

# SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

Brian Frost

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Grace Unleashed

PART

26

TITLE

Dressing For Battle

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:10-18



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It's so good to see you Providence family. If you're here in our room or all the other venues, welcome. We're glad you're here. If you're a guest with us we're thrilled that you are here also. We always know that it's an honor when you join us as a guest. Welcome. We love the Bible here at Providence. What the Bible does is it's God informing us who we are and who He is and how we're supposed to live in His world. If you have one with you if you want to head over to the 6th chapter of Ephesians. If you are new we're walking through verse by verse through this book. We're up to chapter six verses 10 through 18. What this section does is it really unveils, it unpacks for us some harder truths, some hard realities in terms of where we live. What we learn here is that every single one of us are living in the middle of a battlefield. We learn here that every single one of us lives under and around a considerable amount of risk.

We also learn here that God has taken great pains to make sure that His children are protected. We have every reason to hope. The fact is, is every single week that we gather there are some who come in and they are very aware that they're right in the middle of a battle. They're very aware that pain and affliction and brokenness is all around them. They feel the weight of it, and so it's natural when we feel that way, for us to be really vigilant, for us to lean into the sermon and to the songs. We're almost rooting for God to say something to us because we need it so badly. Then there's a lot of Sundays when we come in and the fact is we're just having a really good week, it's beautiful weather outside and everybody in the home is somewhat healthy. Most of the people are pretty much happy. We come in and we're less vigilant. We're a little bit less survival mode. We're more like, "Maybe this will be inspiring to me."

Wherever you find yourself I want you to know that this passage is significant to your day today. Everyone of us, we're in a battlefield. We are literally in a war, whether you know it or not. The challenge is this, if you're not aware of it, you won't account for it. What I want to do right now is so to pray, in particular for those right now that are heavy laden, that God would give you rest. Let's pray together. Father in heaven, we do thank you. We thank you for Jesus. We thank you for saving us, thank you for forgiving us. Thank you for coming to die on a cross and be buried and rise from the dead. Thank you for giving us such an amazing calling that we have the privilege to represent you in the world and to take the gospel, the truths about what you've made available, about what you've accomplished to the ends of the earth. Even at the end of our time as we have the privilege to be able to pray and send out more teams we know God, that they go to places that are dark. Dark just like sometimes this land and our city and our culture and our lives are.

I pray God, that you would give us grace. As we open up your word now would you give you the gift of belief? Help us to believe you. Help us to believe that you're for us and not against us. Help us to see what you've made available to protect us. Help us to believe that even though sometimes we don't feel as though we are, that we really living our life in a battle ground. God, would you give us grace I pray. Speak through weakness in Christ's name I pray. Amen. Well, I want to set the whole table for this meal of these amazing nine verses. What the Bible says, at the very beginning it says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. He created this earth with perfect peace. There was perfect peace everywhere.

That means there was no sin, there was no guilt, there was no regret, there was no strife, there was no fighting, there was no funerals, no elections, no voting, no evening news. Just a world where there's no need for evening news.

Maybe someone like John Clark. We'd hire him at 7:00 in the morning, show him. "Good morning everybody. Welcome to another perfect day. Enjoy it." There was no crime to report. There was no brokenness. There was no embezzlement. There was no weather patterns to report. It was perfect. It was a world that was full of peace. There was no rivals, there was no wars. There was no walls anywhere. Just peace. The Bible tells us that one of God's angels, Lucifer, Satan, he chose to try to take the throne of heaven. He lost. God sent him out of heaven and he was sent to the earth where he tempted humanity and humanity sinned against God. We broke fellowship with God and in doing so we invited peace to runaway. Suddenly on the earth there was sin and guilt and shame and terror and there were wars and there were elections, and funerals and there were walls, lots of walls. Satan loves walls. He loves walls between us and God. He loves walls between us and each other. He loves to build walls between ethnicities, between genders, between ages, between backgrounds. He just loves walls.

He loves to separate us from God and each other. God looked at a world that wasn't intended to have a bunch of walls. He says, "I'm going to send my Son. I'm going to send my Son," and what Jesus Christ did, His Son, He came to this earth and He lived a righteous life. Then He went to a cross to pay for the penalty of our sin. He was buried in a grave and he rose from the dead. The Bible says in Ephesians 2:14, we were there about four or five months ago, it says that when He did so that Jesus Christ literally ripped down the walls that separated us from God and the possibility of the walls to be separated and to be torn down between us and each other. Yet, Satan loves to continue to build walls. Jesus is breaking down walls. I don't know if you've ever been to the beach and you built a sand castle, a really beautiful sand castle. Then without invitation or asking or anything another kid, not in your family, just comes and runs and jumps and just slams right into your sand castle. You think, "Man." It just causes anger.

