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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden, at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,
on Sunday evening, 12th January 1964.

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Ephesians 6:13.

This brings before us the Lord Jesus Christ in whom all fulness, a fulness that has no lack in it, dwells; and the exhortation here is: Wherefore take unto you the **whole** of Christ. Is there any part of the Gospel of Christ that you have no need of? The emphasis here is: the **whole** armour – **all** of it. Is there anything in you which does not need the Gospel? anything of Christ that you can do without? Well, a very solemn condition to be in, if there is anything in the Gospel of which you can say you have no need of.

You remember we were speaking lately concerning the supper, and there were those that were bidden: "They all with one consent began to make excuse." (Luke 14:18) Well, we should not in so many words make excuses, but my friends, if we are rightly prepared to receive Christ, you may depend upon it, we shall be completely emptied of self, brought to the end of our own strength and wisdom and righteousness; and then we shall need a whole Christ, a complete armour, a complete Gospel.

Look at yourself, and the text, and the Scriptures; don't you really feel in a mysterious experience, which probably you could never express, that there is that completeness in the Gospel, that would meet and swallow up the complexity of your state and case as a ruined sinner? I believe it; and a faith's consideration of this at times will preserve you from despair, from sinking. The completeness of our ruin, and death, and destruction, and corruption is such that nothing can be added to it. The completeness of it is seen physically in the grave of corruption. I will repeat what I have sometimes said, because I am persuaded it is a solemn fact, that a corpse corrupting in the grave is not a type of sin, it is an actual physical consequence of it. It is complete; but when Christ is revealed to faith, it sees a blessed completeness in Him that swallows up that deathly corruption completely, altogether. For "as sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life." (Romans 5:21) And really, that is in the text; there is the whole armour of God, and that blessed "even so" does meet the case.

We have not to dismiss and put out what we are, in order to hope in God; but faith can look at what we are as it is discovered, and realise in our very being, in our very body, and in our soul, this truth, that sin is reigning unto death. "Even so" – taking that into consideration, without dismissing that solemn fact, but taking it up and viewing it in its entirety – "even so might grace reign," as sin has penetrated to every fibre of our being – "even so might grace reign through righteousness," beyond the grave – "unto eternal life." And therefore, mortality will be swallowed up of life, and death will be swallowed up in victory. Well, that is in the text – it is the whole of Christ.

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all" – overcome all – "to stand." We attempted to speak of a few things concerning the righteousness of Christ; and poor pilgrims' feet being shod with the preparation of

the Gospel of peace. Beautiful description: "Gospel of peace"! And there is no peace anywhere else. It is a Gospel of peace, because it is a Gospel of reconciliation. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. Therefore the mercy and mystery is to have union with Christ. If so, then the whole of His work was to reconcile you unto God; and with respect to you and your soul, mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other. All the sacred peace that Christ has wrought out; and it is in that peace that rest is – peace by a fulfilled law, a law which is infinitely satisfied by the obedience of God's dear Son; and therefore, His people are accepted in the Beloved.

O how acceptable was God's dear Son unto the law! How acceptable He was to His Father! Even here upon the earth, when He was enduring the cross, when He was suffering reproach, His Father bore testimony to Him: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17) He took not only human nature into union with His divine Person, but took into union with Himself all His dear people, and such was the virtue of His substitutionary life and death, that they are accepted in Him, as He is accepted unto His Father. And therefore there is peace; no more warfare; and this peace was secured by His precious blood upon Calvary. And this is the peace which He has left as a precious legacy to all His people: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27) To have the feet established upon this foundation is a comfort and a support through all the changing scenes and storms of this life.

By Peter it is said: "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." (1 Peter 5:10) Now that is to have your feet shod, or set down firmly, upon the Rock of ages, upon the Gospel. This will establish your goings, enable you to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life.

"Your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." The inference here is that there will be some fiery darts, otherwise there would be no need of a shield. This blessed shield has been brought before the people of God for their defence from the beginning. Abraham, you remember, when he went out, the Lord sent him out with this promise: "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." (Genesis 15:1) If you go out with those two promises, it will indeed be a strength to your heart. It will put courage in your faith. But there are two things: "I am thy shield" – therefore, Abram, there will be warfare, there will be enemies, but this shield is an infallible shield. "And thy exceeding great reward" – and this great reward suggests victory. Thus Moses, by faith, looked through all the sufferings of the people of God that he was willing to endure, because "he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." (Hebrews 11:26)

"Above all, taking the shield of faith." This shield of faith is God Himself, His divine perfections, His immutability, His divine sovereignty, His omnipotent power, His infinite wisdom. O what a shield this is! Spoken of in different language by those that fear God. We read in Isaiah: "His place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." (Isaiah 33:16) And "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem so the Lord is round about His people." (Psalm 125:2) Those mountains represent His divine attributes, and they are the defence of His people. O then, with what delight the Psalmist says: "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces...For this God" – He constitutes

these bulwarks – “this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death.” (Psalm 48:12-14)

