The Whole Armor of God

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, August 3, 2025
PASSAGES	Ephesians 6; Psalm 18; Isaiah 11; Isaiah 59; Isaiah 1
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:13:12 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

The armor of Ephesians 6 is not a Roman soldier costume and not a set of magic words. It is God's own gear, worn by his children into a battle he has already won. And putting it on looks like telling the truth, doing right, and defending the widow and the orphan — not just saying things in a dark room.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Spiritual warfare is neither to be feared nor forgotten. It gets over-embraced until it is spooky, or under-embraced until it is absurd; the sane middle is Ephesians 6:10 — strong *in the Lord*, in the strength of his might.
- The people you are suspicious of or afraid of are not your enemy. Paul rules out flesh and blood entirely, which means it is not your neighbor and not the governor either.
- Resistance is relational, not technical. James pairs "resist the devil" with "submit yourselves to God," and Peter says stand firm *in your faith* — not firm in the right tactics.
- Paul did not invent the armor metaphor. Psalm 18 and Isaiah 11 and 59 have it first, and in Isaiah 59 the one putting it on is God himself.
- Ephesians 6 does not describe a helmet of words, a breastplate of more words and a sword of the same words again. Prayer is in it; prayer does not exhaust it.
- Isaiah 1 spells out what the fight looks like on the ground: cease to do evil, learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression, plead the widow's cause.

- Isaiah 59 begins with a search for a defender and finds nobody. Both that warrior and Isaiah 11's branch of Jesse are fulfilled in Jesus — David's descendant who is God made man.
- The gear is a child's size of his father's. You are in the fight and the decisions are real, but most of the fighting is his.

▶ 1:13:13

Matt began by naming the two ditches on either side of this subject. Spiritual warfare gets "alternatively over-embraced to the point of being spooky, or under-embraced to the point of absurdity." Jesus taught us to pray *lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*, so it is a regular part of Christian life — and it is relational before it is anything else.

1. Finally, be strong in the Lord

▶ 1:13:56

> "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil."
>
> EPHESIANS 6:10–11 ↗

Matt asked the room to hold verse 10 in mind over everything that followed. Paul has spent the first chapters of the letter stacking up the phrase *in him* — "like a bazillion times" — because every blessing, every bit of redemption and grace and gifting and inheritance is not merely *because* of Jesus but located *in* him. This is not a change of subject. Love is active, faith is active, hope is active, and so is standing.

▶ 1:15:40

Then the line Matt said God had used to challenge him personally: we do not wrestle against flesh and blood. "These Muslim neighbors of yours are not your enemy." And the same applies to anyone you dislike, suspect or fear. When Paul lists rulers and authorities, he has already ruled out the human kind — "you wouldn't want to interpret that as, like, Governor Abbott, because he just said not flesh and blood." The struggle is against the cosmic powers over this present darkness.

2. Firm in faith, not firm in tactics

▶ 1:17:24

> "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith."
>
> 1 PETER 5:8–9 ↗

Firm in faith, Matt stressed — not firm in the right tactics. He reached for Keanu Reeves in *Constantine* as the anti-model: the right words, the right tools, all of it mechanistic. "It's not about having the right stuff, the right formulas or saying the right words — like, go to the county line, spin five times and say this prayer backwards." The actual instruction runs the other direction: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Submission first. He is the strong tower.

▶ 1:19:05

And the goal Paul sets is modest and enormous at once — to stand firm in the evil day. First-century evil days, twenty-first-century evil days, all the centuries in between. God's triumph over his enemies is still unfolding, and we live surrounded by people who freely choose evil. The days may be evil; we are called to stand in them.

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3. Where the armor comes from

▶ 1:21:53

Matt read the list — belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shoes of the gospel of peace, shield of faith, helmet of salvation, sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:14–17) — and then made the point the rest of the message rested on: this is God's equipment, and it did not start with Paul.

> "For who is God, but the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God — the God who equipped me with strength and made my way blameless… He trains my hands for war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. You have given me the shield of your salvation."
>
> PSALM 18:31–35 ↗

Shield of salvation, shield of faith — the difference is semantics; the idea is the same. David was a literal mighty warrior, and David credits the strength and the victory to God.

▶ 1:23:16

Then Isaiah, twice. First the shoot from the stump of Jesse — written some three hundred years after David, near the end of the kingdom of Judah, when the dynasty was an inglorious smoldering stump next to its own past. Out of the wreckage comes a branch with the Spirit of the Lord resting on him:

wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And what he does with it is justice.

> "With righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth… Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins."
>
> ISAIAH 11:4–5 ↗

▶ 1:26:14

Then Isaiah 59, where the armor is on God himself. The chapter opens with a survey of the damage — "truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey" — and what displeases the Lord is precisely that there is no justice, and no one to intercede.

