

Bible Basics Conference 2009: "Walk Worthy of the Calling!"

Part 14

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Place	Catford
Duration	00:35:13
Online version	https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/cbb003/bible-basics-conference-2009-walk-worthy-of-the-calling

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[00:00:00] Let's read the verses from Ephesians 6, we'll start reading at verse 10.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

For 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.

Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, 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. Above all, take in the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts [00:01:05] of the wicked, and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Pray always with all prayer, and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

We'll speak about the last verses of the chapter later on.

The Christian warfare.

Generally we've understood that the subject of Ephesians affects every aspect of our lives.

Ephesian truth is not just for the Christian conference or the Bible reading.

It's something which affects every aspect of our lives.

[00:02:03] We've been looking at that particularly this afternoon.

We saw the practical part of the epistle starts with believers together.

True believers on the Lord Jesus, I'm talking about, but it also affects the profession we make in this world, of the fact that we're Christians. That should affect our lives, our lives together, our lives with our neighbours, our lives before the world should affect our lives as husbands and wives, as parents, as employers, and as employees.

And really we can't enjoy our spiritual blessings.

Those blessings we read about in chapter one, if we don't have this practical Christianity [00:03:06] in our lives that we've been considering.

Really God isn't honoured if we say, well, I fully understand Ephesian truth, yes, I've read all the books, and I can tell you everything exactly as it should be according to what Paul teaches in the letter to the Ephesians, if in practice it's not coming out in our lives, in our thoughts, and in our words, and in our actions.

The two things go completely together.

So if we know and understand this Ephesian truth, and obviously we've seen already, we're never going to fully grasp it.

[00:04:02] It's really something that's so immense.

But as we go in for it more and more, there should be a practical effect in you and me.

But you know, there's someone who wants to stop that happening. There's someone who says, no, I don't want that to be worked out in your life. And just as when the people of Israel entered the Promised Land, when they went over the River Jordan, what did they find there? Was it peaceful circumstances, villages to just move into, crops to start reaping and enjoying, all those wonderful things we read about when we started our conference from Deuteronomy?

No, what they found was, yes, indeed, there were wonderful things in that land. It was the Promised Land, flowing with milk and honey, but there were enemies there. There were people that wanted to stop them working these things out, stop them inheriting [00:05:06] that land and possessing it for God's glory. And we're finding the same here. And it's called the Christian warfare. The evil one, the one we read about at the start of Ephesians 2, he wants to stop us putting these things into practice.

Now we're not going to possess our spiritual blessings by building castles like this. This is a crusader castle built in the Promised Land, when men thought that the great aim of Christianity was to invade and possess militarily the Promised Land.

That was what they were going to do. But that's complete misunderstanding of the scripture, as we're going to find in the verses we're looking at now. Now that's just a quick recap.

You'll have a chance to look at that slide when it's up on the website, but I haven't [00:06:01] got enough time to go through it now, but it's just a little reminder of the things that we've been looking at.

Now the last part of Paul's teaching is what I've just been referring to, and it's for all of us as brethren

together. One thing we learnt at the start of our study was that we come into God's blessings individually, but once we've individually trusted in the Lord Jesus as our saviour, we're brought together and we're members together of his body.

One of the things that we're going to find in these last few verses is that Paul appeals to us not just as individuals, but as believers together, when he says, be strong in the Lord, because he says you're going to face opposition, you're going to face conflict. There are going to be things that try to stop you putting these things into practice and enjoying them. And who are you going to be strong in? [00:07:03] You're going to be strong in the one who's given you these things in the first place. We've already mentioned, Brian's already mentioned, in the Lord.

And this is something that comes out in these closing verses of the letter. In the Lord.

Submitting to the Lord.

He's the source of our spiritual strength and in the might of his strength. And that is make full use of the strength that he gives in all its effectiveness. At Plumstone, we were looking at the story of the people of Israel crossing the River Jordan and particularly in the first chapter of the book of Joshua, the promises that God gives to Joshua to move on into the land and to possess it for God's glory.

And Timothy's another example. Timothy, as he came across the difficulties of the Christian life, you can read about [00:08:01] it in the first chapter of Paul's second letter to him, he started to get discouraged. And the Apostle Paul encourages Timothy to be strong in the Lord.

