. And they said, well, we know that midshipmen are just studying, you know, this is pre-computers, of course. We had books, you know, books, these things.

It was all came out of books. We were using slide rules with those little fine graduations. And so they said, well, you know, these guys were trying to make sure people that want to fly have good eyes.

And a lot of these guys are going blind over the course of the four years. They're losing their 20/20 and getting disqualified. So we want to figure out if there's a way we can keep their vision sharp.

So they had the ERGP, the experimental reading glass program. And like all good tests, they said, well, we need to control and we need the real deal. So they made up two sets of black government frame glasses.

One set had a lens that was basically reading glasses. It was like a, you know, plus two or some such thing. And the rest of them were like movie glasses that were, it's just transparent.

Well, I mean, you can imagine young men at that time, 18 to 22, 23, you hand them a pair of fake movie glasses and say, now I want you to wear these while you're studying. Well, the scorn with which this was greeted was palpable. You could cut it with a knife.

None of the control group wore their fake glasses. I was given some of the real ones and I wore them faithfully because I had said I would. They said, look, where are these? Because we want to know if this works and, you know, salute three bags full.

So I wore these glasses for about three years and they would come down and test our eyes. Every so often they'd send out a, you know, a paper note, wasn't any email. So there would be a thing that would come on the desk and say, all you guys experimental reading glass program report to, report to the, you know, basement down there and go see a guy and he's going to test your eyes.

Well, they kind of quit doing that and I was down there because I got hit in the eye by a snowball and I said, by the way, you know, I'm not going to be able to wear my experimental reading glasses over this big patch you've got over my eye. And I noticed they haven't asked us down here lately. He said, ah, we dropped that.

It was a waste of time. It wasn't enough guys wearing the glasses and none of the control group or theirs and it's complete waste of time. And it just really set in my mind that if you're going to do an experiment and you're going to have a control, if you're going to use a placebo or a, you know, try to do this and do it well, it takes thought.

There are many experiments that are really not well thought out. And there are many conclusions that are drawn where they, they commit the post hoc fallacy. And, uh, you, most of you know, but the post hoc fallacy, a post hoc ergo proctor hoc.

That means that this result came after, therefore it was caused by, um, I prayed diligently that the sun would come up this morning and you know what? The sun came up. I was, you can thank me that there's daylight right now because I prayed last night sun would come up just because something precedes doesn't mean it causes. So it is important to recognize that this is a demonstration.

This is, we are limited on purpose. God made us lower than the angels. Remember that out of the Psalms? You have made him lower than the angels.

Why? That right away tells you when you limit a thing, it's probably because you are trying to figure something out when you're troubleshooting a computer or a car. You, you've changed one thing and see if that fixes the problem. My dear laptop here, I spent a good portion of yesterday working on it and I was reminded of these steps.

That's why we're here. So when it, when Paul tells us in verse 12, we are not here simply to solve

the material puzzle, to finish the material tasks, the mundane visible challenges. That's not why we're here.

You are not here just to fix a thing. You're not here just to wash a thing. You're not here just to earn a check.

You're not here just to get a piece of paper that says you're qualified. We as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, in Him, chapter 1, chapter 2, chapter 3, bonded to each other by the Holy Spirit, chapter 4, chapter 5, we are here ultimately and finally for larger purposes that are being accomplished in dimensions beyond our own. We are the experiment.

That's why we're not wrestling against blood and flesh, but against these invisible forces of opposition that have a different agenda than God's. God is proving one point, they are trying to prove another. It does God no good to save us and then have us Benedict Arnold over to the enemy and make their point.

Therefore, verse 13, take up the whole armor of God. If it's an invisible conflict, it is not hard to figure out that it's invisible armor. Take up the whole armor of God.

Notice the whole armor. We don't say, well today is sword day. Everybody bring your sword.

No, today is helmet day. You know, \$2 discount if you bring a helmet. Whole armor of God so that you may be able to withstand in the evil day.

Some days are more evil than others, but we are to redeem the time. Why? Because the days are evil. Redeeming the time because the days are evil.

Any given day is the evil day. But we take them one day at a time. So the day we're taking is the evil day.

And having done all to stand. That's the big picture. And it's so often in Hebrew thinking, you give the big picture, then you go back and give the details.

