

1068
La 9692

1068

LIBRARY OF THE
GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

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

The Apostle opens this chapter with salutary exhortations to children, and to fathers, and to servants. And what different conditions would obtain today, if the Word of God was made a rule for our personal and national and Church conduct! O what misery, and what sin, what tumults arise from departing from the Word of God; rejecting the Word of God! What true wisdom can be left in us, or in the nation? O the blessed Word of God, inspired, infallible, a perfect rule for everything in this life! A rule which teaches how to work, how to discharge every duty, how to sustain every relationship, how to govern a nation, and how to behave in the Church of God. And yet, this blessed Book is rejected; and what confusion and riots and strikes and warfare and discontent ensue! But having dismissed his responsibility in regard to children and servants, he comes to the more important matter of the warfare of the soul.

And that comes into the first word in the 10th verse: "Finally, my brethren" – that is to say, After you have considered the duties and responsibilities of this life, there is a different kind of life, of warfare, something distinct. We need a natural wisdom for natural things; we need natural strength for natural things; but are we conscious that we have a soul as well as a body? And are we conscious that while we have difficulties here and anxieties as we have to contend with men and natural things; yet distinct from all that, are we conscious of a spiritual warfare? "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life." (1 Timothy 6:12)

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God." And why "wherefore"? Why, because of the nature of our enemies! "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (v.12) There is only one defence against such enemies, and that is "The whole armour of God."

What is it to put this armour on? Paul tells the Romans: "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh." (Romans 13:14) But who needs it? Do we? Do you need an armour? David, when he was to go against Goliath, put on Saul's armour and assayed to go in that, but he could not. The armour was a hindrance to him. He took it off, he went as he was, took five smooth stones from the brook and a sling. But he told that giant what armour he had; he came to him in the name of Jehovah; he put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

But have we been brought to feel our exposed position, to be exposed to the wrath of God in His holy law, to be pursued by conscience, wrath and law? Have we been given to realise the power of the enemy, these spiritual enemies that are in our own heart, and the fiery darts of the devil? It is a very real and solemn experience to realise by the Spirit what we are without Christ, without this armour. The wicked have no need of it; they have their own defences, they have their own righteousness, they have their own strength, their own wisdom; they have no need of Christ. Have we? "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" – put Him on – it is to be clothed in Him. It is to have that

gracious Word fulfilled experimentally: "I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her." (Zechariah 2:5) Is there anything attractive to you under a sense of your exposed condition, your complete undone state, apart from Christ? That He can be put on is to be involved in Christ, to be all taken up in Him. Well, this is attractive to me because of what I am. Isaiah confessed when he saw the glory of God: "Woe is me! for I am undone." (ch.6:5) O that expression "undone" did describe my state! What is it to be undone? O it is just to fall to pieces! You take a horse with none of his harness buckled, all undone, the traces not hitched on, of what use is it? Everything falls to pieces. "I am undone!" Undone in the fall, undone and ruined; and this was by a sight of the glory of God. What then? "Wherefore" – not only seeing the nature of the enemies against which we must fight, but seeing our state and condition by nature – "take unto you the whole armour of God. Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh."

Well, what wisdom and goodness and grace is in God, that He should provide such an armour in this unspeakable Gift of Christ! And the expression here: "Take unto you the whole armour of God." Well, where is the armoury from which it must be taken? It is in the Word of God. It is only the Holy Spirit that can lead us into it, and those who are thus led to Christ will take the whole armour of God, as in their experience they are brought to feel their need of salvation, brought to realise that their righteousness is as filthy rags, and will never stand in the sight of God.

Well then, may the Lord help us to speak a few things that are right concerning the Lord Jesus in all His suitability, and in all His sufficiency, as He is set forth in the Gospel. O for faith to take the whole armour of God, and the various parts of it we have in this chapter! But the purpose of it is in the text: "That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." There is a withstanding in order to stand at last. The withstanding is to withstand the powers and the wiles of the devil: "Whom resist steadfast in the faith." (1 Peter 5:9) And this withstanding constitutes the whole fight of faith in the wilderness, and, as we said at the outset, it is a different life, a different conflict from anything that is natural. It is a spiritual conflict, and this is a day "that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day." What evils abound today: the evils of communism, of popery, atheism, modernism! O I feel for our young people. Some of us remember better days, but O what a flood of immorality has flooded the country; and the blasphemies of popery insinuating themselves into our very life's blood! And there is only one thing by which that thing -can be overcome. It is by taking the whole armour of God. O what a mercy it would be for this country if the Lord should raise up men of God as he did of old, who would take the whole armour of God! And what blessed conquests He gave them in the Reformation! He is our only hope for the future. But it is our personal cases that will matter when we come to the end, and indeed before we come there. O the powers of our depraved and fallen nature are dreadful! Some of you know it. Resolutions break like threads. The burning lusts of nature are like a roaring furnace within – pride, deadly carnality, unbelief – these are lively enemies; and if we have not this whole armour of God we should be in despair.

