

Ephesians 1

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[0 : 0 0] You may be seated. I'm just going to put this up here so I have somewhere to place my book. So we're going to be talking today, I want to talk to you, the kids, but for all of us, I want to talk to you today about the armor of God.

Who's heard about the armor of God? Anybody? Do you know what it is? Do you know where it's found? You've heard of it. Good. It's like a helmet, breastplate, a sword, right?

There's all these things that go on. You know, as a kid, one of the questions that I had growing up, even into the days when I went off to university, the big question hearing about as a kid, because this is the thing that pops up as a kid quite often, was how on earth do you put on the armor of God, right?

You hear about it, you even deconstruct it a bit and look at all the different pieces, but on the end of it, I never understood how to put on the armor of God, or if you even could.

And honestly, I went into a Bible study one night, and a guy was leading it, and this is when I was in university, so I wasn't even a kid anymore. Went into a Bible study, and the guy was teaching about the armor of God, and by the end of it, he had us standing up and closing our eyes, and imagine putting on the helmet, putting on the breastplate, buckling everything up, and I wasn't very good at buckling things anyway, but putting on everything and drawing the sword, and then he had us actually fighting, fighting whatever the bad guys were that we were supposed to be fighting.

[1 : 3 2] And I left there thinking, wow, so that's what it is. The armor of God is some imaginary thing to fight some imaginary enemy, and it doesn't make any real difference in my life today.

And today, what I want to ask is that question again. How do you put on the armor of God? What good is it in life? But I want to ask that by looking back, not at where the armor of God is found in the very end of a letter that a guy named Paul wrote, but I want to get there by looking back at the beginning of the letter, and sort of trekking through and trying to understand, if we're going to put on the armor of God, how do we do that?

And if you're going to look at the armor of God, where you need to start is the very beginning. So if you have a Bible, we're going to read from the very beginning of Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

Paul's letter to the Ephesians. And I'm going to start reading from chapter 1. It's on page 1173 if you have a red Bible.

So this is Paul's letter to the Ephesians. It says this in chapter 1, verse 1. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, to the saints who are in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus.

[3 : 0 1] And your Bible actually might have a little number there, which connects to a footnote at the bottom of the page, that says actually that word, in Ephesus, wasn't in many of the earliest manuscripts.

And there's a reason for that. The best we can tell, Ephesians, this letter, wasn't actually written just to the church in Ephesus, in that city called Ephesus.

It's actually a letter that would have been spread around, probably over the entire Roman Empire, concentrated maybe particularly in the area in which Ephesus was one of the many cities in that part of the world.

And the idea is that Paul wrote this, not to a specific context, where we need to go back and figure out the specific context of that specific church, and then try to understand what it has to do with us today.

He's actually writing this for Christians everywhere, like you, like me. So it's just as applicable today as it was back then.

[4 : 04] So Paul writes, to the saints who are in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus, he says, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. And listen to what he says. He says, praise be to God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

praise God who has in Christ, in Jesus, when he died upon the cross, for me, for me, right? And for you, for me, right?

Praise God who in Jesus has made available to us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms. everything, everything in heaven that you would want, he's made available.

You may say, you know, I don't want anything in heaven. I'm not really interested in that. Really, because many of us get so interested in the toys and the treasures and the treats in this world, oftentimes we're not really concerned with heaven.

Do you know what this is? It's a toy airplane. Do you know whose it was? Take a guess. It was Emmett's. This was Emmett's toy airplane.

[5 : 17] We had a lot of fun with this airplane. But I stepped on it. And I broke it. And I did that with many of his toys. By accident. Emmett got to the point just before he left to go back to the States where, you remember the red noses?

You know, I would never buy a red nose. And not because I don't want to do good. Okay, I, I, that's probably not a good thing to me. I would never buy a red nose. Why? Because I know things like that aren't going to last.

It's probably, it's for a good cause. I probably should buy a red nose. But I never would buy a red nose. But eventually, we were down in London and I was getting Emmett so excited. We were going to be down in London. We were going to be visiting London right on Red Nose Day.