What you need to know is that Satan's not so happy that his walls are being torn down. He creates a war. He declares war with everybody who loves Jesus Christ. This creates a battle field, good and evil. Here at the end of Ephesians, a whole letter that's there written to a church of believers. He wants so badly for them to represent Christ in the world, but what he wants them to know at the end is that there really is an enemy who actively pursues our failure to live worthily of the gospel. This is not a room without wind, without resistance, without an enemy, without struggle. In fact, what the Bible really portrays is this kind of picture. Everything that God has called us to do He says, "I want you to swim these laps. I want you to be married this way. I want you to be a parent this way. I want you to be an employer this way." It's really, really difficult. The waves we have to swim through, how we go about representing Christ in this world, because there is a war under us, it is very difficult.

Yet, what we find here is that God's grace is still stronger. Let's read it together starting in verse 10 Paul writes, "Finally be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might and put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, and against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, having put on the whole breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace."

"In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication." What I want you to see here in this text is really two dominant themes, two theological truths that almost act like hooks on the wall that we can hang up all the rest of these words so that we can see them, we can understand them, we can believe them, we can practice them. The first thing I want you to see is this; We are representing Christ in the middle of a battlefield. It's not an easy place where we're supposed to represent him. Everything that he's talked about, starting in 4:1 where he says, "To live worthily of the calling with which we've been called."

He's talked to about tongue, how we're not supposed to be lying or supposed to be using it to encourage other people. He's talked about anger, he's talked about greed, he's talked about purity in our life. He's talked about marriages, he's talked about parenting and family and he's talked about the workplace. He says, "In all these places where you're supposed to be representing Jesus Christ to people who have never seen him, who don't know anything about who he is or what he's done he says, "I want you to know that there's a war taking place in every one of those arenas." Paul was like a parent sending his kid off to college. He says, "You're about to see all kinds of stuff when you get there, but before you do, let me just tell you this, you got to be strong. Don't forget what I've taught you. Don't forget who you are." What does he say to them? He says, "Finally, be strong in the lord and the strength of his might."

That word be strong. The voice is passive. It's happening to you is what he's saying. What he's saying is place yourself where it can happen to you. In other words, be strengthened. Notice that we're supposed to be strengthened in the Lord and in His might. It's not our might. It's not our strength. It's His. You and I are like a cell phone. We have apps and we have all kinds of capacity. Yet we have a battery that diminished every single day that it must be recharged. What he says is this, "You're not independent. You're not this being that just can live forever and live in amazing ways and love in amazing ways and love and lead other people in amazing ways unless you're strengthened by God's spirit. It's a hard world because it's a hard war. He says, "Stand where his strength can fall on you. It's literally like when you take a shower and you turn the water on. You wait for it to get warmer and then you get under it."

All those moments while you're waiting water's still falling. You and I, we're not experiencing any of the benefit or the strength from that water. It's just going down the drain. The reason is because we're not standing under it. This is what he says, "God's strength is flowing. Find where it's falling and stand under it so that you could be strengthened." Then he says why. He says for, or because, "Because we do not wrestle against flesh and blood." Then he says, "But we wrestle against ..." and he starts talking about all of these rulers and authorities, and cosmic powers over the present darkness and over the spiritual forces in the heavenly places. This is interesting to me. Paul is scarred from head to toe because of evil people. He says that our war is not against flesh and blood. It's not with people who are critical of us, who don't believe in Jesus Christ, who mock us because of our faith in Christ. That's not our war. That's not our enemy. It's not because of cruelty. It's amazing that he would say this.

I want to say to Paul, "What do you mean war is not with flesh and blood? Look at your body. Your whole body bears witness that evil people have done these things to you." I think what he's saying is this, "Oh, it's true that flesh and blood it certainly can be evil, but anytime that it is, it's because there's a deeper and more sinister evil that's under girding all of that evil. Every time there's been a holocaust and every time there's been ethnic cleansing, every time there's been racial killings, every time there's been crime, every time there's been cynicism, every time you see evil in flesh and blood world, underneath it is because there's a war and that evil is literally splashing up on us." Ephesians 2:1-2 says something pretty remarkable about us as Christians, but also pretty remarkable about the people that sometimes that we struggle with who don't know Christ and who mock us. This is what he says he goes, "You were dead." He's talking to Christians. "You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked." He says, "This is what we were doing. We were following the prince of the power of the air."