So this is kind of like Genesis 1 before Genesis 2 in the creation of man. He says, God created man in his own image and after his own likeness. And the image of God created him, male and female created he then.

You get that? Then you go into detail about how man was formed and how Eve came into being and so on. You tell them what you're going to tell them and then you tell them in detail what you're telling them. Same thing here.

Take the whole armor of God so that you can withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand. That's the summary. Now we're going to get the details.

Stand therefore having girded your waist with truth. Having girded your waist with truth. Well this

armor, this whole armor picture and withstanding in the spiritual sense, of course isn't new from Paul.

Jesus talked about this. The Old Testament prophets talked about it. Throughout the Old Testament in the wisdom literature you have this idea.

There is intelligent and motivated opposition. One of the effects of your world view is if you think that we're all here in a giant accident then any given circumstance is simply the ball falling through the pachinko machine hitting a particular nail and it doesn't necessarily have a purpose. It doesn't necessarily fit in.

It's just a happenstance. The big bang happened. The big cue stick hit the cue ball and it rolled down and boom went the whatever it was and now all of the balls are bouncing around and either falling into pockets or not.

So anything that happens to you is random. It's happenstance. It's fate, kismet, karma, call it what you will.

There's no intelligence behind it. Well go be warmed and be fed. In reality there is an intelligent and motivated opposition for believers.

Now if you have wounded yourself I am forewarned and forearmed by reading about guys who shoot themselves because they are incautious with their weapons. Guys show up at the emergency room with anything from arrows to bullets to cleaning rods. Guys have shot their cleaning rod into themselves or somebody else.

Whack, whack, whack and you set the primer off because there is a bullet because you incautiously began without checking to see. Well I took out the magazine. What about the one in the chamber? Oops.

So you can shoot yourself in the foot. Believers who have taken themselves out of the battle by self inflicted wounds or friendly fire. They get into a squabble and everybody is over there in the corner arguing about whose fault it was that somebody got shot by friendly fire.

Satan and his very intelligent well organized forces aren't interested in you if you have taken yourself out. If you are wandering around bumping into things you are harmless. You are not an objective.

The targets in the spiritual conflict selected, there is a whole science of target selection. In the artillery there is target selection. In airstrikes there is target selection.

Now that they have these smart missiles that can fly around, you are going to hit somebody with a six million dollar missile. You don't just pick any old thing. Six million bucks or whatever these things cost, I think I am going to select the target carefully.

Is this a six million dollar man I am taking out here? Is this a target worthy of elimination to spend that much money on? Maybe I ought to save this one for when all the leadership of ISIS are in one hut talking to each other. Now I will launch my six million dollar missile. Target selection, it is an intelligent foe.

It is an intelligent opposition. Now what does that mean to you? You are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and I say this with some evasion and mental reservation because I don't want to discourage you, but because you are here, because you are listening to the Word of God, because you care, because you are focused, because you know how to walk the narrow road, because you can see the straight gate and you have aimed yourself toward it, because you are doing what you are supposed to do, you are effective in the spiritual conflict. You are somebody who counts.

Therefore, you are a target. We think well, maybe I ought to rethink this whole I am motivated in my spiritual life thing. If I am going to be targeted by unseen forces of darkness, these guys sound pretty scary.

Maybe I ought to just kind of slip back and let somebody else be point man for a while. I don't necessarily want the unseen forces of darkness making an issue out of me. Oh yes, you do.

Yes, you do. Because you are fully equipped. There is not a reason in the world to be afraid of these guys and they are guys.

They are individuals. My name is fill in the blank here. Gabriel has got a name.

Michael has got a name. These guys have names. They don't say, hey you.

They know each other. There are names for every single one of these fallen, and I use the word fallen more like thrown out, these thrown out angels. They are reject angels.

They are get out of here and don't let the gate of heaven hit you on the way out angels. They chose badly and they are now on the losing side. If you have ever played a video game, I never got beyond the two dimensional like Tetris.

There was years ago, years ago, back in the days of 8086 and 8286 computers. You know the old 64K IBM with a 16 color display. We had Tetris on one of those.

It sat in our house at Poppy Lane. I would play and Patty would play and Patty's brother Tim would play. We got good at it.

All three of us got pretty good at that game. Somebody would play and leave the high score. Tim would come in and somebody beat my high score.

