



Message **Transcript**

Dress for the Fight

Jeff Schwarzentraub

Pastor Jeff:

Father, we give You all glory, honor, and praise for who You are. And Lord, we pray that You would speak directly to each one of us today. Because Lord, we believe, we do believe that every time that Your Word is opened and that it's faithfully and it's accurately proclaimed, Lord, that You speak directly to the hearts of men and women and boys and girls. And we desire that today. That's why we've gathered. And so if you're here and you desire to hear the Lord, your prayer should be, "Speak, God, I want to hear what You have to say." So now for all those who have gathered who desire to hear the Lord speak directly to you, who will believe what He tells you, and who will by faith put into practice what He shows you, will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word, amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

Amen. Specific occasions call for specific attire. There are different ways that we dress based upon what we're doing or where we're going to go. In the military, the infantry wear different garments than you would wear to your job on a Monday through Friday. When the Denver Broncos suit up for a game, they wear different attire than you would wear if you were just going to a park. And it's interesting because when you watch people suit up, there's this part of us that wants to identify with who we like. So even at a Broncos game, it's the players that need to wear all of the garb and all of the

uniform. And yet, what we find so often is people in the stands are doing the same thing, even though they're never going to get called on to go down on the field, but they're wearing and identifying with that outfit. Specific occasions called for specific attire.

No more is this true than a wedding, right? I mean, when it comes to a wedding, no matter who it is, usually there's, always exceptions, but usually there's a type of attire that happens. The groom usually wears a tuxedo, and all of his groomsmen are dressed the same. He might have a nuance to his tuxedo because he's the head of it, but there's nothing quite like the bride, right? I mean, she picks out bridesmaids dresses that she's apparently thought for for her entire life as to what the color needs to be and how it needs to look. And then she wears a special type of outfit, and it's white. And what I learned is when I got married, this was a really big deal, to pick the exact right dress. I got engaged to my wife in November. We weren't getting married until May.

And after we got engaged, I went off to India to preach for a couple weeks, and all we had communication wise was internet back and forth. And so I was texting her like, "Are you excited? I'm excited. How's it going? How's the planning?" "It's great. I just can't find a dress." And I'm thinking, "How long does it take to do that?" So I started talking to my friends, and every time I would talk to her, she was like, "Yeah, I can't do it." Even after I got home, she would tell me, "I'm going to look for a dress today." And my task-oriented, problem-solving nature was like, "I'm praying for this. She's going to get it done today." And routinely, she would call me in the evening, she

would say... I'd say, "Did you find a dress?" She would say, "Nah, I didn't find it, but I had a lot of fun." And I was getting concerned because the date was approaching, and I thought, foolishly, she might need my help.

So I asked, "Do you want me to come with?" I'll go to Walmart and get a white dress. We can get this thing done fast, right? She's like, "No, I don't need your help." So she would be out with her friends and I would even call her, "How's it going today?" "It's not going so well, blah, blah, blah." Well, I remember the night after she had looked at dresses that she found the one, because I remember talking to her on the phone, and here's what the conversation went like, "How'd it go? You didn't find it, did you?" She was really sad. She's like, "Nah, I actually did." I said, "You did?" I'm like, "That's awesome. Why are you so sad?" She said, "Because I know I'm never, ever going to get to shop for a wedding dress ever again in my life." To which I said, "You mean you enjoyed this?" And she said, "Yes, except for you bugging me all the time."

I had no clue what a big deal it was, but I still remember what she looked like coming down the aisle, and I'm still in love with that girl today because there's specific... Amen? Because specific occasions call for specific attire. When it comes to our Christian walk, God has given us some garments that we're called to wear, that we're called to put on, that He wants us to robe ourself in, so to speak. And yet, for so few people, they understand what those garments are or how to put them on. And as we've been talking about waging war, this is how you dress for the fight. So if you ever want to know how to dress for the Lord, here's what you can do. Open your Bible up to Ephesians chapter six this morning. Ephesians chapter six verses 14 through 17,

Ephesians chapter six verses 14 through 17, and to bring you up to speed, if you weren't here last week, we talked about the fact that in this spiritual battle that we face, we're not against other people. It's not flesh and blood that's our enemy.

It's the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly realms that we can't see that oftentimes manifests themselves through people, and we need to fight the source of the problem, not the people that have those problems. In verse 13, He says, "Therefore, take up the full armor of God so that you'll be able to resist in the evil day. And having done everything, to stand firm." We talked about what this means is, when it comes to evil, we as Christians are called to choose righteousness and to choose good and to make a decision to oppose that which is wrong and stand firm on the word of God as we continue to take steps for His kingdom. And then He's going to tell us how to dress. Now, for many people, if you grew up in a traditional church, you would think it would say, "Wear a coat and tie." Or you would think it says, "Wear a dress and something over your head."

But that's not what He tells us. Here's what He tells us. Listen to the word of the Lord. Here's how you dress for the Lord. He says in verse 14 of Ephesians, chapter six, "Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. In addition to all, taking up the shield of faith, which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." Now, just by show of hands, how many have heard this before? I'm just curious. Okay. What I feel is in church, this has

been taught so much that it becomes white noise to us, and we think back to some pastor or Bible teacher or some quiet time we've had with the Lord that we've really owned this and learned this.

And so as I teach this today, I don't want this to be white noise. So I'm actually going to teach from three different perspectives, the same garment. So we're going to go through these pieces of armor three different times. The first group I want to talk to are those of you who do not have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ yet. Maybe you're new to church, maybe you are new to the things of God. Maybe you got dragged here by a friend. Maybe you don't even understand what it means, and all this language about being saved and all these different things, it doesn't even make sense to you. I want to talk about why it's important for you to be clothed in the things of Christ, why it's important for you. In case you didn't know, if you came to church, God has a way He wants you to dress.