This is Satan. This is the devil. What he's saying though is this, is that for those who are still in the world, who have yet to trust Christ, they have a leader. That leader is an evil one. Now it's really important for us not to make two tragic mistakes anytime we talk about the devil. One mistake is we can ascribe too much cause and too much glory and too much power to him. You can hear people say, I got a speeding ticket. The devil's after me. I've been to the gym so often I can't lose weight. The devil's after me." Well, maybe we need to slow down and stop eating at Bojangles, right? Maybe it's not all because Satan is after us. Maybe it's not all the devil. Sometimes we give him glory where glory is not due. We ascribe power to him. We ascribe cause to him, when really it's not because of him. Sometimes we just do really foolish things. There's another error that some people ... we hear this, "I'll never make that mistake. I'm not going to attribute that." What happens is we ascribe to little cause or power to the evil one.

He wants us not to do that, which is why he uses terms that literally describe a formidable enemy when he uses words like rulers, authorities, powers and forces. He uses these words to speak of strength, not weakness. We can ascribe too little cause and in our culture in particular. You go on a mission trip here at Providence and you go to do different places. If you go to Latin America or Africa or Asia, those places, they have absolutely no problem speaking openly about what they see. That is the presence of darkness. They speak readily about spiritual warfare because they see it differently than we see it here in America. In America we're under this total illusion that everything must have a natural scientific cause, that you must be able to put it into a beaker for us to be able to measure. Because the word evil implies morality and morality can't be put into a beaker we say, "Let's not talk about evil. Let's talk about disfunction. Let's put it into medical terms."

The challenge here is that if we don't recognize the evil that's actually there and how pervasive it actually is that we will not account for it in our own life. This is why I think a man like Richard Baxter serves us so well. Richard Baxter was a pastor in the 1600s. He was asked about the cause of melancholy. We call that now depression. He was able to balance it in such a wonderful way where he recognized that not everything is simply because of Satan. There's a lot of people that say anytime you're depressed it's because Satan is after you. It's because the devil. He recognized that we can't fall off of either cliff here give him too much or give him too little. This is what he says, he goes, "The fact is that our melancholy, or depression, it could be for physical reasons in which case we need rest, food or medicine. Or it could be psychological in which case we need to give love and support and encouragement. Or it may be moral in which case the person needs to confess their sin, repent of it and receive forgiveness from God.

Or it could be spiritual forces of evil in which case we need to put on the full armor of God and pray in the spirit on all occasions. You see, Satan is there. There is a battle field. There is a war between good and evil. Everyone one of us, whether you recognize it, see it or believe in it, you live within it. All the brokenness that we see around the world and all the walls that are built back up you have to understand that is not God. It's not His plan. He came to bust down all these things. We have to understand and we have to be wise. Well, then how do we identify then these schemes? This is the application for this first point is this, let's be alert to Satan's schemes. You see in verse 11 he says, "Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil." Before we get to the armor let's understand his schemes.

The word schemes is from a Greek word, *methodeia*. It's where we get the word methods. In other words he has an arsenal for evil. He has plans, but it's interesting that his schemes they're all bent on doing one particular thing. Jesus speaks to that very clearly in John 10:10 when He says, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy." He wants to end your life. He wants to end your marriage. He wants to end every good thing in your life. In particular if you know Christ as your savior and Lord he wants to shame Jesus by shaming you. He wants that. What is his scheme? The way that he does this, his method is not to leave fangs within our flesh. It's to leave lies within our heart. The word devil has a verb form. The verb form of devil means to lie or to slander. This is what he does. He lies to us. This is his scheme. Satan loves to lie.

John 8:44 Jesus says, "There is no truth in him." This is Jesus speaking of Satan. "There's no truth in him. When he lies he speaks out of his own character for he is a liar and the father of lies." What Satan loves to do is play us like strings on the piano. If we had one up here, we don't so there's a slide of one. We opened up a piano and you can see all the different strings. Every one of those is a particular note. It's interesting. If you'll stand on the side of an open piano and you'll start singing there's an energy that will literally flow from your voice. It will send sound waves and it will literally reverberate and shake the string that aligns and it's attuned with your voice tone, with the note that you're singing. You'll be able to see it move just a little bit. It shakes. If you could understand that picture you can understand how Satan works. Watch this. What he does is Satan creatively and patiently plucks deceitful strings until he finds the one that attunes with our heart.