He would play until he defeated it. Once you figure out the elements of that game, it is pretty

simple. Once you figure it out and you kind of get good at it, it is very satisfying because you know you can do this and you'll sit there until you do.

You've got skills. You're not fresh off the block. You've played this game before.

You know how it works. You know the pitfalls to avoid. Don't let those long ones stack up.

Get to the top before you can knock them out. You got to flip them sideways. Give yourself a little room.

You've got the skills. The good thing is when you fail, you reset. Play again.

Why? You hit Y and here we go. You got a whole fresh set. You never actually die.

What would it be like if when you're playing video games, the first time one of these nefarious little ghostly virtual enemies shoots you and the picture goes sideways, your heart stops. Video games would become instantly unpopular. Nobody would play video.

You can die playing that. The ambulances are doing nothing but running around collecting guys from in front of their computers because hey, you didn't see the guy coming around the corner with the bazooka and he died. Why are video games popular? Because you can't die actually.

You die virtually just dozens of times. I've watched some of you guys play. Either you're not very good or you're at one level above where you've learned all the skills because you die constantly.

Well look, not to trivialize the spiritual conflict, but you have got the skills to win and even when you don't, you do not die. This is a worthy conflict because everything is on the line. This is a no kidding conflict, but we have a fail safe.

We've got an inner protection in the person of God, the Holy Spirit, and we cannot be slain by the unseen forces of darkness. All they can do, they largely make us defeat ourselves. They distract our minds.

They plant ideas. They throw opposition in our way and we lose our nerve. We lose our courage.

We lose our focus. We lose the concentration and the dedication to use the things that God has given us to defeat them. We are able to do this and that's why we are so powerful.

Why they oppose us? Because they don't want that happening. They are losing their case. The Lord Jesus Christ has already won the strategic victory.

We're just in mop-up mode. We're practicing against these guys. They are the weakened germs of the inoculation and we're learning how to be strong by fighting this defeated enemy.

They are defeated. So take up the whole armor of God. This idea of conflict is throughout the

Bible.

So that we can withstand James 4.7, Submit therefore to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you. Now when it says resist the devil, this is everything that he represents and perpetrates. This includes his spiritual hosts in the heavenly places.

This is like saying we're resisting Saddam or we're resisting Idi Amin or we're resisting Arafat. Notice all three of those guys despite their opposition are dead. Dead and gone.

The other guy that they had to root out and it took them forever. Who was the terrorist guy for 9-11? Osama Bin Laden is dead, right? Yes, he lasted a while but look at the miserable life he had to live. He's sneaking around living in caves and holes in the ground and I almost wish they hadn't found him so that he could keep on being miserable and slinking around, not being free, not being able to enjoy his wealth, worried at any moment that he's going to get slain.

That enemy is on the run. That enemy is being forcefully prosecuted at least as long as we have a government willing to do so and not willing to try to find diplomatic solutions. Nobody wakes up in the middle of the night sweating because of a diplomatic solution.

They wake up in the middle of the night because of smart missiles. They wake up in the middle of the night because of Rangers and Marines and SEALs armed to the teeth sneaking around, getting through their security, getting at them. That's what they wake up in the night sweating and that's what they ought to do.

There ought to be sneaky peep guys all over finding these guys and hounding them and making them miserable so that they're too busy with self-preservation to think up new ways to damage the United States. So resist the devil and he will flee from you. Resist the forces of the devil and the forces of the devil will flee.

All you've got to do is resist the way you know how to resist. 1 Peter 5, 9, resist him, firm in your faith. Firm in your faith.

Don't let him rattle you. Don't let him throw you off your game. You know how when you're doing an assignment for school or a presentation for work or whatever and when you're working through it in prospect and you say, okay, here's my points, here's my slides, here's my thing I'm going to hold up for an object lesson or whatever and it all goes great in practice.

And in the earliest days when I was first having to stand up and present the Word of God and I had this dazzlingly exciting Bible class in my head and then you stand up and look out at the group, especially if it's a group of strangers and especially if it is a group of somewhat unconvinced strangers. They really may not want to be there and they're not sure you ought to be up there talking to them anyway and not only do you have material to present but you've got to kind of win them over and get them on your side. This is why they say, well, start with a joke, you

know, get them on your side.