Then I want to talk to some of you who are Christians who come to know the Lord through repentance and faith, that believe in who He is, that God wants to strengthen. God wants you to grow. You're saved, but you're stagnant. You wonder why it is that other Christians are growing at a rate that you don't consider yourself able to grow. And I'm going to show you how these pieces of armor will help you. And then third, I want to talk to a group of you that are strengthened in the Lord. You've been saved, you're strengthened, but we have to realize that Jesus Christ put us on mission and what it looks like to wear that armor when we're sent out into the mission

field and how we can put that armor on and use it for our benefit when God calls us to share the gospel with other people.

And so my hope is as we do this, not that you remember every little thing that I say, but from your perspective, maybe there's one point or one illustration or one thing that the Lord shows you this morning through His Holy Spirit that you say, "That's what I needed." When that's it, you write that down and you put that into practice. So the first group I want to talk to is those who do not know the Lord. I want to give you the reason that you need to put on Christ. And before I tell you that, you go through the book of Ephesians. Ephesians chapter four, you go through the book of Colossians, and Colossians chapter three, and here's what the gospel's all about. In the way of your former way of thinking, put off the old and what put on that which is new.

The Bible says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have been made new," right? That's what this whole message is about for the nonbeliever. So let me give you the first reason, to those of you who do not know the Lord, why you need to put on all these garments. It's because of this, that Christ saves and satisfies. If you haven't put on these elements, you need to know something. Christ not only saves, but He satisfies. Hear the word of the Lord. He says, "Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness." Now, when it says gird your loins with truth, that may sound kind of funny to us, but a Roman soldier would've had a tunic underneath and in order to run, he would've had to pull it up or he would've been running in a dress.

And so the belt is what fastened all the pieces of armor together and gave him the freedom to move and do what he did. Truth is central to everything that God is. What you are looking for, whether you realize it or not, is truth. Some of you think, "I'm looking for a new job. I'm looking for a new girlfriend. I'm looking for a new boyfriend. I'm looking for my marriage to work. I'm looking for somebody to get healed." That is not essentially what you're looking for. What you're looking for first is truth. The question you're asking yourself is, why in this world that's spinning out of control, I can't seem to find any bedrock, any ground? Who can I trust? What can I trust? Here's your answer. You ready? Jesus. He's the embodiment of truth. That's why He said this in John 14:6, "I am the way the," say it with me, "truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through Me."

The only way you can be satisfied in your life is with the truth of Jesus Christ. What you are looking for, even if you don't realize it or not, you are looking for a personal relationship with Jesus because He embodies truth. John 17:3 says, "Now this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God," the true God, "and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent." Jesus said in John 17:17, "Sanctify them in truth. Thy word is truth." To know Jesus is to know truth. He will tell you the truth because He is the truth. What you are looking for in this world is truth. That fastens everything together. When you are around a bunch of people or media or schools or whatever that are lying to you, and they say this and they do... Jesus will never lie. Our God cannot lie. He tells the truth. Amen?

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

But what about the next piece, this breastplate of righteousness? This breastplate is what covers all of your vitals, all your vital organs. I mean, it just covers you, your heart, your lungs, your liver, your kidney. I mean, it just covers you. So if you are in a battle, you're moving forward, you're covered with this. Well, what does He want us to be covered with? Righteousness. Now, why? Now I'm going to read a verse I read last week in 1 Corinthians chapter six, verses nine through 11. It's a verse that when I read is an equal opportunity offender.

He says this, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" Unrighteous people don't get in. If you're unrighteous, you can't make it into heaven. If you're unrighteous, you can't have a relationship with God. It's impossible. Notice what He says. "Do not be deceived." Don't think, "Well, I think I'm good enough and I think I've done it good enough. And if God doesn't want me..." Don't be deceived. Don't lie to yourself. You're not righteous, you're not getting in. Neither fornicators nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexual, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindler will inherit the kingdom of God." Not entering. Now, that should bother us, because all of us fit in that definition somewhere. The Bible says before you trust Christ, you are unrighteous. You are dead in your sins. You are blind to your sins. You are held captive by your sins. You are going into direction of your sins. You are heading away from Jesus, and everything

about you is dead and unrighteous.

So what you need is what? Righteousness. Where are you going to get that? Jesus Christ is the righteous one. Jesus Christ wants to clothe you in His righteousness. If you're unrighteous and you say, "I just want to find the right religion, I just want to find the right spirituality, I want to find the right diet, I want to find the right exercise program, I'm just going to do all these things," you can do all that and find some success in life. But what you won't find is righteousness, because Jesus Christ, the Righteous One, is the only one that offers it. When Jesus Christ came as the Righteous One, He was born of a virgin, Mary.

He's fully God, He's fully man. He never sinned. He fulfilled the law, and then when He went to the cross, He died in your place for all your sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to do what? To bring you to God. So not only are you looking for truth this morning, if you're not a believer, you're looking for righteousness, and I'm telling you, the only place that you're going to get it is Jesus. There is no other place. That's why I can say with authority, when Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through Me." Muhammad won't give it to you. Confucius won't give it to you. Buddha won't give it to you. Any other made up religion won't... Only the Lord Jesus Christ can make you righteous. And when you turn... Amen. Let's give God praise for that.

So the gospel is not about trying to be righteous or trying to get better. It's by admitting I'm not, and I'm in need of His righteousness and I want to put on His garment, that breastplate. I want to be covered in His righteousness so that when He

sees me, He sees me as righteous, not because of my behavior, but because I'm clothed in Him. Amen? That's what we see. Let's keep reading. Not only we need the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness, but what does the word tell us? It says, "And having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. In addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you'll be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one."

For those of you that don't know the gospel, here's what being ready with the gospel means, have an open heart to what you're hearing. It's interesting for me that when I talk to different people that don't believe in Jesus, there's a different level of readiness for the gospel. Some people say things like this, "I'm open. If it's true, if I can see it, if I can believe, I'll place my faith in it." And yet there are others that would say something like this, "You can't tell me what to do. I know that's wrong. There's no way I'm..." They're shut off. They don't have an open heart. If you're here today, here's what I would say, just have an open heart. If you're hostile towards Jesus, here's my question, why? Where do you think all that hostility comes from? Who are you mad at? The God of the universe loved you so much He sent His Son Jesus to die for you so that He could be in relationship with you.