On Red Nose Day. Emmett, and I said, you know Emmett, when we get to London, it's going to be Red Nose Day and part of what we'll do is we'll get you a red nose. We'll get you and Aletheia, maybe we'll even get mom and mine.

We'll get red noses. We'll go around the city. We'll take pictures with our red noses. Nobody will understand back home what we're doing. But it'll be fun. I didn't want to do it though because things like that don't last.

[6 : 23] So we went down to London and, and the thing was, is we went into every Sainsbury's we could find. And all the red noses were sold out. We were walking all day.

Nobody had a red nose on. But they were all sold out. We didn't know where they went. I didn't really want to buy one anyway. But, you know, I would have. But they were all sold out.

Eventually we found a Sainsbury's though. It wasn't in London. It was in Oxford. It had red noses. We bought a red nose. And by that night, guess what happened? It broke.

It ripped right down the seam. So it wouldn't even stick on your nose. And Emmett got so upset. He was so upset. He was so upset that at the end of the night he said this, Dad, I want you to make me a promise.

I want you to promise me that you will never buy me another toy again. I know. I thought it was weird too.

[7 : 22] I said, Emmett, come on. You have to enjoy things while you have them. And then when they break, you get rid of them. I kept the plane. But he couldn't do it. He said, Dad, I want you to make me a promise.

I said, Emmett, I'm going to buy you a red nose tomorrow. We'll find another red nose. And we actually found another red nose in Sainsbury's. And I bought it. And he said, Dad, you promised. You can have that red nose. I'll use it.

But it's yours. Because I don't want it. You know what the trouble was? We had long conversations about this. Is Emmett was getting so caught up in the toys and the treasure and the treats of life that he thought that was the most important thing.

And you know what the problem is? Things like that break. They never satisfy. You can never hold on to them. And if that's everything to you, you're going to live your life and you're going to be miserable.

You're going to, at the end of the day, say, I don't care what it is. I don't want anymore. Because you're making the toy or the treat or the treasure something that it wasn't meant to be.

[8 : 38] You're making it everything. And you're actually stripping up of it the enjoyment that you could have had of it. What Paul is saying is things like this, they break.

Paul is saying, though, every blessing that will not break, that will never rust, it will never fade, that's secured in heaven. Then, Jesus came down to bring heaven and earth together.

And anything that you would ever want that's up there, you get now that you're down here. And he goes on to say, you can actually read in verse 4 everything that happened in Jesus.

He says this in verse 4. He says, He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight, in love. God predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ.

We were made children through Him with a Father who loves us and will never fail us and according with the pleasure of His good will to the praise of His glorious grace which He freely gave us in the one who He loves.

[9 : 48] In Him, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, of all that we know we've done wrong in hurting others and hurting ourselves and mostly and hurting God in accordance with the riches of God's grace He's lavished upon us and brought us back.

And then He gets down to verse 13 and He says this, And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, literally it means having put your faith in, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit who is a deposit, guaranteeing your inheritance until the day of redemption comes.

And you know, a lot of people in life try to figure out exactly what Paul's saying. They try to figure out, well, something happens here and then this happens and Paul must be saying X, Y, and Z.

And I don't think it's really like that. I think Paul, actually, in this passage is maybe the hardest passage in all of Paul's writings to figure out exactly what he's saying because I don't think he's trying to get us to understand exactly how things work, X, Y, and Z.

He's more like piling things up and wanting us to be lifted up, wrapped up in worship. And oftentimes we're at the sake of not getting wrapped up in worship trying to figure out X, Y, and Z.

[11 : 10] You know, have you ever seen Mary Poppins? Anybody seen Mary Poppins? What's Mary Poppins about? You remember? Who's Mary Poppins? She's a nanny.