Well, if your joke falls flat, you're in for a long presentation. But you have the material, you've worked on it, you know it, you go into a test and you've studied, you've got all of these facts hanging on hooks in your mind and you are ready to go and you walk in there, flip open the book or get the first sheet or pull up your screen or whatever it is you're doing for a test and you stare at the first question and your mind is like the Arctic snow, it's an unbroken vista of nothingness and you say, and seconds go by. Hopefully some survival instinct kicks in, some piece of adrenaline kicks in and your brain restarts but you just, you vapor lock.

Well, if you can induce this in others, if you can be the hostile audience, this is what happens in the artillery, the gunnery department at the artillery school has a rehearsal program before you ever teach a class to students for six months, you teach every single class to a seasoned instructor. He is the one student and you come in and you're going to present your basics of observed fire class to a guy that has taught that class 25 or 30 different times over the years. Does he know how to pick you apart? Is he ready to ask the bad question that throws everybody off? What if a student asks this? He is there to throw you off.

He is there to break your concentration. He's there to deflect you. He's there to test you and make sure that you can get through this class no matter what.

And you fail and you have to reteach the class usually to a different instructor who's got a whole fresh bag of tricks he's going to throw at you. And sometimes guys have had to present their classes two, three, four, five times before they pass it. This guy just couldn't do it.

If you know your stuff and if you stick to what you know, you'll be fine. But you can't let yourself be rattled. You can't lose your focus and your concentration.

You can't vapor lock. You can't clutch. And this is all that the unseen forces of darkness can do.

They can't injure you. They can't make you bleed. They can't take away anything that God has given you.

Did you hear that last one? The unseen forces of darkness cannot take away anything that God has given you. If God gives you something, do you think demons can take it away? Do you think unseen forces of spiritual darkness can take away something God has given? No, they can't. So what do you use against them? Stuff that God has given you because they can't take it away.

They can't knock the shield out of your hand. They can't knock the sword out of your other hand. They can't knock the helmet off your head.

They can't blow you out of your shoes. You know how we lose that stuff? We drop it. We take it off.

We forget we have it. Fiery dark coming, we don't raise the shield. What's the matter with us? You cannot lose if you focus.

You cannot lose if you remember who you are and why you're here. They can't take away the stuff that God has given us. All we have to do is use it.

It is not as difficult as we sometimes think. And it isn't scary at all. This is a defeated enemy.

It's like an inoculation. The thing can't kill you. It can make you kind of floozy, kind of misty, kind of under the weather for a day.

But done right, it's not supposed to kill you. Take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand. Resist the devil and he will flee from you, James 4.7. Resist him firm in your faith knowing the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren in the world.

You're not the lone ranger. You're not the one guy dropped behind the lines on his own. You're part of a team.

You're part of a force, organized force, mutually supporting force. You've got communications. You've got logistics.

You've got supporting fires. You've got others with you, 1 Peter 5.9. So as we think about these individual pieces of armor, remember that this has been the case from the beginning. Jeremiah 17.7, blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and whose trust is the Lord.

For he will be, and remember this is not Psalm 1, this is Jeremiah 17.7 and 8. He will be like a tree planted by the water that extends its roots by a stream and will not fear when the heat comes, but its leaves will be green. It will not be anxious in a year of drought nor cease to yield fruit. It will not be anxious in a year of drought and even in a year of drought it will not cease to yield fruit.

How can you be that tree planted by the water bringing forth his fruit in his season, his leaf not withering? Whatever he does is prosperous, is fruitful, is meaningful, counts. Go to the previous verse. Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and whose trust is the Lord.

That is the key. Even in the tribulation, you think about the Old Testament examples that reflect our New Testament truths, we know that the time of Jacob's trouble is coming, right? Daniel 12.1, at that time, the time of the Antichrist, the time when we're gone and seals and trumpets and bowls and thunders are happening down here. At that time, Michael, Mikael, who is like the Lord, the great prince, the great national angel for Israel, who stands guard over the sons of your people will arise.

And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time. This is Daniel 12.1. Time of distress such as there has never been. But notice he precedes

that.

He doesn't say there's coming a big time of distress and then the angel is going to stand up. He says the angel is going to stand up and then there will be a time of distress because God knows it's coming. It's on God's calendar.