I'll just mention the verses so that we have them clearly in our minds.

Verse 6 of chapter 1 of 2 Timothy, wherefore, I put the remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands, for God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind and soul.

So we're going to face opposition, but the Apostle Paul says, finally, my brethren be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. He's not going to forsake us, he's going to give us the strength to be able to possess our blessings. Yes, there's conflict in the heaven. I think that may even be a picture of Israel, I'm not quite sure, but there it is, the land [00:09:07] laid out for the people of Israel to enjoy the spiritual blessings that we've been reading about in the first part of this letter are there for us to enjoy.

We're only going to be able to enjoy them as we put the practical exhortations that we've been considering into practice.

Then we'll realise in our lives the calling that we've been given by God and we will walk worthy of it day by day until the Lord Jesus comes to take us to be with him in the Father's house.

So yes, there is a conflict in the heavens as there were battles for Israel to fight to possess the promised land.

When we're told in these verses to be strong in the Lord, we're actually also told that [00:10:07] the Lord has given us equipment with which to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. The

apostle says, put on the whole armour of God, panoply is one word that's often used for this.

It's the full extent of the armour of God. There are seven parts to this armour and we're told not just to put on our favourite part, but we're told to put on all the parts of the armour. Here is the armour, it's there ready to be taken and put on by the soldier. It's God's fighting equipment for the believer who wants to possess his spiritual possessions and to put the practical exhortations we've been hearing about into practice. Then we can stand firm.

We want believers who will stand firm because we face an enemy who's very cunning. [00:11:02] He started off being very cunning. In the Garden of Eden, he said to Eve, hath God said? Oh, very cunning, very cunning, very clever way of getting beneath Eve's gun, creating a sense of doubt in what God had said.

The devil, he hasn't changed. He's still working in the same way today. And if we want to possess our blessings, we must make use of God's resources to be able to stand for God in the current day and possess those possessions.

Because the Apostle says our struggle is not against blood and flesh. Now this is a strange picture, actually. It's a picture of the security police of Peru, I think.

And they look pretty formidable, don't they? They look as if they would be impossible to defeat.

[00:12:04] But you know, we can be pretty sure, too, that our enemy is a very strong enemy, too.

We mustn't underestimate his power, but at the same time, we mustn't overestimate his power either.

We're told greater is he that is in you than he that is within the world.

So we're not talking about fighting against blood and flesh here. I made a reference to the Crusader armies of past centuries who thought they were fighting for God when they actually took armies into the Middle East. That's not what we're talking about. We're not talking about fighting blood and flesh. We're talking about dealing with the spiritual forces which are lined up against the Christian. And the Apostle speaks of them as principalities, and he speaks about authorities.

[00:13:05] Principalities are a kind of order, a high order of spiritual power, and authorities speak about those that have actual power and exercise it.

And I've given some references there in Ephesians and in Daniel to examples of how there are spiritual powers at work in our world today.

We can't see them necessarily, but they're there. In Ephesians 2, verse 2, we read about the prince of the power of the air.

That's the evil one himself, spoken of in such a way to convey to us that there's one who is active in a way that we can't see with our eyes, but he's there, and he's very active.

And if you were to read Daniel 10, you would see that Daniel had communications with one [00:14:04]

who was an angelic power that had to do with a particular country, and had to deal with spirits that were responsible for dealing with other countries. For instance, the prince of Persia. These are things we don't really know about, but perhaps they're added reasons for not getting involved in politics.

There are powers at work in our world that are beyond our ken and thought, and yet if we keep close to the Lord Jesus and follow the instructions of his word, we will be enabled to defeat them.

The rulers of the darkness of this world brings before us, doesn't it, the fact that this world is in moral darkness. The whole world lies in the wicked one. Do we really believe that? Often it's said to young people, the whole world is your oyster. [00:15:03] Go out and enjoy yourself.

Make a name for yourself.

Get as much as you can. What? Of the world that lies in the wicked one. Is that where you want to be and where you want to make your name? No, that's not where the Lord wants you to be and where he wants you to make your name. The world is marked by darkness, moral darkness, and if there's ever a day when we see moral darkness, it's today.