He comes to us and he tempts us. He come sand he says, "Wouldn't you just love to have 50 pair of shoes today?" Some of you are like, "Wow, man that really appeals to me." That does not appeal to me. Satan would look and go, "Okay, it's not that one," so he goes to another one. "Wouldn't you love to be glorified by man?" Some of us aren't so drawn maybe to having things, but maybe we're drawn to someone. Maybe someone that's not our wife. What he does is he just creatively, he's like, "Let me try this string." Ding. "No affect. All right, well how about this one? Oh, you like that one do you?" James 1:14 says, "Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire." The scheme of the devil is literally to play these chords in order to identify what is the unique thing, your unique weakness, your unique temptation. How can he accuse you? How can he tempt you? He does it in two different ways.

You guys know that on a piano there's white keys and there's black keys. The white keys, they're the notes that are a little bit more happy sounding. You hit them like, "Oh, that's nice." This is temptation. Then there's a black key. Those are the sharp and the flat keys. They sound a little bit more ominous, a little bit more scary sounding. Let's talk real briefly about some of the lies that he tells us in two different directions. First is Satan's schemes and temptation. These are the white keys, these are the happy ones. This is where he tries to show you and remind you frequently about God's love, but he doesn't want you to see God's justice. He does three things. Actually he does more than this, but I want to show you three of them. They're on the screen. You can see them right here. He shows us the bait and he hides the hook. He comes to us and he says, "There's no risk in this. Nobody is ever going to find out. It's going to bring you so much pleasure." A real happy note. He comes and he justifies our sin.

In other words, he comes to us and he says, "Don't worry. You're not being greedy. You're just being frugal. The reason that you don't give to anybody in need is because you're just saving up for the future." He justifies our sin. He goes, "Oh, I'm doing a good job. It's a happy note." He reminds of us of our suffering. He comes and he says, "You've really gone through so much. You deserve this. You deserve to sin.

You've earned this privilege to enjoy this kind of pleasure. He comes with temptation, but then he also sometimes plays the darker keys, the more ominous notes. It's amazing that he can catch us in both directions. This is accusation. This is the second one. Satan's scheme is accusation. What he does here is a little darker. He reminds us of forgiven sin. The things that we've already sinned, we've already asked God to forgive us, he's already forgiven us. He comes back to us and he says, "I can't believe you actually did that. Can you believe you actually did that?"

Now all of a sudden we feel defeated again for sin that's already been forgiven. This is one of his schemes. He comes and he links our trials to God's anger. "Would you really be going through a job loss if God was happy with you? There must be something in your past. Maybe he hasn't. Maybe he's not pleased with you." Then he comes to us and he leads us to doubt our salvation. A lot of people come and they say, "Would a real Christian actually do the things that I'm doing?" Satan comes to him and he goes, "Really, would a born again person keep doing what you keep doing?" What he's doing in each of these ways is Satan is literally plucking strings to identify how to sideline our life so that we can not represent Him well in the world. Providence, we are representing Christ in the middle of a battlefield. The second overarching truth that I want you to see is that, is that we are representing Christ with sufficient armor. God has not left us empty handed. He has not left us without protection.

We have everything that we need in order to live this life and to live in the middle of this battlefield and to represent him well while we're here. He says, "Take the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day." The assumption is if we do it we will be able to stand. It is strong enough. What you find here is that the gospel is that armor. I want you to think about the gospel and think about the different pieces of the armor. He says, "It's the shield of something. It's the belt of something." Now let's talk about those somethings. Paul knows that this church, that these believers that they've trusted in Christ, which means this; He knows that they have listened to the truth of God's word. He knows that each and every one of them have placed their faith in Jesus Christ and because of that Jesus has given them His righteousness. They're now saved. They're now at peace with God. They now have the word of God and the spirit of God living within them.

If you think about it truth, faith, righteousness, salvation, peace and the Spirit. What Paul was doing was simply saying this, "I recognize and believe that you are a child of God. I know that you are trusting in Jesus Christ. Now what I'm asking and begging you to do is to take that truth and faith and righteousness and salvation and peace and Spirit and the word of God and to appropriate each and every one of them as spiritual armor over your life. In other words don't leave these things on the table thinking this is how you come to faith in Christ and now you white knuckle it to the end. No. Remember Luke 8? Some of you are saying, "No, I don't. That's a horrible way to introduce that. Luke 8. What's there?" In Luke 8 Jesus is with His 12 disciples and they're in a boat. It's a great day and so Jesus takes a nap. While He's taking a nap a big storm erupts upon the sea, upon the lake. They start freaking out He's asleep. They wake Him up and they're in an absolute panic.



