

Forks of Elkhorn Baptist Church  
Sermon Transcript: August 4, 2019 "Putting on the Armor" Week 1

Thank you, Bill and choir for leading, and thank you for being here today and allowing the spirit of God to be in this place. I usually start with a little joke or humor to get you ready to listen to more important things, to break the ice, to calm my nerves, to help you be ready to listen. I'm not going to give you a joke today. I'm going to tell you a funny story.

I had the privilege this last Friday to conduct a funeral of one of our members, Johnny Shumate, 88 years old. Johnny, when he was coming to church here, would sit back to my left, it'd be your right, on the back row along with some other gentlemen. One Sunday when I got up to preach, I shared my usual Sunday morning joke. And when I looked back, Johnny along with these three other guys held up threes like at a UK game and they had the little three. They rated my joke a three.

I got tickled. I couldn't hardly go on after watching them hold up their threes. So, we did not pass out threes when you came in today since there's no joke. But I shared that story at his funeral on Friday, and I just thought about how out of character for these guys that were normally pretty quiet in the back, and then they were holding up their threes.

Hard to believe that summer vacation is coming to a close and that school is on the horizon, already has begun for our city schools. I know that as vacations come to a close, we start thinking about the new school year and what's up ahead.

My wife and I were praying about God's direction for this church and about messages that would inspire our members and equip our members and motivate non-believers and encourage all of us to live our lives more for the Lord Jesus Christ. God led me to this passage to begin a series of sermons on the armor of God. The fact is that the whole universe is in conflict, and there is a war raging right now between good and evil, the Lord and the Devil, and we are right in the midst of spiritual warfare.

In our scripture passage today, we see Paul writing the church of Ephesus, and many believe this was a circular letter, not only to the church of Ephesus but with several churches, to give God's high goals for the church and how to accomplish those goals. But he also emphasized that our relationship with Jesus Christ is not only for our personal benefit, but our relationship with Christ should be to bring glory and honor and praise to God in the way that we live our lives.

So, as God was leading a message or a series of sermons, as we will break down in the next few weeks, the armor of God, and how we all need to be equipped. We all need to put on the full armor of God, because we are living in evil times, and we must be prepared for whatever lies ahead.

When Paul wrote this letter, he's believed to have been in prison in Rome, in prison because of his faith. No doubt saw those Roman centurions or guards maybe with their armor or their garb on, and maybe God was ... Not maybe. God was certainly inspiring Paul as he witnessed these guards outside of his prison, and then message for us to encourage us, and then these particular verses to show us that we have victory over the evil one. In this great spiritual conflict that we're in, when we know Christ, we have victory through Jesus Christ. And today may we be prepared.

May we be prepared and equipped as we go to school, as we go to work. Wherever we go, I pray that we would be ever-mindful that we need to have on the full armor of God, because the Devil is going to be lurking to attack you and me. So, how can we be prepared as we start the school year? How can we be prepared as we go back to work? How can we be prepared as we go through our daily lives? First, we

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must be strong in the Lord. We must be strong in the Lord. In verse 10, Paul wrote, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power."

Well, what does it mean to be strong in the Lord? It implies that our human effort is inadequate but that God's strength and power is invincible. Our strength is inadequate, but God's power and strength is invincible. And when we are in Christ, listen to this, we are protected by the only person that the Devil has never defeated. Did you hear that? When we are in Christ, we're protected by the only person that Satan has never defeated, which is Jesus Christ.

I pray today that we would be in the Lord. Let me ask you, are you in the Lord? Are you in the world? If you're in the Lord, we talked about you're going to be living differently than the rest of the world. If you're in the world, you're going to fit right in. You're going to blend right in. Students, as you go back to school, I pray that you would not be ashamed to be in the Lord, that people will see something different about you, the way you talk, the way you walk, the way you live, the way you treat people, the way you respect people, the way you conduct yourself, that people would see that you are in Christ, not in the world living like everyone else.

Paul says, "Be strong in the Lord and his mighty power." Why do we need to be strong in the Lord? "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever would believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life." We should be in the Lord, because he gave us his only son to save us. And he doesn't ask for us to die for him today; he asks for us to live for him, to follow after him.