Why is it you don't mind people talking about religion or morality or country or God or anything? That doesn't bother you, but when we talk about the Lord Jesus Christ being the only way to heaven, something goes off in your heart and you're... Why do you think that is? Because there's a spiritual attack on your soul and the enemy doesn't want you to know that Jesus Christ is Lord. And here's the good news.

I got great news. The good news of the gospel is Jesus does not ask you to get religious. Jesus just wants you to be in relationship with Him. Amen?

Congregation:

Amen. That's right.

Pastor Jeff:

There's a lot of people that say they're rejecting Jesus. They're not really rejecting Jesus. They're rejecting other people that claim that they knew Jesus or they saw something bad happen or this happened. I'm rejecting all that. If you saw the beauty and the fullness of Christ on this platform right now, here this morning, you would fall to your face and worship Him, because the Bible says that, "At the name of Jesus, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." You will do that, whether you believe it or not, but you get one chance on this side of heaven to be clothed with the gospel. Are you ready to hear it? Even if you're here today and you're brand new or you feel... Open your heart to the truth, open your heart to His righteousness, be willing to experience that God genuinely loves you. He loves you. Amen?

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

What's His shield of faith? Notice what he says. He says His shield of faith for a

nonbeliever is the readiness to believe and surrender. When you come to Christ, here's what the gospel is. It's not about good works. It's not about keeping the law. It's not about trying to please God. It's not about I got spiritual. It's not about I got religion. It's about this. I can't do anything to make God pleased, other than believe that He's the one that's worthy and I want Him. I want Him. And here's what those of us would say, praise God if you believe this, Jesus not only saves, He's satisfying. Amen? Can we praise God for that?

There's nothing I would want. If you took everything out of my life, as long as I had Jesus, I have everything I need. Everything's going to work. He's satisfying. In other words, when I place my faith in Him, His fullness comes to live in me. His joy, His hope, His peace, the fact He's in control of the world and that with all the chaos going on, He thinks about me and He loves me. He thinks about our church and He loves our church. He's got good things planned. But it comes through faith in Him. Faith in Him means I'm going to turn from living my life my own way and doing my own thing, and I'm going to go all in with Jesus. I'm going to take a step of faith with Him. And as we say all the time, the hardest step of faith you'll ever take is what? It's the next one.

If you're a non-believer, the hardest step of faith you will ever take is to turn from your sin and trust the Lord Jesus Christ. And then notice what He says. What other garments does He have? He says, "And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." The helmet of salvation is something that you need to put on. Much like a football player is no good holding his helmet in his hand, salvation is no good with you just messing around with it, hearing about it. You got to

put this salvation on. You need to put on this new identity. It's not automatic. You weren't born wearing the helmet of salvation. Now, here's why we think we were, because some of us grew up in religious traditions and we had helmets that we wore. And here's what they said on the side of those helmets, Methodist, Independent Fundamental Baptist, Pentecostal, Charismatic, Non-Denominational, Evangelical Free. We have all the different head gear that we wear. Friends, that headgear doesn't do anything for you.

Salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ is everything, and you got to put it on. So the question comes, when did you put on the helmet of salvation? When was the moment in your life that you said, "I'm done wearing this headgear, I'm done living for this, I'm done protecting my mind with those things, I want the fullness of Jesus and I don't care who sees, I want the world to know I belong to him"? When did that happen? Now, you may not remember the exact moment or date or time or what time zone you were in. You may not know all that, but there's a chance, and for sure you would know, if you were living unrighteously and all of a sudden you got clothed in the righteousness of God by faith in Christ, what would you do? You would be totally different. Amen? Here's my... When did that happen for you? Hey, I'm asking all of you that attend BRAVE on a regular basis. When did that happen for you?

Congregation:

December 1993.

Pastor Jeff:

Amen. We know. I did some research to find out when I got saved in young life. I actually got saved on July 8th, 1989, which July 8th happens to be my dad's birthday. Now I'll never forget it, right? You may not know the exact day. It's okay, but you would know a timeframe that I went from there to there. I was dead. Now I'm alive. I was lost. Now I'm found. I was an enemy. Now I'm a friend, and I'm never going back. You would know that. And if you don't know that, you don't know that Jesus I'm preaching to you about. And He's saying this, "Come today. Surrender to Me today." It's by grace through faith. It's not your own doing. It's a gift. Receive the gift. Amen? And then there's this final piece called the sword of the Spirit. Romans 10:17 says, "Faith comes through hearing and hearing through the word of Christ." It's the spoken word of God.

When the word of God is spoken, it has the ability to convict your heart, piercing and dividing both soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the attitudes and the intentions of the heart. That's why when you hear the word of God, it can be comfortable, it can be offensive, it can be any number of things because it's God speaking directly to you. I believe every time that this book is preached that God is speaking to you in some way, it's Him that's talking to you. It's Him that's letting you know how much He loves you, right? That's the sword of Spirit. Are you open to that? Because some people get offended by the Bible. You're not offended by the Bible. You're offended at the power of God's word.

Man, I've been preaching for 20 something years. I've been pastoring this church for 13. There's been rare a message where somebody doesn't get up and leave while

I'm preaching. And I know sometimes people have to go to the bathroom, and I get it. Sometimes you got to leave early for a game. I get it. But I know there's other times when I say something and three people are like, "Boom, we out." I'm like, "You're not mad at me. You're mad that the spoken word of God and the sword of the Spirit cut you in a place that you weren't willing to be cut." Amen?

So if you're here today, you just want to hear some Word, let me let me tell you something. Let me just give you a couple scriptures about Christ's righteousness and the gospel. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." 1 John 4:10 says, "This is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a propitiation for our sin." John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him would not perish but would have eternal life." I mean, this is God saying to you, "I love you. I care about you. I want a relationship with you. Will you come to me? What's keeping you? What's in your way?" Come clothed in the righteousness of God. God's willing to give you a garment so that you're prepared to meet him.