They say to him in verse 24, “Master we’re perishing. Don’t you care anything about us? Don’t you recognize that our life is in peril right now?” Do you remember what Jesus says to them? He says in verse 25, “Where is your faith? He doesn’t say you need faith. He says, “Where is it?” Get it out of the drawer, you’ve got to put it on. This is why it’s there. This is the moment to use it. It’s right now. It’s right in front of you. When we came to faith in Jesus Christ and we came out of His factory of being born again, when He gave us a new heart we came fully loaded. 2 Peter 1:3 He says, “All things have been given to us for life and godliness.” You have all the bells and whistles to represent Him in the world, every one of them. Yet, if we do not activate them by faith they gather dust. It’s interesting that when they gather dust, sometimes when life is going pretty well we all tend to coast. We don’t pray very fervently.

We sometimes come to church and instead of being disciplined and saying, “Man, God please, please I need something. It’s survival.” We look at whoever’s preaching and we’re like, “All right, why don’t you go ahead and give me something clever. Something that would inspire me today. Something that’ll make me laugh a little bit, some good lunch fodder to talk about with the family.” Others you can see and it’s survival mode. “Give me something that I can withstand the rest of the day.” When we’re at ease sometimes we just naturally coast and then suddenly what happens is we look up and our life and the day changes. Suddenly now the sky is full of flaming arrows. We start grabbing for our shield but we’ve misplaced it because it’s been so long since we’ve needed it or used it. We forgot where we put it. We look over and we see a helmet, we put the helmet on. We’re like, “Wow, it’s been so long I’ve had a helmet on my neck can’t hardly hold it up to look where the arrows are coming from.”

Our arms are not strong because we’ve not used the word of God in the little skirmishes of life and so we’re not battle ready for the major skirmishes in life when they come. God’s armor is not like a tux that we put on for special occasions. It’s to be worn every single day and practiced in the big things in the little days every single day. That armor is the gospel. It’s the different parts of how you came to faith in Christ. Two applications before we have the privilege to pray over several of our friends. First is let’s consider the gospel every day. If it’s true that this armor that God has given to us is the gospel then we need to consider it and think about this gospel every day of our life. We start with the belt of truth. Now to us belts are accessories. They’re thin. They really don’t do a whole lot. They’re just there. When a soldier it wasn’t a belt like this. The belt that they were talking about was a thick leather piece that literally went from mid belly to mid thigh under the armor. It was the underlying of everything.

What he’s saying is this, the very first thing is, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Then we cover our heart with righteousness. Not our righteousness. The righteousness of Christ. We recognize and remind ourselves that we have been justified because of our faith in Jesus Christ that he looks at us and he’s taken away our sin. He’s given us his righteousness and so there’s nothing we can do in the course of the day that’s going to add to or take away his evaluation or judgment over our life. We’ve already been judged innocent. What this allows us to do is live in love and not self-righteousness, love and not self-sufficiency.

Then what we do is we take every thought captive with the helmet of salvation. We start saying that the word of God, my salvation, I have a new identity in Jesus Christ. God has said things about me that are true and I'd live as though they're true.

Every time I have a thought or a temptation that literally is outside I need to put that thought in a prison, the prison of God's word. I'm a child of God. I'm free. I'm redeemed. Then we reach over and we grab the shield of faith every morning. With it we can extinguish the lies of all those temptations and all those accusations. Then we lace up the shoes of peace by preparing to share the gospel with other people. Then we read the word of God, the sword that allows us to deepen our maturity and our gratitude and our wisdom. In Providence we get to put all this armor on because someone put it on before us. Isaiah 59:17, speaking of Jesus the Messiah he says, "He put on righteousness as a breastplate and a helmet of salvation upon his head." Jesus was the first to wear this armor, to win His fight and now He give it to us. He says, "For all who have trusted in me wear it every day." Let's think frequently Providence about the gospel. If you're here today and you've never trusted Christ we want you to know today that you can be forgiven of all your sin.