> "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede; then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him. He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak."
>
> ISAIAH 59:16–17 ↗

Matt noted the one item Paul left behind, with obvious regret: "Garments of vengeance would be a good song title, if you are in a Christian grunge band. Okay. Focus."

4. So spiritual warfare is bigger than words

▶ 1:28:54

Look at the arena God fights in, in both Isaiah passages: justice in action, wisdom and knowledge, protection of the poor and the meek, truth declared out loud after truth had been stumbling in the marketplace. That is the Old Testament backdrop Paul is writing against, and it means the battle has a visible dimension, not only an invisible one.

> *"Ephesians 6 does not outline a helmet of words, a breastplate of more words, a belt of even more words, a shield of extra words, and a sword of yet those same very words."*

Prayer is in it. *Deliver us from evil* is in it. Renouncing the devil and his works out loud is in it. But so is telling the truth when it is hard or awkward, and so is protecting widows and defending orphans.

▶ 1:31:22

He went to Isaiah 1 to press it, and warned the room it was heavy. God says he hates their appointed feasts, that he will hide his eyes even from many prayers, because their hands are full of blood. Then:

> "Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause."
>
> ISAIAH 1:16–17 ↗

"This is spiritual warfare," Matt said. It is hard and costly and you will likely stumble, but it is holistic — a multidimensional battle, not one fought entirely inside our own heads.

5. It is his gear, and he is the warrior

▶ 1:33:19

Isaiah 59 shows God looking around for someone seeking justice and finding no one — which Matt connected to sins of omission, "the stuff we knew we should have done, like telling the truth when it was hard or awkward, but didn't do." Isaiah 11 shows David's branch girding himself with righteousness. Christians read both as fulfilled in the same person: Jesus, born in David's line, who is God made man. The single-handed mighty warrior who fought on our behalf in ways nobody else was willing or able to.

> *"Imagine a child putting on his dad's samurai armor, doing the motions — but his dad's doing a lot of the fighting. Let's just say, between us, most of it."*

6. Praying in the Spirit, and the end of the letter

▶ 1:34:23

> "Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains."
>
> EPHESIANS 6:18–20 ↗

Paul cannot come himself, so Tychicus carries the letter and the news (Ephesians 6:21–22). Matt liked the ordinariness of that: the man handing over the scroll was probably in the room before and after the reading, available to be asked what Paul meant by a line. The letter closes with peace, love with faith, and grace to all who love the Lord Jesus with love incorruptible. "Boom. What a way to end that letter."

▶ 1:41:08

"Praying in the Spirit" is relational too — led by him, under his influence. Not a bank tube you load a deposit slip into and shoot off to nobody in particular. When you pray you get to say why you think the thing matters, and appeal to a mercy with a long track record of doing great things for weird people.

Where to start

▶ 1:39:54

For anyone who feels spiritually bankrupt and does not know where to begin, Matt gave the starting line plainly: renounce the devil and his works, confess to Jesus the things you did and the things you left undone, place your faith in his rescue of your soul. Start there, at least. Then, as you grow up, you put on your father's war gear — faithfulness, faith, righteousness, prayer, worship, truth, defending the lowly, articulating the gospel, walking in the wisdom and fear of God.

And the pressure is off, which was his last real point. The television template makes this look unattainable: the special guy with the special scrolls and the correct formula. But the message of Christianity is for the plain and the simple, the old and the young, people without degrees who have not memorized the Torah. "You don't need AI to decipher ancient scrolls to topple some demon whose name no one can pronounce." Anyone who comes to Jesus like a child receives the kingdom and wages this war in the strength of his might.

He closed by praying that God would stir up great faith and steadfastness in the room, and handed off to the heart ministry team — "tactical prayer deployment," standing up front with name tags — with an invitation to come and give them a doozy.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- Ephesians 6:10–11
- Ephesians 6:12
- 1 Peter 5:8–9
- James 4:7
- Ephesians 6:14–17
- Psalm 18:31–35
- Isaiah 11:4–5
- Isaiah 59:16–17
- Isaiah 1:16–17
- Ephesians 6:18–20
- Ephesians 6:21–22
- Ephesians 6:23–24

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Which ditch do you tend to fall into — spiritual warfare as something spooky, or something you never think about at all? What put you there?
2. Matt said the people you are suspicious of or afraid of are not your enemy. Who have you been treating as flesh-and-blood opposition, and what would change if you stopped?
3. Where are you tempted to trust technique — the right words, the right formula — instead of submission to God?
4. Isaiah 1 lists correcting oppression and pleading the widow's cause as the fight itself. Where has that been missing from your idea of the Christian life?
5. Matt named sins of omission — the truth you knew to tell but didn't. What is one piece of your father's armor you can actually put on this week, and where?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CPtxTH181lg&t=4392s

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.