But it's interesting to know that when the Lord was crucified, it speaks of that hour as one being the power of darkness, physical darkness, moral darkness, and the world hasn't really changed, but we see more and more, particularly in our own country, which used to enjoy the light of Christianity. We see darkness invading every aspect of life in our country, spiritual powers of wickedness [00:16:06] in the heavenlies. Yes, you see the evil one. He knows that living out the word of God involves reading the word of God, studying it, letting it fill our minds, and then us working it out in our lives, and what will he do?

He will try to put everything into our thoughts, but we'll work against that. That's why we have to be very careful, particularly as young people today, when we're exposed to a media which is full of moral darkness.

When I was brought up, not that my parents had a television, but I remember I used to go round to my grandfather and he had a television, but you know, there were certain times of the day when you couldn't watch anything, there was just a test card, and it was so boring.

But today, you've got hundreds of channels to watch.

[00:17:08] For this reason we should have equipped ourselves, I put it here, we should have equipped ourselves. This should be something we've done, and we've done it for good, for the rest of our lives, with the whole armour of God. Now, I said there were seven pieces, there are five defensive pieces, and two for attack as well.

And if we've got these pieces of armour, we're wearing them, we'll be able to withstand in the evil day, and the evil day is the day that we're in today. Not just the year 2009, this would have applied in the year 1950, or even in the 19th century. To all intents and purposes, the Christian day has been an evil day because the devil has always been trying to defeat the Christian. We just see it in a more obvious way in our country today.

[00:18:03] And having overcome all things to stand, the successful soldier is the one who is still

standing at the end of the battle.

So be able to withstand in the evil day, and having overcome all things, stand. God wants those who stand. So I'm going to emphasise that with this slide. Stand, therefore! That's what the apostle says.

And I feel he wasn't shouting it necessarily, but I feel that if he could have done, he would have written it like this.

Now the first piece of armour is the girdle of truth. These are practical things. We should gird our loins with truth. I'm very thankful to those who re-enact Roman battles in Germany, because they put all their slides on a photo-sharing site, and they just are wonderful illustrations of this truth.

We should gird our loins with truth. [00:19:01] This soldier's got a very strong belt on, which keeps all his armour in the place it should be.

There's not going to be anything that's going to impede his movement. As he stands, and we're talking about defensive movement, standing for what God has put in our trust, we need to be able to deal with the enemy as he comes at us, from whichever angle.

We need freedom of movement. And applying this spiritually in our lives, our thoughts, our intents, our desires must be governed by what is right before the Lord. This is a moral thought. It's not the truth of God understood so much as active and applied in our lives in a practical way. It's governing our thoughts, our intents, and our desires, and as a result, we can move in whichever way God wants us to in order to withstand the enemy.

He will have truth in the inward parts is one example of this. [00:20:03] In my verses here, I won't be able to refer to them all because we haven't got enough time. There's a verse from the Old Testament generally, a verse which applies to the Lord Jesus himself. He was altogether what he said he was, and although we shall never match him in that, he wants us to be like that more and more. He wants us to be what we say we are in our thoughts and words and actions. And how will we be like that if we give ourselves to those things which are good? In Philippians chapter four, verse eight, it says, finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, there'd be any virtue and if there'd be any praise, think on these things. When you read books, whatever you do, because I don't want to pick on particular things, [00:21:01] I don't want to be seen to be picking on particular things that might be seen to be criticisms of younger brethren or whatever, but what do you do? Are you occupied with things which come up to that catalog or are you occupied with things which are really quite impure or violent or horrible?

If those things are what you're taking in and occupied in your life, then how will you be able to respond to the directions of the Lord?

Because he will always direct in those ways that we've just read about in this verse. Breastplate of righteousness. We should put on the breastplate of righteousness, the apostle says. The breastplate protected the soldier's vital organs. Here's a Roman soldier's breastplate. Our words and actions must be just and good if we're to keep our testimony intact. It's righteousness in a practical sense, not our righteousness in Christ, of course that's most important and foundational, but are we marked by practical righteousness in our lives? [00:22:03] Are our words and our actions righteous? If they're not,

how can we possibly withstand the attacks of the evil one? He's going to be able to get in a knife for us, just in that gap in your armour where you did something wrong or you said something wrong, you acted in a way that wasn't right. He will use that against you and you won't be able to withstand him. We need to have practical righteousness in our lives. Job was a righteous man.