You can experience peace within your heart by not relying on your righteousness, but on Jesus' righteousness. Not on your accomplishments but His. You too can be protected. You too can be saved. You too can have the word of God and the Spirit of God active in your life. You too can have literally the friend that sticks closer than a brother when you go through life's most difficult parts. It's there for you. You can trust him today. How do you appropriate all of this armor? How do you put it on? How do you apply it? This is the last thing. Let's give ourselves to prayer. He says, "Praying at all times in the Spirit." When we yield to the Holy Spirit He has a controlling power over our thoughts and perceptions and emotions similar to wine, which is why Ephesians 5:18 says, "Do not get drunk on wine, but be filled with the Spirit." The Spirit literally wants to govern us and control our thoughts so that we understand. He gives us power over evil and over temptation and over accusation.

This is why James 4:7 says, "Submit yourself to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." It's interesting that at the end of chapter 3, after he says, "This is the gospel and all that's available," Paul gets on his knees and he says, "So I'm going to pray on your behalf that God would help you to experience this." He writes three more chapters of how we apply the gospel. Now what he does, he invites us to get on our knees so that we can appropriate all that God has made available so that we can represent Him well in the world. You think about it Providence, this whole idea of prayer. It's such a gift. There's so much power in it, which is why we love to pray for people as they go. As you go. This is why we pray for you multiple times in a service. There's still walls and there's wars all over the world. There's people who have never heard about Jesus Christ. We have a calling from God to send our best.

Sometimes for career and sometimes for a week to take the gospel to places who have never heard it where walls are still built all over the place between them and God and between the various people within their own culture. Here this morning we have the opportunity actual have several teams come up right now, if you want to come on up Thomas, to pray for them. They're going to London, Moldova, Thailand. Then Gary Pedit will be going to Zimbabwe. He'll be doing a lot of pastor training with the team there. Our team in London, they're going to have an opportunity to go into London and partner with lots of churches. What they're going to do is be sharing the gospel throughout the city. Those in Moldova, they're going to be holding hammers and the gospel. They're going to be doing a lot of construction, a lot of labor on a camp and for a church as well as sharing God's truth even in the local schools there in the town.

Those going to Thailand have an opportunity to hang out with a bunch of really cool kids, most of which have never heard the gospel. They've never heard about Jesus Christ, to be able to go and share the gospel with them. In your snapshot here this morning you can actually see on the inside all the names of all the team members. I want to ask you to take this. If you didn't get one on your way in would you get one on your way out? Would you put this on your fridge? It has all the dates there. As they're gone would you pray for them by name that God would protect them, that he would defend them, that he would en-strengthen them and empower them to share the gospel and to love people well? In the Bible in Acts it's interesting. There's local churches that did just this. Of course, this is where we get it. What they used to do is, as an expression that we really are a family is that they would gather around them and they would lay their hands on them and pray for them.

Why they would do that is they're saying, "We're family. We're one. We love you and we're going to be praying for you as you go." We can't do that. One is because this is a big room, but also because there's three other rooms at this very hour that are watching this on the screen. I recognize that it's a little bit odd. By the way the next time that we do this we'll all be in one room together and so that'll be a little bit different, which will be really cool. But for now what I want to ask you to do symbolically just raise your hand up and act like it's resting on a shoulder of someone here on stage and let's pray for them.

Father in heaven thank you so much for your grace on each of our lives. We thank you for Jesus Christ who saved us from our sin. We thank you for your gift of spiritual armor. We thank you for the gospel that truly protects us in our every day life. We also thank you for our calling to take the good news and the hope that we have in Jesus to the ends of the earth. I pray for Gary as he goes to Zimbabwe and I pray for the teams as they go to Moldova and London and Thailand. I pray God that you would protect them. I pray that you would defend them. I pray that you would give their teams unity and humility. I pray that you would pour out your spirit upon them. I pray that as they share the gospel, as the love children or as they swing hammers in order to build things, I pray father that you would strengthen them for the task.

I pray that you would fill them with your Spirit and I pray that all of their labor would spill out in loving people well and in sharing the gospel in humility. Our prayer as a church family is, God, as they go, God that you would do the miracle in their life and through their life that real people would be changed, that real walls will be torn down. Spiritual walls will be torn down. Lord, even families would be reconciled and maybe marriages would be reconciled. I pray God, that you would do a miracle as the gospel goes into these cultures. We pray for your protection. God, we look forward in faith to hearing the stories of what you've done. Until that time would you help us to be faithful to pray, to pray and pray and pray in all these circumstances. God, we love you. We're so grateful and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.



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