"Above all, taking the shield of faith." There is a taking it by going to the armoury of the Gospel in the Word of God, and there is a taking it for a defence to God. Have not some of you in prayer, under a sense of your weakness, taken this shield of faith, and prayed the Lord to remember you according to His word to the Apostle: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in (thy) weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9) It is a great thing to go before the Lord as a poor, dependent, needy, guilty sinner, and take this shield of faith with you. "I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only." (Psalm 71:16) You will take that shield of faith. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." (Proverbs 18:10)

When you take this shield of faith, you take the name of the Lord Jesus, a name that the Lord loves to hear His people plead; and it will have a connexion with your real needs. You will go and say unto Him: "O Lord, I feel perplexed and bewildered. I know not where I am, or what I am. I do need wonders wrought, wonders of grace wrought in my soul, wonders wrought for me in Thy providence. I need Thee to guide me every day, to preserve my soul from evil." A Counsellor. You will go to Him in your felt weakness; and here is the shield, the shield of faith. All that God in Christ is, you will take with you to the throne of grace for your defence, and prove that He has laid help upon One that is mighty; it is so suitable. A poor, weak sinner, seeking help laid for him upon One that is mighty.

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." O they are fiery darts! They come from the devil. But my friends, there is that in our depraved nature that they work upon. When the devil came to tempt the Lord Jesus, there was nothing in Him upon which that temptation worked. "Fiery darts of fierce temptations" come in through carnal reason, power of unbelief, used by the devil to worry whom he cannot destroy. The Lord's people are brought into such a place that, if it were not for the Word of God, and the blessed Spirit leading a poor sinner into the truth, there would be no standing ground at all.

But upon this point, shall we be able to quench the fiery darts of the devil? One took this shield and prayed like this: "When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." (Isaiah 59:19) Well now, the standard that is lifted up against that enemy that comes in like a flood, is Christ. It is the whole of the Gospel, and the Gospel is Christ. It is not only from Him, but everything in the Gospel is Christ. You can find nothing in the Gospel but which refers to Christ Himself. O to thus eat His flesh and drink His blood by faith; for Him to be a shield, a hiding place, your refuge, your refuge and strength, a very present help in the time of trouble!

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day." You will find there is no armour for the hack. You will not find throughout the whole Word of God where there is any armour for the hack. We have to face the enemy; there is no turning back – no need to turn back with your armour. Faith looks straight on, fights with hell by faith. But "take the helmet of salvation." In writing to the Thessalonians, Paul calls this helmet "the hope of salvation" – a good hope through grace. (1 Thessalonians 5:8) O what a defence this is, to have a

good hope of salvation for a cover! "Take the helmet of salvation." Well, salvation is everything. Salvation takes in the whole of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus. Salvation is more than a word to a lost sinner. So it would seem that in this salvation there is the whole of Christ in the Gospel as a defence upon the head of all His people.

"Cover my defenceless head,
With the shadow (the defence) of Thy wings." (Gadsby's 303)

Therefore this salvation contains in it the great, everlasting love of the Father. It takes in the whole of the finished work of redemption through the Lord Jesus Christ. It embraces also the whole of the work of the Holy Ghost in a work of salvation in the heart – and what a cover this is, what a defence! "The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" – this infallible, inspired Word.

Now upon this point, if we notice, the text says: "That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day." And the Apostle writing to Timothy says: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." (2 Timothy 3:1) Now we are in those perilous times, and we need the whole armour of God. O how sufficient it is! I think we were trying to say something about it last Wednesday: "Deal bountifully with Thy servant, that I may live." (Psalm 119:17) And this armour, Christ Himself, covers a poor sinner from his head to his feet. "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents" and so on; but it is to be noticed that at the end of the chapter, Paul says: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" – with the whole armour of God. As much as to say: "Timothy, when these perilous times come, the Word of God will be your strength. It is given by inspiration of God. It is profitable for everything, for doctrine, for experience." We need nothing really but what is revealed between these two covers in order to know the way of salvation. O if we could, as we said this morning, walk through life and be conducted according to the rules of the Holy Scriptures, it would be well for us! But perilous times have come, "wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand" all these perils.

It is as though he was describing these very days. "Covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, without natural affection, trucebreakers, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God" – the one thing set against the other. Well, my friends, we shall need it. As sure as we are being led by the Spirit, being led forth by the right way to heaven, we shall need the Lord Jesus in all that He is.