There's a parable in the New Testament, in the Gospel of Matthew, where there's a wedding banquet and different groups of people come in, and some of the people are dressed for the wedding and some of the people aren't. And when the master of the house, who's representing God, sees that some people aren't dressed properly, he says, "Who let these people in? They don't belong to the wedding party,

kick them out." Friends, the only way you're going to experience eternity with Christ is to put on the fullness of Christ through His truth, through His righteousness, through His gospel, by faith. Amen? That's how we come to know Him. And to put on that helmet of salvation and to let the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, be your direction and your directive to lead you to Christ.

If you're here today, make today your day. Say, "How do I do that?" Just say this right where you're sitting, "Lord, I'm surrendering to you right now. I need all that. Come in my life. I want to turn for my sin. I want to give you everything." Just come. He'll take you right as you are. Amen?

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

Ain't that good news? Now, if we're looking at it from a perspective of those who are what the Bible would call lost or enemies or those that are outside the camp, God calls you in. Let's take a look at those of you who know Christ, but you're not really growing in Christ. You're spiritually stunted in your growth, and let's walk back through these same passages and talk about this. Because Christ not only saves and satisfies, which is the great joy that we have, but Christ strengthens and sanctifies. Christ strengthens and sanctifies.

Where do I go? Where's my help come from? Psalm 120, "My help comes from the Lord, the maker of the heavens and the earth." The Lord is my strength. The joy of

the Lord is my strength. He can strengthen me and He can grow me in holiness. Some of us, when you hear Pastor talk about you need to live more holy, we think that means I'm going to go try. Good luck. You can't grow in holiness. Christ can grow you in holiness. So how does that work? Well, it starts again with that belt of truth. It's growing in truth. There's a pervasive need in our culture everywhere for truth, but specifically in the lives of the saints. When people are not operating in truth, they're operating in error. And where there's error, there's confusion, frustration, lifelessness, sin, and a lack of hope. I mean, you may know about the Word and how God designed marriage or how God designed your singleness or how God designed how to work for somebody or how to be a boss or employee.

You may know about it, but you may not know how to implement it. We need to grow in our understanding of truth. That's why good preaching will help you grow in your understanding of truth. Good times in the Word by yourself or with other people will help you grow in your understanding of truth. Scripture memory, scripture meditation on the Word. These things will change your life. You can't grow apart from knowing the truth. You have to grow in truth. Sometimes in a church, people think the only truth you need to know is that Jesus Christ is Lord. If you get that, everything else is good. No. If you get that, there's entrance into the kingdom, and that's the start. It's called new birth.

But just like we don't leave babies at the hospital and say, "Good luck. See you in 18 years. Call me if you need anything." When people are new in Christ, they need to grow in the truth. Get in a Bible teaching church. Get around people that study the

Word. Learn how to study the Word. That's how you grow in the things of God. The more truth you know, the more error you'll expose, not only in the lives of other people, but in your own life. You'll start seeing error, like, "I believed this my whole life. And this isn't true because it doesn't say that in the Bible, but that's what I was taught by my parents or that's what I was taught by my pastor." It's not right, because this is what the Word says. The Word is always true. You can take it to the bank. It's not only true now, but Jesus told us not one jot or tittle will be changed for all eternity.

The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our Lord stands for how long? Forever. So grow in truth, if you grow in truth, it'll change your life. How about that breastplate of righteousness? Pastor Jeff, you said, "I got that breastplate at salvation, so what do I need to do with it?" Well, when you put it on, then you need to start practicing the righteousness that Christ has given to you. You need to start letting that work out. The Bible says nowhere that you're to work for your salvation. But the Bible does say in Philippians to work out your salvation. Let Christ's righteousness live through you. Right? When God gives you strength to act according to His Word, you will get strong and you'll grow in holiness, right? What I mean by that is this, if you want to grow in truth and you want to start practicing righteousness, God will give you opportunities every day to do it.

If you're married, you have an ongoing opportunity to practice righteousness all the time. If you're a single in our culture, you have an ongoing opportunity to practice righteousness in a way that's opposite of our culture. If you're an employee, you have an opportunity to practice righteousness. If you're an employer, you have an

opportunity to practice righteousness. If you're a neighbor, you have an opportunity to practice righteousness. Why is it that you think, "Man my life, not everything works out great"? It's because God has sovereignly designed opportunities for you to grow in your strength, and you can't change your circumstance, but Christ coming through you can change the result of what's going on. Amen? I didn't realize this. My wife and I call marriage heavenly sandpaper, because in a marriage where a husband's called to love his wife like Christ loved the church, that's not just dying for her, because guys, you know sometimes I'd rather just be dead than keep doing this, right?

Dying was the easy part. It's everything that suffered leading up to it that was hard. And wives, submit to your husbands as unto Christ. I mean, how impossible is that apart from the... You can't. But wives, on the daily, on the hour, you have every opportunity to submit to your husband like as to Christ. And husbands, on the daily, the hourly, you have every opportunity to preference your wife and lay down your life and put her preferences first. And when you do those things, you get strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. If you come out of a background of drug use and abuse and those kind of things and you start making decisions to not hang out in certain places and not hang out with certain people and you start saying no to certain things, you'll get stronger in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

So this is the place to practice righteousness. Where I say this, there's times where God says, "I need you to stop doing that," or, "I need you to start doing this," or, "I need you to do what you're doing just a little bit differently." That's what it means to practice righteousness. That's what it means to grow in righteousness. And as a

saint, you have opportunities around you all the time. And most of the time when those things happen, we want God to change our circumstances and God says, "I don't want to change your circumstances. I want Christ's righteousness to come through you. I want My truth to come through you. I want you to be who I want you to be." How about this one? Let your yes be yes and your no be no.