The Lord Jesus was marked by practical righteousness. There was no guile in his mouth.

He's one example of that. We're told to be marked by practical righteousness by Paul in 2 Corinthians 6 verse 7. Sandals, the gospel of peace, you need good footwear if you're going to be a soldier.

You need to be able to march. It's no use not having shoes and then trying to march for 50 miles, you'll never make it. [00:23:02] And when you fight, you need to be able to stand firmly on the ground.

And here we're not talking about preaching the gospel, we're talking about the effect of the gospel practically on you and me.

Is that peace that we read about in chapter 2 having its practical effect in our lives? Are we at peace in our lives?

Is the gospel of peace having its practical effect in us?

It's almost like the peace of God. We have peace with God, but is the peace of God something we're enjoying? We're at peace, we're leaving everything in God's hands. We're committing everything to him. If we are, then we shall be able to go where he wants us to go and we shall be able to stand where he wants us to stand. We won't always be worrying about things and as a result not able to be occupied with serving [00:24:01] him, for standing for what's according to his will and for practicing those spiritual truths in our lives.

The Lord Jesus, he left his peace with his disciples.

Are we enjoying that peace in our lives?

The shield of faith, in addition we should have the shield of faith at the ready. This shield here isn't a little shield, it's a big shield. It's the big Roman shield that you could protect almost, what really, all your body with and it would stop those barbarian darts, fiery darts from hitting you, your armour and setting you on fire.

The devil wants to do that, he wants to set us on fire so that we no longer are witnesses for the Lord Jesus. You know I'm talking about being set on fire in a negative way. [00:25:01] The large Roman shield gave the soldier plenty of protection. The greater our faith, this is faith in a practical sense, faith, yes, for salvation is the most important thing, but what about faith practically in our lives? The greater our faith in the Lord, the more we shall be able to stand for him, whatever the difficulties we face in our lives.

In Psalm 22 verse, in Psalm 23 verse 4, the Psalmist was showing some evidence of the shield of faith. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

And in Hebrews chapter 2 verse 13, we read, the Lord Jesus himself says, I will put my [00:26:07] trust in him.

The Lord Jesus himself was marked by faith, do you realise that? As a man in this world, he was marked by trust. And in Romans chapter 5 verses 1 to 11, we see the outcome of one who puts his faith in God.

It's not just a positional thing, it's a practical thing. This is a fine helmet, isn't it? This is the helmet of salvation. I wish I had a helmet, well I have, I have got a helmet like this, but metaphorically of course, wear also the helmet of salvation.

The helmet enabled the soldier to fight effectively and boldly. If he didn't have a helmet on, why?

Someone would aim for his head. If you hit someone's head and injure it, then you really do make it difficult for him to fight intelligently and to fight confidently.

The more we know of our great salvation, the deeper our confidence and joy will be in our [00:27:07] lives.

You know, it's not a question of simply being saved for eternity. It's a wonderful thing to be saved for eternity, but you realize, young one, perhaps you don't realize that salvation in the scriptures goes beyond that. It means salvation from the power of sin and it means one day knowing the salvation of God from the presence of sin.

But today we need to know what it is to enjoy God's salvation from the power of sin. Very often we're only thinking in terms of the fact that I'm saved from hell, but salvation goes beyond that.

It's an extensive thing and some of the verses that I've put here convey that to us. Do we know that God's saving power affects every aspect of our lives?

If we do, then we shall be able to withstand in an evil day, despite the many attempts [00:28:04] the devil will make to try and disable us in our stand for the Lord.

And here we have some, the first offensive weapon, the sword of the spirit.

Handle the sword of the spirit, which is God's word. People used to say, have you got your sword? That's a good thing to say. I'm not going to criticize it too much. We all used to do that, yes. But really, of course, it's not our sword. It's the sword of the spirit. We have to remember that we can only use the word of God effectively as guided by the Holy Spirit.