Well, the first thing in the armoury, according to this chapter, is: "Having your loins girt about with truth." Truth is a very comprehensive term. Truth essentially is Christ Himself. But truth is the Gospel and all the doctrines of the Gospel. So really, this first part of the armour of God contains every other part in it. Strictly speaking, you cannot have one part of this armour without having it all. You cannot have a little of Christ unless you have Him all, and that is a mercy. You will never find

Christ to be your righteousness unless He is your sanctification. He will never be your wisdom unless He is your Redeemer. But in experience we are brought to such points as we need Him in His special manifestations. Some of you now may need Him to be unto you wisdom in a special way. Others may have had some discovery that everything in them is completely wrong and ruined and depraved, and you need Him to be your righteousness. Some of you may feel that you have sold yourself for nought, that you cannot blame Adam for your sinnership and your condition. Adam did sell the whole human race when he was deceived by Eve, but as I have sometimes said, and feel it in my own case, we confirm that sale by our innumerable transgressions; and when you feel, it you will need that part of the armour, the Lord to be your Redemption.

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God. " And there is something in every word of it that is so suitable, and therefore, attractive to a self-destroyed sinner. It is the armour of God. David could not go in the armour of Saul. He could not go in the armour of a Pharisee, because of divine teaching. When the Lord has turned man to destruction, He destroys his defences, destroys his armour wherein he stood, gives him to know that his strength is weakness, that his righteousness is as filthy rags, that his best is bad. O what a preparation this is! And then to see provided and made available to those who are thus stripped naked, weakened and destroyed, the whole armour of God – of God – and to take it. It is set before us in the Gospel – take it. What takes it? Faith, the hands of faith. "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth." The loin is the seat of strength. If the loins are weakened the whole body is incapacitated; and to have the loins girded about with truth is to be strengthened in that seat of strength, in the soul, by Christ who is the truth.

"Thomas saith unto Him, Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14:5-6) Now that strengthened the disciples, "the truth as it is in Jesus." Then He further unfolds this truth in its various parts. "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness." This is the righteousness of Christ. "And except your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:20)

It is a mercy to be made suitable for the righteousness of Christ, and, therefore, Christ's righteousness to be made suitable unto our case. This is the wedding garment; this is the beauty of the Lord which is upon them that fear Him. "The King's daughter is all glorious within...she shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework." (Psalm 45:13-14) This is the righteousness wrought out, stitch by stitch, by the Person, the life, the sinless life, the sacred humanity, the temptations, the sufferings, the ignominy, the shame, the reproach, the precious death and glorious resurrection of Christ that constitutes this righteousness. It is wrought-out righteousness. Not that intrinsic righteousness that belongs to Christ in His person; that righteousness cannot be communicated to a sinner; and yet the mystery of it is that the virtue of His sinless humanity in union with this divine Person, gives virtue to all that He did, and therefore, while His essential righteousness cannot be conveyed to a sinner, yet that essential righteousness is in all the virtue of what He did. If an angel could have lived a sinless life - that sinless life could never have been made a substitute for sinners. "Wherefore, take unto you the righteousness of the Lord Jesus."

It is revealed in the Gospel from faith to faith. The beauty of it is that it is the righteousness, the result of a perfect obedience. It is the righteousness of life without a flaw, without a spot or a

wrinkle. It is the righteousness of a satisfied law, completely fulfilled. It is the righteousness of the removal of sin from the Church by the substitution of the Lord Jesus. It is the righteousness of a penalty paid, a debt paid to the uttermost farthing His Church owed, paid by the dear Redeemer. This righteousness is wrought out, it is paid, the law satisfied, and He made perfect through sufferings

"Having on the breastplate of righteousness," nothing can penetrate – to stand complete in the righteousness of Christ. Nothing can pierce through that breastplate, no charge of the law. For this purpose, the apostle in the 8th Romans (v.33) sends out this challenge: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth" – by His righteousness. It is a challenge to the law, to every enemy, to lay anything to the charge of God's elect. And I have thought that the Word needs a little opening. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." That is not the answer. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" That is a challenge, and as though Paul would warn any, before they lay any charge, to remember that it is God that justifieth – now lay a charge! His perfect life, His obedience, His divine Person, His sacred human nature, and all the work that He had finished: "It is God that justifieth." Who dare lay anything to the charge of God's elect? "Who is he that condemneth?" Now before any dares to condemn, remember this, that it is Christ that died, and when He died all sin was condemned in Him for His people.