Do you remember that Jesus, after he resurrected from the tomb, before he ascended back into Heaven ... The first part of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18. "Then Jesus said to them, 'All authority in Heaven and on Earth has been given to me.'" He has all authority and all power for you and for me, and all we have to do is tap into that power.

Have you ever thought about, when Paul said in that verse we quote many times, Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things, everything, through Christ who gives me strength." Romans 8:37. "We are more than conquerors through him who loved us." You understand when we are in Christ, we can do all things through him, and we can have strength?

I think about when Isaiah wrote to a distressed people, and he stressed the strength that God would give those people to deliver them from their judgment and deliver them from their pain. That great passage Isaiah 40:31. "But those who hope in the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall soar on wings like eagles, run and not grow weary. They shall walk and not be faint." We put our hope, our trust in the Lord.

I pray today that you too would be in the Lord and not rely on your own strength. But ultimately, Paul's talking about that resurrection power. When Jesus was raised from the dead, it displayed the divine, awesome power of an almighty God, and he's emphasizing, reminding his readers, that that same resurrection power is available to you and me. And yet, many times, we live in defeat. We walk around dejected. We walk around down. We walk around defeated. Look, if you are in Christ, we have that supernatural power living inside of us to do things we never thought we could do on our own.

Some of you are here today, and you need his power. You're looking at your life right now, and I'd be willing to say one or more of you are battling some kind of addiction today. You think, "There's no way I

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can overcome this addiction." I want to tell you you can't overcome it on your own strength, but you can through the power of almighty God. You can overcome your addiction. Believe that. If you are in Christ, God will give you the supernatural power. Sure, he uses doctors. He uses counselors. He uses medication. But, look, all things are possible for those who believe, and if you believe today, God can give you the power to overcome your addiction.

Some of you are here today, and you're depressed. I'd be willing ... Several of you are battling depression, and you've walked around in a fog for quite some time, and nothing seems to stir you. Nothing spikes your emotions. You're just a blank stare most of the time. Well, I want you to know today, through God's power, he can deliver you from your depression. That's a promise. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him. He will make your path straight."

Some of you all are here today, and your marriage is on the rocks. You and your spouse have talked about splitting up. I want you to know today, through God's power, he can heal your marriage. He can reconcile differences. And maybe you can be stronger than you've ever been beautiful in your marriage, but you've got to give it to him and trust in him.

Some of you are here today, and you're going through some private temptation that no one else knows about. But God knows. You don't think you're going to get through it. God will give you the power to resist that temptation if you would give it to him and trust in him. Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. That's how we prepare ourselves for each day. "I'm waking up today, and I'm going to be strong no matter what comes my way, no matter how people treat me, no matter what hand is dealt to me, no matter what people say about me. I'm going to be strong in the Lord every moment of every day."

But not only are we prepared by being strong in the Lord, but we stand against the Devil. In verse 11, "Put on the full ..." Not a part, not a piece or two. "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the Devil's schemes." Did you hear that? "Put on the full armor of God ..." And we're going to be breaking that down piece by piece starting next Sunday. "Put on the full armor of God so that we can take our stand against the Devil's schemes." That means we're standing. We're ready for spiritual warfare. I'm not running. I'm not hiding. I'm not putting my hands up. We're facing him in all of his ugliness. We're looking him right in the eye, and we're taking our stand against the Devil.

He lets us know who the enemy is, doesn't he? The enemy is the Devil. In Revelation 12:6, we find out he is that ancient serpent who has been called the Devil or Satan, who tries to destroy the entire world. And yet, we found out in John 8:44 he has been a murderer from the beginning. He is a liar and the father of lies. Peter came right out in said it in 1 Peter 5:8, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy, the Devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."

Look, today, your enemy is not your spouse. Your enemy is not your coworker. Your enemy is not your parent or your child. Your enemy is not your brother or your sister or your fellow Christian. Because if you would read on in verse 12, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." The enemy is not flesh and blood. This is spiritual warfare going on. So many times we like to think that the enemy is a particular person, a boss, employee, a family member, or whomever. That real enemy is the Devil.