Let your word count for something. You made a commitment. You told them you're coming and then this came up and this is a way better opportunity. But the Bible says let your yes be yes. And so you tell them no because you already told them yes. Every time you do that, you start growing in the strength of Christ and He starts sanctifying you and chiseling you and making you stronger in Him, and that's how you grow in holiness. And then what about the next one? It's readiness for the gospel. It's readiness for the gospel. When you get saved, you get put on team Jesus. We're going to talk about that in the next section, but God wants you to be ready. He wants you to be ready for the gospel. It's a mindset of others. It's viewing the world as either in need of Christ or hungry for Christ. You start seeing yourself as every relationship that I'm in, I'm either helping direct someone towards Christ or helping them and encouraging them to grow in Christ.

That's why God has me on this planet, and I got my feet planted firmly in the ground. Like with cleats, the Roman soldiers would drive nails through the bottom of their sandals so they could grab the turf and be strong so they wouldn't give up any ground because they're moving forward, and they're getting ready to go out. And so

they start viewing the world, like Paul says, we don't view anyone from the world from a worldly perspective anymore, or according to the flesh. We view everyone from God's perspective. And from God's perspective, as He looks at the world, He doesn't look at our groups that we're in or our political parties we affiliate or the teams that we serve or the offices we work.

Here's how He looks at the world. "I died for them and they haven't come to Me yet and I love them and I gave My whole life to demonstrate it. Will anybody tell them?" And He looks at them like this, "They're saved and they're My child and I want them to grow in the fullness of what I've designed them to be. And I put you guys on mission as a church to go help them do that. Would you help Me?" That's what it means to be ready for the gospel. That means all the other distractions that get in our way are coming from the evil one because that's where we stand. We stand firm on the gospel, the good news of Christ, both for the saved and the unsaved. And then how about the shield of faith? The shield of faith means after you take a step of faith to believe Christ, you continue to take steps for Christ believing Him more. It's this, stop doubting. Your best days are ahead of you.

When you come to Christ, you took that great step of faith, some of us think, "That's it. I'm done." No, you just got started, bro. Sister, you just began what we call a walk. So you take a step of faith here and step of faith here and step of faith here. And you know what the hardest step is? The very next one you're going to take. They don't get any easier. Sometimes they get bigger or they seem bigger, but every time you take a step, you are stepping where you can't see, you're stepping where God needs

to come in. And so if you refuse to take steps of faith, your muscles, spiritual muscles begin to atrophy, because all the time if you said, "Lord, is there something you want me to do?" He can show you. Start doing this. Stop doing this. What you're doing here, just do that a little bit differently. That's a step of faith. And oftentimes, we're waiting for the one that everybody else is watching. "If you call me to go to New Guinea, raise a million dollar. I'm in, God. Just don't ask me to forgive my mom."

We don't want to do the things He wants us to do. And if you're faithful in the little, He'll let you be faithful with much. Take the little step of faith. Take the one that nobody sees. That's how your muscles get strong. Don't say what you want to say. Sometimes say what you don't want to say. God is the one that's growing you and doing those things. That's how you get your spiritual muscles strong, is by continuing to take steps of faith, believing that God is where I'm at, but He's moving and I want to move with Him. Amen? And then that helmet of salvation, that's growing in your identity.

It's putting it on all the time, because there's this tendency after we come to Christ to say, "Well, I put it on. I got this really nice helmet. Let me put it on my shelf. Isn't that a cool helmet? Doesn't that look nice? It says Jesus Christ on it, glows. Isn't that neat?" God wants us to put it on and to wear it so that everyone knows this is who we are. So that when people see us, they see truth and they see righteousness and they see the gospel and they see faith and they see our identity being lived out. And why is that so important? Because the devil wants to rob you of your identity. He wants you to hear a pastor say, "You're coming to Christ not because of what you do, but

because of the gift that God gave you and you're coming by faith and that's it." And then after you come to Christ, he lies to you and said, "It's all about works now. You better work really, really hard or God's going to be mad at you."

No, he's not. Christ already died for you and rose for you. He can't love you any more than He already does. He can't love you any less. He's Jesus. That's who He is. Amen? But this stuff gets robbed from us in an instant because we live in a world where even when we're trying to practice righteousness, we mess up. And sometimes we don't even know that we messed up until later. I remember when I was attending seminary at Dallas Seminary. When I was in college, I didn't even know cheating was a sin. I didn't. I knew getting good grades was important. By the time I was getting trained and I went to seminary, one of the things I had prayed about was, Lord, I can't, quote, "cheat" my way through seminary and become a pastor. So Lord, you're going to have to help me, because school's not my forte. And I remember when I went to school, I started studying and reading and studying and reading. I was a slow reader. I had to learn how to read fast and do all this stuff.

And I did really well because it was something I enjoyed studying. But I remember after I moved from one seminary to another, I ended up at Dallas Seminary, I had an opportunity to get out of a class because I'd already taken it at the previous seminary and I got an A in it, but I was like, "No, I want to take it again because this class is... This guy wrote the book on this." And it was a Greek grammar class. Lord knows why I said that. I took that class. It was the hardest class I ever took in my whole life. One of the things we had to do, remember in middle school when you

diagrammed sentences in English and you had all those lines coming off? We had to do that for the book of Philippians in Greek. That's what we were doing, which started off as kind of a fun exercise.

I like rolling through it slowly, but as the semester rolled on and as other things got busy and other books had to be read, I started making my way to the library to see if I could find a book that could help. Wouldn't you know at Dallas Seminary there's a book at Dallas Seminary on the book of Philippians diagrammed? And I said, "This'll help." So I started just... I'd do this and I'd check my answers, and that's how it started. But by the end of semester when things got busy, there were times I just copied it down. Now, I didn't think about anything at the time. I wasn't even having a thought, "You're doing something wrong." That's just what I did. And one day I'm having my quiet time and I'm spending time with the Lord because I want to grow in truth. I want to grow in the Word and all this. And I'm like, "Search me and try me, oh Lord, see if there's any offensive way in me and lead me to the way everlasting."