I have felt it a time or two, and I believe expressed it – and some of you know the same experience. You have felt what you are in such a solemn and an alarming sense, that you have gone before God to put Him on, so that you might partake of all that He is, and receive the benefit and power of all that He has accomplished. You will say to Him: Lord, I need all of Thee, all of Thy precious blood to cleanse my black, my filthy soul; I need the whole of Thy righteousness to cover me; I need the whole of Thy divine grace to save me; I need to be brought into union with Thee, so as to be partaker of Thy holiness. I need all Thy infinite wisdom so that I be not ensnared by the wiles of the devil. You will need Him all. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be

able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." And we don't know what our young people may be brought face to face with. The audacity of that "man of sin" the Pope, in obtruding himself (for that is what he did in the Middle East, whether he was wanted or not, with all his usurped authority and his arrogant claims.) Just how far that diabolical system can develop we don't know. The Daily Press upholds it, so does the Archbishop of Canterbury – a dishonest man, a professed Protestant, receiving thousands a year to do the devil's work. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand" these antichrists, these errors, and to withstand the conditions that obtain today. O how can our young people stand? I feel for them, and I feel for godly parents. Iniquities abound, and the love of many, of which we had good hopes, waxes cold, and immorality is encouraged.

"Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand." O that our dear young people might be blessed of God! It is only this armour that will keep them safe. It is only as the Holy Ghost teaches them their need, their danger – and blessed be His name it, is not only a discovery of what we are and of what our danger is, but it is a revelation of His blessed, glorious kingdom, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And that makes a defence – not only to find in Christ a refuge, but a sanctuary. A sanctuary is a refuge, but it is a place of rest, a place of sacred communion and worship. And you will find that will strengthen you.

What enabled our forefathers to go to the stake? It was the presence of the Lord in their hearts, really. It was some apprehension by faith of the glory of Christ. It is faith having the eye upon those things that are unseen and eternal, which made them endure affliction and made their afflictions to appear light. It brought them into the truth with the Romans: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Romans 8:18) Now to my mind, when the blessed Word of God takes effect in bringing into the soul some savour of Christ, union with Him, that there is this armour, Christ Jesus, made unto His people their defence, their shelter, their hiding place, their refuge – a present help in trouble.

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." Now this will connect up with the Word: "Take" – "Wherefore **take** unto you" – and that is by prayer. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." (Matthew 7:7)

"Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;
Prayer makes the Christian's armour bright;
And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees." (Gadsby's 394)

"Praying always" – under all conditions – "Pray without ceasing." (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

There is the most important thing – secret prayer. It will be seen in public prayer, and felt; and not only so, but in family prayer, my friends. I believe that there is derived from morning and evening prayers in the family much blessing. I know there will be times and conditions when it seems almost impossible. It is one thing that the Lord has enabled us to continue in – family prayer. And when we look back, under some of the conditions it is a wonder that one's mouth was not completely stopped. But "pray without ceasing." And I could commend to you, and especially young people

and those who are newly married, O if you could feel able to pray in family prayer every day of your life, you will never regret it. And sometimes the Lord will surprise you in giving you some sweet liberty and deliverances there, in His wisdom; some Word of direction in the midst of sorrow, some Word of comfort, of support under your burdens. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." **All prayer and in the Spirit.** You might say: "Well, but that is just a form – and a good form too," you might say. But do you believe in a form of prayer? Yes, I do. If you give up a form, you will very soon give up what that form represents. I do not know of anything in the Word of God from Genesis to Revelation to forbid the greatest sinner on earth to pray. "Pray without ceasing." If you say: "Well, I feel to be a hypocrite," tell the Lord so, pray about it. If you feel you cannot pray; well, go and pray "can't-pray prayers." You might feel too overwhelmed, too full of rebellion. Well, go to the throne of grace – and what has that got to do with the other part of the text? Well, that is just taking: "Take unto you." This is faith, taking at the throne of grace the whole armour of Christ, trusting in Him, standing upon His merit, coming up from time to time out of the wilderness, leaning upon Him.

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." Yes, it is not an easy thing. Said Habakkuk: "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved." (ch.2:1) This perseverance, this diligence, is the work of the Spirit, and He will work this diligence and perseverance in you by many ways – sometimes by bringing you into dire distress, bringing you into such close quarters, and at the ends of the earth, so that you are obliged to pray, obliged to "take unto you the whole armour of God," all that He is. Have you ever taken it? Some parts of it you feel to need in particular.

"Watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" – so to come in this sweet enlargement of heart in prayer. Have not some of you known that? It may be your own circumstances, your own sore, your own case, your own burden. You go to the Lord with it. But I am warranted to say that, as you urge your own case, and feel a love to the people of God and to Zion, you will find that your heart will be enlarged toward His people. And this is one purpose of prayer: the internal graces of the Spirit, brought into activity, whereby there is a growth in grace and in a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I would just mention here with respect to prayer, and conclude with this: the Apostle says: "And for me, that utterance may be given unto me." And if he needed that, I do. And if any of you are favoured to take unto you the whole armour of God, and are brought nigh, then may I ask that, when you are favoured in prayer, it may include me, "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel."

Amen.