Does anybody have a nanny here? I never had a nanny either. Mary Poppins, though, if I had a nanny, she'd be the one, right? She'd be the one I want. Well, there's a point in Mary Poppins where she gets in a situation which I think is very similar to what Paul is doing or at least what we do with Paul.

She gets in, she comes with her friend Bert who is a guy that you find on the streets a lot or sweeping a chimney of some sort. She comes with her friend Bert and the two kids, Michael and Jane, and she comes into her Uncle Albert's home.

Does anybody remember Uncle Albert? If you don't know Mary Poppins, you're probably not going to remember Uncle Albert. He's a great guy, though. And they find Uncle Albert floating on the ceiling. He's floating.

He's levitating. He's all up there. He's way up on the ceiling. And you know how he got there? By laughing. Somehow by laughing, he ended up levitating into the ceiling.

[12 : 22] And you know what Mary Poppins starts to do? She takes it as her job to solve Uncle Albert's problem. You're not supposed to be up there.

You're supposed to be down here. We're here for tea. We can't have tea on the ceiling, right? And after a while, though, of failing to solve Uncle Albert, she actually finds herself and Bert first, and even before him, Michael and Jane, joining Uncle Albert.

And they start laughing and they start floating and they have tea on the ceiling that day. And we come to Paul a lot when he's saying, look at all of what God's done in Jesus.

Look at all of what he's made available. We come trying to solve Paul and tell him exactly what he meant. When he's really looking for us to be wrapped up in worship.

Because that's where you have to start. Wrapped up in worship. Because the gospel, the good news about what Jesus did, what God did through Jesus, is all about joining Paul in worship of God.

[13 : 35] And when he moves on, you should have echoing in your head all these things that are going to come back later. faith, salvation, truth.

Because he's going to come back to these at the end of the book. He moves on, though, after talking about all that God has made available in Jesus, and he starts talking about what that means for life.

What that means for life. And he uses a very particular picture, which is very apt. And I think it's funny, because in your red Bibles, this picture has actually been changed, because maybe somebody thought that you couldn't understand it.

But I think even you can understand this picture of what you're supposed to do seeing how Jesus has done so much. And the picture comes in chapter 4, verse 1.

And I think if you read this, after three chapters of explaining all that Jesus has done, and all that we're supposed to do in being wrapped up, I think if you read in chapter 4, verse 1, you're going to see that it says something like this.

[14 : 43] Therefore, or now therefore, or then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the gospel. Does it say something like that?

It says something like that. You know what the original words meant? What Paul wrote? To live a life worthy of the gospel. He actually didn't say that. He actually said, what I urge you to do is walk worthy of the gospel.

Walk. To walk. Right? To walk. Why? Because his picture of life is all about walking. And he actually is going to pick this up later in the book. And he actually is picking up something he's already said back in chapter 2 when he explained what the gospel really was.

You know what he says in chapter 2? Listen to this. He says, for you were once dead in your trespasses. You were dead. It was like you were dead.

You weren't even alive. And you were walking around in the sin of this world. You were dead but walking around. Does anybody know what a zombie is?

[15 : 48] Emmett doesn't like zombies. Aletheia really doesn't like zombies. I don't really like zombies. What's a zombie? It's like a monster. It's like something that's supposed to be dead but is walking around.

It's really scary. Because if it was just dead and lying there it would be less scary. But it's actually walking around. And Paul actually says you were zombies. You were walking around dead.

Couldn't do anything. Just following after sin. And following after what he's saying is all you were doing your whole life was going after the treats and the treasures and the toys of this world.

Because that's what sin is. It's just going after the things that we think please us most. He says you were his zombies. He says but God in Christ has made you alive.

And you get to the end of that passage in verses 8 to 10 and it says for by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is the gift of God. It's not by your works.

[16 : 51] You were zombies. You couldn't do anything to save yourself. God did it. And he's created you anew to walk in the good works he's prepared for you in advance to do.

To walk in the good works. And then he's going to say in chapter 4 so walk worthy. So walk like you care about the gospel. Walk like you understand what you've been saved from and saved for.