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Look, back in Bible times, the spirit world was more prevalent. There was more of an awareness of demons and evil spirits. I want to tell you they're as prevalent today as they were in scriptures. I can tell you that. Evil is still roaming the world, and Paul said in 2 Corinthians 10:3-4. He says, "For though we live in the world, even though we're in the world, we do not wage war as the world does." Do you understand that? Even though we live ...

He said, "For the weapons that we use are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, we have been given divine power to demolish strongholds." Did you hear that? "We've been given divine power to demolish strongholds." Well, how do we demolish strongholds? Through faith in Christ, obedience to his word, by claiming the work of Jesus Christ that he gave on the cross, and by believing that he rose from the grave and he gives us power through the Holy Spirit to overcome these strongholds.

Yet Paul went on to say in 2 Corinthians 11:3, "But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by this cunning serpent ..." Some of your minds may somehow be led astray from the sincere and pure devotion to Christ Jesus, that the devil wants to mess with your mind. And he gets in your head, and that's where most of our sin is born, right here. We think it, and then the next thing you know, we're acting it out.

Some of you all are here today, and there's spiritual warfare going on, and it's attacking your mind. The Devil is tempting you, putting lustful thoughts, angry thoughts, jealous thoughts, envious thoughts, and he's ... Who was it? Joyce Meyer wrote a book years ago, *Battlefields of the Mind*. And so many times, the Devil says, "You're not good enough." "You're not smart enough." "You're not thin enough." "You're not educated enough." "You'll never be good enough." And that's a Devil's lie. He's a deceiver, and he's going to mess with your mind. He's going to cause you to do things that you normally wouldn't do, because he's messing with you.

Years ago, Beth Moore wrote a Bible study called *Breaking Free*. In that study, there was a testimonial by a woman that shared that ever since she was a child, she had believed that the Devil had been attacking her mind, so much so that as a child and as an adult, she had pure misery because of these thoughts the Devil was putting in her mind. She said, finally, with God's help, she began to tear away those high places, those strongholds, and she began to fill her life with the truth. Now, the truth has set her free. I want you to know today that that same truth is available to you and me, and he will set us free if we would call on him.

I love what Paul said in Philippians 4:8. "And finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable ... If anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things." Everything else? You get out of there. We must have pure and holy thoughts. And maybe you're here today, and there's some stronghold in your life, and the Devil's placing some thoughts in your mind.

I want you to know today God can deliver you, and God can give you a steadfast mind. That's in Isaiah 26:3 when he talks about, "You will have perfect peace, him whose mind is steadfast because he trusts in you." Isn't that beautiful? Not that you're going to have a perfect mind ... I mean, I wouldn't mind to have a perfect mind. But to have perfect peace, who's steadfast, that's faithful, that person who keeps on keeping on. We steadfastly think on the word of God and his power. Then, we trust in him.

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Today if the Devil's been messing with your mind, hey, say right now, in the strong name of Jesus, "My mind belongs to the Lord. My mind belongs to the Lord right now. The Devil's not going to have any more victory messing with my mind." The doubt, the fear, the anxiety that I'm not good enough or I don't look good enough. None of that stuff. Today you let God take over your thought control.

But then, lastly, we are to suit up today, suit up today. I love that when I played ball on a team and the coach would pass out the uniforms. Couldn't wait to get on my ... You know, the shorts may be too big, or my shirt was sagging, but I couldn't wait to get on my uniform. I thought that was ... I was ready to ... "Put me in coach. I'm ready to play. Suit me up. I'm ready to get in the game."

Well, in verse 13, it says, "Therefore ..." Once again, he reiterates, "Put on the full armor of God so that when ..." Not if. "When the day of evil comes, you may be able to take your stand. And after you have done everything ..." He said it again, "To stand." After we've done everything, we're going to stand with the full armor of God on. Isn't that a beautiful picture?

The Devil's going come at you every way this school year, students. People at work, he's going to come full force at you in every kind of way, and you've got to be ready to take your stand against him. That's why Paul reminds us in Ephesians 5:15 and 16, "Be very careful then how you live, not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity because the days are evil." Because the days are evil. That's why we suit up today. Every day we put on the full armor of God.