And this is what I heard the Lord say to me, now, not out loud, not an out loud voice, just down in my spirit. And all I heard was this, "You cheated." And He took me right back to the library. And here's what I said, "I didn't cheat. I just got some help from a book." "You cheated." How many of you know when the Lord lays His hand on you, no matter where you read in the Bible, that's all you're going to hear? For two weeks, that's all I heard. And here's what I started to do to the Lord. "Lord, I already passed the class at the last seminary I was at. I got an A. I don't need this class. And

Lord, I'm not going in, because if I tell my teacher there's an honor code at our school, and I'm going to get kicked out of school. And I can't go into ministry if I get kicked out of school for being a cheater, so I'm not doing it, forget it."

How many of you know that God has that way of putting weight on your shoulders until you can't handle it anymore? Finally, I'm at the place I'm like, "I don't care if they kicked me out of school. I just don't want to feel this way again. I want to be free." So I went into my professor one day. I told him exactly what I did. I said, "I'm not making any excuses. I'm just telling you what I did." And I told him. And he's like, "Okay, thanks for telling me." I'm like, "What happens now?" He goes, "You're going to get a zero." And I said, "Anything else?" He's like, "No." I said, "Can I still pass your class?" He said, "Yep." Because I was like, "I'm not taking this thing a third time."

And that was it. I walked out of his office so light, like, "I'm never cheating again." I didn't cheat again. Man, I'm not doing that, because I didn't want to do it again. Amen? A week later, I got my paper back, the one I told him I cheated on that he was going to give me a zero on. Got it back, a hundred. I remember looking at this, "Wait a second." I was tempted to go back to him and tell him, "Did you not understand what I said?" And then it hit me. He was modeling for me what Christ modeled for me. You confessed your sin, you deserve a zero. You deserve failure. You probably deserve to get kicked out of school. I'm going to give you a hundred because you confessed your sin and you're free now. That's the gospel y'all.

That's what it means to put on your identity in who you are in Christ. And then finally is the sword of the Spirit. It's growing in your ability to speak the Word of God in

every situation. The sword of the Spirit is speaking God's Word. It's when you're so filled with His Spirit and His Word well enough that at different opportunities, the Word kind of comes out of you. Sometimes when I preach, I'm saying scripture I didn't plan on saying. Sometimes when I'm in a conversation, it reminds me of a scripture where I either say the scripture or tell people what the scripture says, because just I wasn't looking for it. It just kind of came out of me, right? That's the sword of the Spirit. And one of the things that will happen for you is as God begins to speak His Word through you, you will be strong and you will grow and you'll be strengthened and you'll be sanctified.

And what will happen is it's not like you're going to put yourself on display, like, "Look at how holy I am now." You won't do that. Usually it's when you look back over your life and you're like, "A decade ago, I can't believe that I was wallowing in that because look where God's brought me. And I can't imagine where God's going to bring me over the next decade. And I know when I meet Him face to face, I'm completely cleansed and I'm going to be presented faultless before the Father." I'm so excited about that. But it's practicing those things. And so the armor of God is for the believer that's stagnant. Clothe yourself in Christ, live in the truth and His righteousness and the gospel and His faith. Put on the helmet of salvation for your identity and use the sword of the Spirit. Speak the Word of God.

Now, how about those of you who are here today that would say, "Well, I believe that. I am saved. I know I am saved. I'm strong"? Here's the third reason you need to put on the armor, because Christ sends and supplies. Jesus Christ put us on mission. I

don't know if you know that or not, but if you forget every word of the great commission, here's one word you need to not forget. Go. If you get everything else wrong, just go. Just go. And I don't know that this comes third, I don't know if this is linear. Sometimes I really believe that you get strengthened and sanctified as you're going. So this isn't in any order. Matter of fact, if you're saved, you can go tell somebody about Jesus today. And as you do, you're going to strengthen and grow.

All these things are together. They overlap. I'm just doing this to highlight some truths. But when Christ sends, not only does He send you, He gives you everything you need to go on that mission. Whether it's money, whether it's resources, whether it's the Word, whether it's the ability, whether it's the talent, the stuff that you don't have when you go, you'll have when you get there. My God will meet all of your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. One of the reasons we don't go on mission is because we don't trust that God's going to show up when we get there. He's going to be there. So what do we need? We need the belt of truth. That's the confidence that everywhere you go there's a need for truth or people get hurt. There's a need for truth or people get hurt, right?

Everywhere you go in this world, there's nowhere you can go that you can't be on mission. You can go in your school and be on mission. "Yeah, but I go to a Christian school." Trust me, you can be on real mission at a Christian school. You can go to work and be on mission. "Yeah, but I work in a church." You can be on mission in a church. Hopefully the people in your church are saved. You can be on mission in your

neighborhood.

You can be on mission at the mall. You can be on mission at an athletic event. You're always on mission. And the truth is that I'm seeing the world through the eyes of God, which means everybody I'm coming across is either in need of Christ or hungry for Christ, and I can help. That's what mission looks like. And I want to be on mission, so when I wake up in the morning, "God, how do you want to use me today? You've given me life. You've given me breath. How do I stay on mission for You?" What does it look like to speak truth into situations? I don't know if you know about this. We'll talk about it in the coming weeks. Our world's not living in truth. That was a place for an amen. I got like three. Our world is not living in truth.

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

Okay. So you bring a conduit of truth to the world in whatever sphere of influence that you're in. You're the conduit of God's grace. You're His ambassador on this side of heaven representing Him. And what's the breastplate of righteousness? The breastplate of righteousness is willingness to put your righteousness on display at all times. It's not about your behavior, it's about Christ's righteousness in you. It means always be prepared to give reason for the hope you have within you. It means I'm going to live righteously because I never know when I'm going to bump into somebody that God's going to use me for. You don't take the day off, you don't take the... You

can go on vacation. You can go out to eat. You can do...