And he's going to elaborate on that later and say walk in light walk in wisdom. And there's actually a great songwriter who wrote a song about this and hoping not to embarrass her try to sing this song for you.

Some of you might have heard this. It's called Walking. It says something like this. Everybody's walking walking Everybody's headed somewhere Have you heard that?

What's the next part? The question's not whether you are walking It's how are you walking and to where Right?

[18 : 01] Have you heard that song? It's how are you walking and to where Everybody's walking somewhere. You might be walking like a zombie. You might be alive because Jesus has given you everything you ever wanted that's in heaven brought it down for you but everybody's walking and the question at the end of the day is not whether you're walking It's how are you walking and to where Where are you headed?

Are you headed like you once were just following Satan? That's what Paul says in chapter 2 Just following the prince of the air the prince the one who's ruling in this world in some sense and you're just following him just following after everything you always thought you wanted the toys and the treasures and the treats or have you seen something better and are you walking towards not just the gifts but the giver Jesus He spends the next bit of Ephesians talking about what it looks like to walk to walk to walk in wisdom to walk in light but he gets to chapter 6 and he says you know we're not just walking in this life we're actually marching because we're actually caught up in a battle that's much bigger than any of us ever expected and if you're going to march he says you first have to be able to stand and so this is what he says in chapter 6 he says this in chapter 6 verse 10 he says finally be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power be strong in the one who chose us and predestined us according to the purpose of his will who blessed us in the one whom he loved who made known to us the mystery of his will according to his purpose right who works all things according to the counsel of what he wants that we would have eyes and open to see to see what's been done in Jesus he says be strong and you can't do it on your own but God can but the problem is you don't really want to rely on someone else it's very difficult to rely on somebody else it's a little bit like has anybody seen the movie

The Incredibles anybody seen that yeah the family who's a family of superheroes it's a little bit like that it's a movie about a family of superheroes but at the beginning there's a boy who wants to be a superhero do you remember that do you remember the boy he doesn't have any superpowers but he wants to be one of the superheroes so what does he do he sort of rigs himself up with all these gadgets right and he goes in and says I'm going to be your sidekick Mr. Incredible right I'm going to be your sidekick come in and fight crime with you what's the problem he doesn't have any superpowers he's tried to make them all up but actually he's just getting himself in more trouble a lot of times we act like that in life right okay we see God and maybe Jesus is even cool at some point and he's done a lot but we're not we're not settled we don't want to just put ourselves in the hands of Jesus we want to be the superhero too but what we end up doing often times is getting ourselves into more trouble than we began in right so Paul says if you're going to be strong if you're going to be able to stand if you're going to be able to stand so that you can and head towards a home that's not of this world that's even better than anything you've experienced here you have to be strong not in yourself but in the Lord in Jesus and all that he's done listen to verse 11 he goes on he says put on then the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the gospel is all about walking but if you want to walk you have to be able to stand put on the armor of God that's how you stand he says in verse 12 for our struggle right the reason why you need

God's armor is because our struggle is against something more it's not against flesh and blood we don't wrestle against others who are like us who were following the power of the prince of the air Satan himself we're not struggling against other people who are following Satan or struggling against others who are trying not to follow him we're struggling against Satan himself things that are much scarier than zombies real our struggle is against the powers of this world that are against God therefore put on the full armor of God he says in verse 13 so that when the day of evil comes when you you're attacked and feeling like you want to give up and maybe even turn back that you may be able to stand your ground and after you have done everything to stand to stand to stand and you can't do it any other way God raised Jesus from the dead to put him in authority over all of these things if you're not with

Jesus you don't get any of that and he goes on in verse 14 to say this stand firm strengthened armed with the belt of truth buckled around your waist this belt would have been worn by Roman soldiers right around their waist every other piece of the armor would attach to the belt the belt held everything secure what it's truth and not just like telling the truth but it's God's truth God's story the story of God's faithfulness you know Emmett's name you know we named him after Emmett's not a name you hear every day and the reason is is because it's not a proper name it's actually what's called an adjective it's a it describes something and Emmett is the word in the Bible in a few languages back Emmett is the word in the Bible that describes God's faithfulness it's the word actually that we get the word amen from true truth