Now, I want to clarify something. Earlier I said that, when we are in Christ, we are protected by the only person that Satan has never defeated. When I say we're protected, now, that doesn't mean we're exempt from physical pain or hardship. I'm talking about our eternity is protected, because, really, the battle's already been won. The Lord has already brought the victory. That's why we're to live with victory. That's why we're to live full of the spirit because the battle's already been won. We're not going, "Who's going to win this?" I've read the end of the book; I know who gets the victory. We know we are more than conquerors through Christ.

I shared my heart was broken as I was watching the news last night, and I saw this horrific picture of El Paso where people are probably buying back-to-school supplies and clothes and all these things, when this crazed shooter comes in filled with evil and takes so many innocent lives and injured so many others. I shared that story and then, as people were leaving after the service, they said, "Todd, did you not hear the news this morning?" I said, "What are you talking about?" "The shooting in Dayton, Ohio." Nine more people were killed in a mass shooting and others injured. It's crazy. Last week in California ...

I mean, there's so many senseless acts of violence. You know what it is? It's the Devil working in this world in which we live. Praise God that we don't have to stay here forever. We have a place called Heaven that awaits those of us who know him as Lord and savior. But if we're going to be here, then we need to suit up with the armor of God. Not if, but when the day of evil comes we'll take our stand. And when we've done everything, we're going to keep on standing. We're not giving him any glory or victory because we win through Jesus Christ.

I want every person in here today to know for sure that if this were to be our last day on this earth, every one of us, that we'll all be in Heaven one day. I don't want there to be any doubt or, "I think I maybe made a decision that I was young. I'm not sure." I want you to know that you know Christ.

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Students, I don't want you to start back to school without the assurance that you are in Christ, and you're going to walk tall down the halls being a witness for Jesus. You're not going to start talking and walking and acting and doing what everybody else does. They'll say, "There's something different about that young man." "There's something different about that young woman." "I've got to find out what it is." I'm in Christ.

I want us to know today that we would have the hope and promise of eternal life if this were to be the end, the last day. If you're a Christian and you've drifted away and you've gotten complacent and you've gotten busy, which happens, I want you to know you can come back to him today and recommit your life to start living for the one who died for you and for me.

Maybe you've been looking for a church home. I say it all the time: we're a field hospital for the sin, sick, and hurting, not a clock for the righteous. We're all sinners saved by God's grace. But because of his love for me, I sure want to repent from those things that I know are hurtful to him or my family. I want to live for him. Today you can make a decision. Don't worry about what anyone else thinks. What's most important is what does God think. Aren't you ready to suit up? Aren't you ready to get in the game? You can do that, even now, as we pray together.

Father, I pray right now in the stillness of this moment that if there are in young people or any adults or anyone, Lord, in this place ... They're not sure if they've ever given their heart and life to you, that this would be the day that they might accept your great love and forgiveness and mercy and grace. And they might come to know you, God, in a real way even now. May they pray a prayer much like this one to begin this journey: "Dear God, I confess that I'm a sinner. Lord Jesus, please forgive me of all of my sins. I ask you to come into my heart. Thank you, God, for saving me. I love you, Jesus."

Lord, if they could pray a prayer like that or one similar where they're inviting you in and asking for forgiveness, bless them God on this journey. Lord, maybe they're Christians that have gotten off track, and they've been more of in the world than they have in Christ. I pray that they would come back to you today, renew their vow of commitment to say, "I'm all in." Not part in, "I'm all in for whatever you want me to do, Lord, serving you, touching others with your love, making a difference while we have life and breath."

Lord, maybe there are folks that have been looking for a church. I say it weekly. We're not perfect. I'm not perfect. But, Lord, I pray they would look beyond my imperfection and this church's imperfection, and they would see the perfection of Jesus Christ, and they would want to be a part of a church that exalts the name of Jesus and points people to the only hope we have in Christ. So, God, help us right now to be bold, to take a stand for Jesus. And when we've done everything to stand, in his name we pray, amen.