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God...having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace." We need to be prepared – not only for heaven – but we need to be prepared for that rough and thorny path that those are willing to tread with hopes to see His face. And therefore, this agrees with what we read in Deuteronomy: "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." (ch.33:25) "Feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace." It is a fight of faith, and it also infers this, that faith stands rooted, grounded, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. In experience we have it in beautiful simplicity in the 40th Psalm: "He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock." (v.2) The "feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel" – and what did that do? It "established my goings." What a preparation for life! What a preparation for death! What a preparation for trouble, for adversity, for tribulation, to have our feet thus shod with the Gospel! "Your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace."

There seem to me to be two things in this preparation. One is the prepared Gospel. O see how wisdom has prepared the ingredients of the Gospel! I have felt a sweetness in that term "ingredients" – and you look at those ingredients and this preparation. The Gospel was prepared by Jehovah in the covenant of grace, and all the ingredients, nothing lacking – living, vital, eternal ingredients of grace, and virtue, and mercy, and redemption, and love – and to have the feet shod with the Gospel so prepared with such ingredients. But then, on the other hand, there are the prepared feet. When this Gospel is laid, as it were, beneath the feet of a poor pilgrim, he sees that his shoes have underneath them iron and brass. I believe you will find in a marginal Bible in that 33rd chapter of Deuteronomy, the margin there says: "Under thy shoes shall be iron." And what are these studs, these nails, that are under the feet of those who are prepared with this Gospel? Well, one thing is this: those exceeding great and precious promises that are scattered throughout the

Word of God. O what a strength it does give to walk on! Have you ever lighted upon a promise that has kept you from sinking, kept you from going back? Another thing is this: the Word of God itself, in all those blessed declarations of truth; and to see those that have gone before, and to be compassed about in your experience, and to have a good hope through grace that you are in the footsteps of the flock. What the Lord has said to His people in ages past, He being the same today, yesterday, and for ever, immutable, therefore you are in the footsteps of the flock. Have you ever, as you may feel to have been so taken up in the Word of God, perhaps in reading the Book of Job, or in the Psalms, expressing your needs, your own confessions, your own desires, have you really felt: "If endless bliss is their reward, I shall possess the same?" Well, it helps you to go on.

"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." To "stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace." We must remember that is to enable us to withstand, and to withstand is to overcome. "Having done all, to stand." Having overcome all, having withstood every temptation, having resisted the devil, to stand at last. To stand in His armour. To stand covered with Christ. To stand upon His merit. O what a life is a life of faith!

I don't wonder that a natural man, like Orpah, would rather go back to their country, and to their gods, than to risk such a life of conflict and tribulation. O but where there is the true light shining, where there is a new creature in Christ Jesus, where He so sends out His light and His truth, and reveals and brings in the blessedness, the life, the sacredness of the presence of Christ, why, then, with Moses, says faith: "I choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." (Hebrews 11:25) O how he did take the whole armour of God, and left everything else! He had every defence in this world; he had the defence of money, riches, luxuries, and the defence of the Court. O but to stand before God! We may have all those things, but when the true light shines, and we are given to feel our nakedness, our defencelessness, our need of refuge, our need of the whole armour of God, we realise they are of no value.

"Above all, taking the shield of faith." The shield of faith. This may in the Church mean the grace of faith, but it particularly refers to the object of faith. The shield of faith is Christ Himself. But faith is the gift of God, and it is only faith that can take this shield. What is a shield? It comes between one and the enemy, and therefore there is no defence, no shield for us, nothing between us and hell, but Christ Himself. No shield from the wrath of God against sin but the blessed atonement of Christ; and it is faith that takes that shield. O precious faith that can go into the secret place of the Most High, and use that shield at the throne of grace! The Psalmist did when he prayed: "Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of Thine anointed." (Psalm 84:9) Haven't you been compelled to take this shield of faith? What other defence have you as you pray? What an enemy is the holy just law of God to the sinner! But faith will take the Lord Jesus, in all His finished work. We sing a truth:

"'Tis He, instead of us, is seen, when we approach to God." (Gadsby's 119)

Well, may the Lord help His dear, poor, trembling, defenceless people to take, by the hand of faith, the whole armour of God. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh." (Romans 13:14) Amen.