Everywhere you go, your eyes are always attentive to living righteously for Christ, because some of us have chameleon Christian lives where, "Hope Pastor Jeff doesn't show up here and see me." If I do, I love you. But some of us have these lives that we live this way over here and then we live this way over here. And here's what God says, "No, no, not when you're on mission for Me. Live your life for Me." Let people see it in you, and not so that when you share the gospel... I've heard people say this, "Oh, you think you're just better than me." Here would be my response to that. I'm sorry if I led you to believe that. I don't think I'm better than you at all. What I'm trying to say is that one time I was dead in my sins and I was angry when people pointed it out to me. And I'm no better than you, but I embraced Christ's righteousness and He put that all over me. And I'm a different person now because of that. And I'm telling you, He's willing to do that for you.

The gospel is not you telling other people that are bad how to get better. The gospel is you were dead and now you're alive and you're showing dead people how they can be made alive, too. Amen? That's living out Christ's righteousness in your life. That's what we want to put on display. And when we don't get it right, what do we do? We repent. God, I was wrong here. I need to apologize to that person there. I need to say the way I handled that wasn't right. The tone I used was wrong. All these different things. That's the breastplate of righteousness.

And then what about the readiness for the gospel? The readiness for the gospel is praying and looking for opportunities. It's when we're intentional about today I'm

going out, I'm going to see a lot of different people. Lord, open up the doors. And how many of you know there's doors that God opens and there's doors that he doesn't open? Sometimes you think it's going to be this, I'm going to totally share. I'm going to totally get... And nothing happens. And then there's other times that somebody's basically standing right in front of you like, "Okay, what's this faith you believe in?" And usually when people do that, it's the time that you don't want to be bothered.

So we keep an open mindset. "Where are you working today, God, and how can I join you in what you're doing?" Right? Think about what it says in Romans 10. In Romans chapter 10, as the apostle Paul is writing this letter here's what he says. Romans chapter 10, verse 13. He says it like this, "For whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved." You call on Jesus' name, He'll save you. But notice what he says. "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? And how will they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news?" Let me just tell you from the authority of God's word, you're all sent.

God's sending you all on mission for the gospel. Have your feet ready, be planted. Be looking around, like, "I'm ready. If it comes my way, I'm ready. If it doesn't come my way, I'm still ready, because I know it will someday." Amen? And then what's the shield of faith? The shield of faith is believing that God can change hearts. The shield of faith is also keeping you from getting distracted from the enemy and staying on mission. Now, listen, what's he firing? Fiery arrows. Fiery darts. Have you ever

wondered why they're fiery? If I'm going to get shot through with an arrow, I really don't care if it's on fire or not. That's really not my problem. It's going to go through me and then burn a little. Who caress? I'm dead. What's the deal? What's the idea of a fiery arrow?

Do you know what it's used for? When you shoot a fiery arrow, it's the idea, if I miss, I'm going to hit something that's going to burn and it's going to distract my opponent. I'm telling you, if you think it's hard to keep your identity as a believer, wait until you step out in faith. You step out in faith and ask God to supply, and the enemy's going to start firing it all over the place. And guess what? It's going to hit in your family or it's going to hit with your health, or it's going to hit somewhere else. So that right when you're ready to go do mission, here's what's going to happen, happens every time we take a mission trip, happens Every time somebody steps out to plant a church, it happens every time somebody says, "I'm going to join a group." It happens all the time.

There's a distraction of something that goes on with health or finances or job or this, and then you say this. Here's what you say, "I just can't do it right now. I'm too busy." No, that was a fiery dart and you didn't have your shield of faith up, because when you have your shield of faith up, you're like, "Okay, God, I'm still walking. You're going to help me pick the pieces up here, but I am not forsaking the mission you called me to. I will not be distracted by the fiery darts of the enemy." That's what it means to put on the shield of faith. Amen?

And then the helmet of salvation. We've talked about that. It's a covering for your life. It's your identity. It guards your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus. Why? Because it's so quick that even if you believe all the truths about who Christ is in you, that you're loved and you're cherished and you're honored and you're blessed and you're forgiven and the enemy can't touch you, life happens and we forget that. I remember when I was at the University of Illinois, my final year, my friend and I were hosting a Fellowship of Christian Athletes banquet, the catcher for the Montreal Expos. Remember that team? Catcher for the Montreal Expos was a Christian. He was the keynote speaker. My friend and I were doing this. We had just gotten back from a bowl game in Texas. I had bought boots for the first time, wasn't used to having a heel on my boot.

I was all duded up that night. I had a trench coat. I looked good. Guys, I had hair back then. It was all slicked back. I looked good. It was one of those nights I was just like, "Man, I feel good. I look good. This is going to be a great night." And my friend pulled up in the car and I stepped off the stairs to go meet him. Unfortunately, I wasn't used to walking in boots, and my boot missed the step, and I went head first rolling down eight cement stairs. The only thing I saw was the wheel of his car. And as I was pulling myself up, noticing I ripped my jeans. I'm bleeding through and all this stuff, and I pull myself up. My friend has doubled over the steering wheel because he can't stop laughing.

And I could tell you what I did not say in my head is, "I am so fearfully and wonderfully made. The Lord is my strength." Here's what unraveled in a moment,

"You're an idiot. You can't even walk down stairs. Now look at you. You're bleeding. This night is over. Too bad you can't go in and change clothes because you're too lazy to do your laundry. You have nothing to wear right now. This is going to be a miserable night." And it all happened that fast. Ever happened to you? That's why I got to put on the helmet, because I got to remind myself in those moments, now I'm still a child of God. This is going to pass. It's going to be okay. I'm going to get through this. I know who I am. I'm still on mission. I'm living for him. That's what it looks like. Amen?