The two matters go together. And the sword that the Apostle Paul is speaking about here is the short sword, very effective for close combat.

Sometimes the devil comes very close to us. Have we got the word of God in our heart so that we can use it to withstand him when he [00:29:02] attempts to defeat us and make us weak?

We can defeat God's enemies with his word if we use it in the power of the Holy Spirit. And then there's a secret weapon, praying at all times.

Of course, we're the brethren, we love seven.

We can't deal with six, so we've got to have a seventh weapon. I'm pleased to say that we've got a secret weapon that makes up our seven. And we're praying at all times. Are we praying at all times? I'm not praying at all times, as I should. But we're told so many times to pray, with all prayer and supplications, in the spirit, watching unto this very thing. With all perseverance and supplication, and for all the saints.

Notice how many times we get the word all.

All. The Lord Jesus was marked by prayer and supplication. [00:30:01] Strong crying and tears marked the Lord Jesus when he prayed.

And Daniel, he prayed three times a day.

And the Apostle Paul says, pray unceasingly.

And I can't resist sharing with you this sandwich that a brother spoke about from this very platform.

He once told the story of how a brother said to him, have you had your sandwich today?

And the brother said, what do you mean? He said, well, have you had your spiritual sandwich? And the spiritual sandwich is in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. And it is, rejoice evermore.

And then the filling is, pray without ceasing. And then the rest of the sandwich is, in everything give thanks. We need to eat our spiritual sandwich more often than we do. That will help us to stand in an evil day.

[00:31:05] Really these things are spiritual common sense. But the Apostle Paul lays them before us here. He says, unless you are wearing, you're using these seven pieces, these seven pieces of spiritual fighting equipment that God has used, you won't be able to stand and possess your spiritual blessings or put into practice the exhortations which I've given you, which should be part of your life, if you're going to stand for the things that I've written about in my letter, if you're going to really enjoy putting to practice those spiritual blessings. And remember it's for God's glory that we enjoy these spiritual blessings. Yes, we get so much out of them. But God gets his glory from them. And we need to remember this. But you know, these are the last few verses of the chapter. I've nearly finished. I'm sorry I've overrun. But Paul asked the Ephesians in these closing verses to pray [00:32:05] that utterance might be given to him in opening his mouth. Doesn't this show us the Apostle Paul didn't say these things from the sense of, I've done it all. You know, really, it's something for you to put into practice. I'm the perfect example. He never took that position. He said to these Ephesian saints, remember me. Utterance might be given to me in opening my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel. We've already mentioned he was an ambassador bound with a chain. He wanted to be bold to speak the gospel as he should. But wonderful thing, even though he was in this situation of being in this prison cell, and I'm sure it wasn't as good as this prison cell that we've got here. He sent Tychicus, a beloved brother, a faithful minister of the Lord, in the Lord. He sent him away to Ephesus.

[00:33:03] You know, we were talking about the unity of the spirit. Something we practice locally or

should do. But something we should practice with believers everywhere. And how the apostle Paul put this into practice. He sent Tychicus, his beloved brother. Beloved brother to Paul. He could have said, I can't do without you. You must stay with me. But no, he sent him. Faithful minister in the Lord to tell the Ephesians how he was getting on. They enjoyed, he knew that they would benefit from knowing how he was getting on.

And he wanted to encourage their hearts. And we need to encourage one another's hearts in this day. Because we need to know the remaining verses of this beautiful letter.

We need to know these in our lives. [00:34:01] Peace and love with faith.

From God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peace and love. Grace with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ without corruption. We live in a corrupt world.

But we shouldn't be marked by corruption. So let's be strong in the Lord.

Let's withstand and stand.

Let's put on the whole armour of God and keep it on. Not take it off. We've been talking about getting home. And sitting down.

Because in the Christian life there should never be a time when we take our armour off. We've got to keep it on. And we should be marked by prayer as that secret piece of armour. And we should encourage one another in the things of the Lord. Then together we shall enjoy the truth of Ephesians. We shall not only enjoy the spiritual blessings. [00:35:02] But our lives will be practically commensurate with them.

For the glory of God and for the blessing of his people. May it be so.