The provision is made before the time of distress starts. At that time, Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people will arise and there will be a time of distress. He's already standing there.

Time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time. And at that time, your people, everyone who is found written in the book, everyone, there is a record book. It's got names in it.

Every single person written in that book will be saved, will be delivered, will be rescued. Didn't miss one, didn't lose one. Time of distress such as there has never been before in the history of the nation of Israel and they're not going to lose a single guy.

It's a spiritual conflict. Michael, the great prince is going to stand up because it's a spiritual conflict. Yes, there's a lot going on on the earth, but still in the tribulation it's a spiritual conflict.

Michael is going to stand up and every single person written in the book will be delivered. So, not in the book of salvation, not in the book of did you ever trust Christ, but in the book of the living, in the book of the fruitful, in the register of the trees that are planted by the river of water, like the old gospel song asks, is your name written there? Is your name written there or not? If it's written there, you cannot lose. You cannot be knocked off your pins.

Full armor of God. This is now not a matter of worrying about whether you're going to survive. This is a matter of deciding how effective you're going to be, how useful, how quickly you can move to the objective, how well you can move with your brethren in the world who are similarly challenged and similarly fighting that conflict.

How well are we going to advance? How well are we going to seize and hold? How well are we going to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand? It is a mistake to get spooked about demon possession and poltergeists and other weird things. It is our mission to stand. It is our mission to stand.

That's why we're talking about these pieces of armor. That's why last time we talked about girding our waist with truth. That's the belt.

You know, you don't walk around, Roman soldiers didn't march down the road with their sword in their hand, did they? Where is their sword? It is in their belt. They pull it out when it is time to go into conflict. Most of an army's time is not spent in conflict.

I don't know if anybody ever thought about this, but most of your time you're either in training, you're in barracks, you're doing exercises, or you're moving from place to place. The time of actual battle for any army in the history of the world is a fraction of its time of existence. Your career as a soldier, your career as a marine, your career as anybody is a fraction when you're actually engaged in the enemy.

All of the rest of the time is preparation and maintenance and looking to that time, doing all the things that are necessary so that when that evil day comes, you are able to stand. And that's what we do. We're not always challenged.

We're not in the thick of it all the time. And in that time between, what do we do? We keep ourselves sharp. We tend to our weapons.

We tend to our armor. We make sure it's bright and not rusty. We make sure that leather straps are flexible and functional and they're not broken and unavailable.

We make sure that the things God has given us are in good trim, are in good repair, right? So that when the evil day comes, we will stand. We gird our waist with truth. They actually hung their shields on these belts.

It gets tedious. If you've ever boxed, you know keeping your arms out at a right angle doesn't last too long. If you've ever malfunctioned and had to put your M1 rifle out, I won't say that I know this by experience, and I won't say that I don't know this by experience, but if you have to hold your M1 rifle out like this, the spirit may be willing, but the flesh will fail in not too many minutes.

Same thing with this big, heavy Roman shield. So there was a hook on it, and you would hook the bottom part of it on your belt, and it helped support the weight of the shield. And you could just angle the thing.

You could unhook it and use it where it needs to. But when you're just having to march along, it hooked on your belt. The sword is carried in your belt.

So there's no point in having a shield and having a sword if you haven't put your belt on first. All of those things depend on the truth. You can't have the shield of faith if you don't know the truth.

You can't wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, if you don't know the truth. That's why both of them depend upon the belt. Put the belt on first.

That's Bible class. Now, we don't come to Bible class and get the truth and say, on to the conflict, here I am with my belt on. You can't do that.

You've got to have the rest of the stuff. And Bible class is not enough. Church is not enough.

Looking at the Bible and studying the Scriptures is not enough. That's just the belt. There's a

whole lot more to go.

And so that's why we looked at, last time, the breastplate of righteousness. Now, we haven't said everything there is to say about this breastplate, so we're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to talk a little bit about this.

But let me just ask you a question. You can be puzzling when you're between tasks here during the break. Why do we have a shield and a breastplate? There's two of them, right? Don't they kind of do the same thing? Something's aiming for your heart.

Shield stops it. Breastplate stops it. Why both? If you have a shield, why do you need a breastplate? If you have a breastplate, why do you need a shield? Well, both of them are mentioned here, and so we'll see that when we return.