Put on the helmet of salvation. You're not a failure. You're not a loser. I think when people step out in ministry sometimes and step out in a bigger step, I know when God was calling me to ministry, I kept saying to Him, "It's not me that You want." I wasn't homeschooled. I didn't grow up in this solid environment where I didn't see things or experience things. My college experience was not what you would want from a pastor. And as the Lord kept calling me, I'm like... All this shame would come over my life. I'm no good. I can't do this, God, because if people really knew who I was, they'd say, "He's a fraud." And here's what God kept telling me, "My blood covers all that. You're cleansed and you're redeemed and you're pure and you're righteous and you're good. And I didn't call you because of your behavior. I called you because that was my destiny on your life before I created you."

And as I've stepped into that and I've remained in that, shame goes away. I don't care what you know about me. Here's what I want you to know about me, I know I'm redeemed. I know I'm nothing apart from Christ, and Christ is all the good that's in my

life. Amen? When you step out in faith, don't be surprised if the enemy whispers lies about your past or how you're not going to make it in the future or how God's not going to show up for you. That's all he can do is lie. And how many of you listen to a lie then it manifests. it gets bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger, and all of a sudden you're like, "What am I going to do?" Nothing's happened, but he's told you it's going to happen.

Stop listening to the liar. He's the father of lies. Put on the helmet of salvation and be clothed with Christ. And then finally this one, this sword of the Spirit. It's believing that this power of the spoken Word is greater than all other remedies. When I preach, I'm called to preach the Word. I know there are churches that they don't bring the Bible up to the pulpit or read it from another technology. I know they're using other things. I don't call that preaching. I call that story time, fairytales. Preach the Word. Read the Word. Study the Word. Speak the Word. Wield the weapon of the Word. The Word of God has a way of changing hearts. Amen?

I was talking to my friend last night about a story we had a couple decades ago when I was a youth pastor outside of Chicago, and we got called to go to this junior college because there was this satanic group that was meeting. And this mother of one of our kids called me and say, "Hey, Pastor Jeff, would you go out there and just talk to these kids at the college campus and tell them about Jesus?" I'm like, "Yeah, we'll go." So I took my friend and we went out. And we got there, and this group was just standing around this weird looking thing. If I remember right, it was like black sheep and white sheep, and there were nails driven in and they had pictures of blood.

And the guy was saying something like, "What's this mean to you?" And I'm like, "I don't know. What's it mean to you?" He's like, "No, that's not the point, brother. What's it mean to you?" I'm like, "It looks like black sheep and white sheep and weird." "Oh, that's incredible. Good job." I'm like, "Where are we going with this?" Then he started to talk and got real hostile about all the religions in the world and said, "We are a group that believes in all the religions and how we're all the same, and we believe that all those Christians out there..." I said, "Well, I happened to be a Christian." Then he got hostile with me, and he started saying how Christians were stupid and they were no good, and they were all this stuff. And I'm praying the whole time like, "Lord, what do I say to this guy? I'm pinned against the wall."

And he dropped a scripture in my heart, and here's what I said to him. I said, "You know what? I appreciate you, because I think the Lord appreciates you, too. Because you know the Bible says to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and your mind, and you're really using your mind. I really think that you want to think about things." And as soon as I said that, his shoulders went down. He's like, "Yeah, that's what we do here." And I said, "Can I share with you the gospel?" We had a two-hour conversation back and forth just about the gospel. He had grown up in a very religious environment, being told what to do, very legalistic and all this stuff. When we got done talking, here's what he did, we were all sitting in chairs, he stood up on his chair and he pointed down at me.

He goes, "This is what I thought the gospel was." And then he sat back down. He goes, "But if it's what y'all are telling me," he goes, "I think this is what I've been

looking for my whole life." And I said, "This exactly is Jesus that you've been looking for." Amen? Wield the sword. Wield the sword. That's what God wants. And see, whether you're lost and need to be clothed in Christ, whether you're stagnant and need to grow up in Christ, or whether you're strong in Christ and need to be sent out by Christ, the weapons that God gives us are what He wants. He wants us to be clothed. We act different when we're clothed different, don't we?

Congregation:

Yes.

Pastor Jeff:

I got two daughters. When they go shopping and they come home, it's like fashion week at our house, because they don't just want to put it on. They want to put on a fashion show. They want me to comment on what I think about their clothing. And what they're really saying is, "How do I look in it?" And while I look at the clothing, make sure it's appropriate and all those kind of things, what I'm really looking at is their face. Because when their face is beaming and there's confidence on them, I want to affirm like, "That's good. You look great in that. You're beautiful in that." Why? Because I want it to come out of them that they know that they're cherished and they're loved and all that stuff. Now, my son's never done that.

But my son just got all his new football gear and he does the same thing and he puts it on and he doesn't want to be cherished and look... He wants to know that he's tough and that he's rough and that he's fit and that it's looking good and that he's ready

to go. So I champion that. As your pastor, what I want to do, I want to champion Christ's clothing. I want you to dress for the fight wherever you are, that you put it on, because when you have that, there's more and more and more, but you can grow up into that clothing. These aren't hand-me-downs, these are beautiful. And no matter how strong you get, no matter how big you get, no matter how effective you get, there's always more room to grow in the clothing of Christ to become more effective for Him. If you're lost, come to Him today. If you're stagnant, grow in Him today. If you're ready, go in Him today. Amen?

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

Amen. Can we give God praise? Stand up. Father in heaven, we worship You. We honor You. We bless You because you are a God that's worthy of all of our praise. And Lord, you've given us this weaponry from which to fight. And Lord, even if we can't remember each and every little piece, we're just going to put on Christ today. We're going to come to You.

If you're here today and you need Jesus, here's what you say, "Lord, I don't have a relationship with You. I want to surrender to You now. Come into my life and be my Lord. I want to turn for my sins and trust you." If you know Jesus, here's what you're saying, "Lord, I want to grow in You, and I want to go for You, and I want to go with You." Lord, go with me as I leave this place today. Help strengthen me and honor me

because I want more. I know it's an adventure. I want to live for You until I meet You face to face. We give You all the praise, all the glory, all the honor. In Jesus' name, amen and amen. Praise the Lord today.