[24 : 52] God's faithfulness and this is what the belt is made of not don't tell a lie or tell a lie yes that of course but so much more you have to put on the belt of God's story know the story of God that's what secures you not your own truth it's God's truth it's God's faithfulness he says put on the breastplate of righteousness that's the part that protects all the important things that are underneath your chest right your heart is right here and your lungs are right here and if those things get attacked you die you don't want to die right so put on the breastplate that protects them what's the breastplate it's righteousness it's a righteousness that's one for you that's not even yours it's God's righteousness one for you by Jesus he's the one that does everything right it's his righteousness put that on because that's what protects your vitals that's what protects your heart and your lungs and everything important in here it's a righteousness that you cannot be pierced by just put on the righteousness the breastplate of righteousness in addition to all this with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace your shoes actually become the gospel the gospel of peace so that even when even when Satan is trying to wage war in this world you get to go with the gospel on your feet a gospel of peace to say the war has already been won it's done he says more than this take up the shield of faith and

Roman soldiers would have two different kinds of shields there was a little shield like this that big circular sort of like Captain America's right you go around you can knock somebody in the face with it you can battle them right like that that's not this shield the shield he's talking about the word for is a shield it was about this big from this to the ground and you would hide behind it so that nobody could get you that's what faith does faith shields you and it says it shields you not just from anything but from our worst enemy the one who wants us to die the one who doesn't want you to live ever not now not for any time Satan himself faith shields you faith is trusting in God it's a faith you may have known once but may have forgotten but it's a faith you're supposed to have always that it's you don't forget that God's the one right you couldn't go up to heaven and get all the spiritual blessing everything that you need everything you ever wanted and bring them back down for yourself you needed someone else to do that

Jesus had to come down and faith is what shields you faith in Jesus if you believe that that's what protects you in battle take up the shield of salvation thing that's going to protect your head the idea that you've been saved by God and the sword of the spirit which is the word of truth the same word that Paul said at the beginning is what brought us into life in the first place you see when Paul's telling us about the armor of God the question of how to put it on is all about returning to the beginning of when we first knew Jesus and the reason I'm telling you this today is I may never talk to you again and if there was anything that I would hope would reverberate out if you remember anything that I've ever said or that's ever been said from up here is you cannot solve your life you cannot fight for yourself and often times we don't look like we are in a battle we barely look like we've picked up the

Xbox controller and are fighting like soldiers on the TV screen and yet the reality is there is a battle being waged around us and you've entered in that whether you know it or not because you start out as good as a zombie now no control over your life going after things that do not last and Paul saying what you once knew what you once knew coming in to this faith putting your trust in something bigger than yourself in someone bigger than yourself who can do what you can't some of us forget that far too easily Paul wrote another book it was called Romans the letter to the Romans it's highly regarded as his greatest treatise ever penned his greatest and maybe the greatest theological statement ever penned it's all about how you get into the gospel the good news about

Jesus how you get in Ephesians was probably written after Romans and I think it's all about how you get back because we forget too much we forget too much we think we believe once in Jesus and we're set oftentimes we go back to the treats and the treasures and the toys we get in or we think that if we keep on following and somehow walk worthy Jesus is going to give us again the treats and the treasures and the toys and what Paul's saying is you weren't just given hope you weren't just given good news Jesus just didn't come down to sort of wipe the slate clean so you could start scribbling all over it again he came down so you could live in it because if you don't live in it you're going to get taken out by the enemy you have to find your way back the belt of truth the breastplate of righteousness the helmet of salvation the shield of faith taking up a sword that many of us don't know how to wield because we're never in it in the first place find your way back to

[32 : 06] Jesus not to what often times we make more important than him we're going to sing again from psalm 18 to close our