

## 2024 TALK FOR CAREY, 13.10.24, ALL-AGE, EPHESIANS 6:10-18

### 'GLADIATORS – ARE YOU READY?'

Good to have this reminder of this year's Camp. And its theme. So our thanks to Warren for coming to Carey to fully update us. And to encourage some of us from Carey to go to Camp 2025 and to be praying about its preparations. I'm certainly looking forward to going to Norfolk next year (God willing)! You can't beat spending time on a North Sea coastline... Those bracing sea breezes stiffen your sinews & put hairs on your chest!... (Don't they Warren?)...

It so happens that our Youth Church are at present looking at 'the armour of God' in their group. So, very timely for them. But also for us all. We all face many battles & struggles in life don't we? And here's the good news of Ephesians chapter 6: **God wants you to be fully equipped for all the challenges you will face...** In this coming week... For the rest of your life. Isn't God good?

One of the stories shared at Camp this Olympic year, was the story of Olympic Champion swimmer, Adam Peaty. No doubt we have all heard of Adam Peaty. You may just know him from Strictly in 2021. You may know something more.

Talking of being 'fully equipped', Adam felt fully equipped whenever he got in an Olympic swimming pool. He won Olympic golds both in Rio and Tokyo. He even went so far as to say that he 'felt like a god' when he was in a swimming pool. He knew he had the strength, skill & endurance to win. He had it all. But when he was out of the swimming pool, he wasn't nearly so confident. In fact, he came to a place in his life when he felt like he was drowning. He encountered all sorts of personal demons: issues with his mental health, problems with drinking... difficulties in his relationships.

Adam Peaty came to the conclusion that the world didn't have the answers to the problems of life. **He** didn't have the answers either. So, one Sunday morning he surprised even himself & slipped into a church. Guess what the preacher was preaching on that day? Why the Olympics of course! And Adam thought to himself: 'If this isn't meant to speak to me, what is?' From that day on, Adam's life changed. He had a tattoo carved into his chest. It's a cross of Jesus, with these words beneath it: 'Into the Light'. With the help of his coaches, some celebrities & some Christian friends, Adam began to rebuild his life. As he humbly puts it, he became **'nearly a new person'**. So much so that

within a very short space of time, he surprised himself again. He was able to get back into training for this year's Paris Olympics. We'll come back to that.

First, two questions for us all this morning:

1) I wonder - do we feel like we are good at one aspect of life, but not so good at another? I guess we are pretty much all in the same boat here. We feel we are equipped for some things, not for others. That's why we all need the support of those around us. It's like this picture in Ephesians 6 of soldiers in a battle line. There's no way one of them could take a stand on their own. But together, with their fellow 'gladiators' either side of them, they can withstand all sorts of batterings... More than that - we all need God's strength within. God's help in our weaknesses. So that we can say with Paul: 'When I am weak, it's then I am strong'. When we realise our limitations, it's then that we see our need for God. We learn not to rely on my own strength but to rely instead on God's power. To lean on God's understanding. This is the truth Adam Peaty discovered - and it turned his life around. Praise God 4 the good news of Jesus! Jesus offers us forgiveness & new life. Strength 4 today, hope 4 tomorrow.

2) I wonder – do you ever feel like you are taking a beating from life? A bit like one of those contestants on the Gladiators TV series... ? Standing on that platform, facing a Gladiator. You've just dropped your own pugile stick. And blow after blow is raining down on you? You feel completely helpless. Exposed. Alone... The good news is, Jesus has promised ***never*** to leave us. We might sometimes feel alone. But Jesus knows exactly what you are going through. Both before the cross & on the cross, ***Jesus took a beating for us***. Jesus has carried our sufferings. And he offers to carry us & hold us as we suffer. But there's more good news than this... God wants to give you the full armour. God can give you everything you need. The full works. Here is everything you need for the battles of life: the belt of truth/ the breastplate of righteousness/ feet fitted with the gospel of peace/ the shield of faith/ the helmet of salvation/ the sword of the Spirit. This is all ***so that*** you can pray to God; so that you can stand & to go on standing. Adam Peaty has discovered this wonderful truth... PTL!

As you know, Adam Peaty didn't win gold in Paris. He tied for 2<sup>nd</sup> place and won silver. But thanks to his faith in Jesus he showed character that he might not have done, if he had not won gold before. He said afterwards that he felt he

was a winner because he had given his all... He was still able to rejoice in God. And now Adam's even beginning to look towards the next Olympics...!

How about you? What is **your** next challenge? Whatever it is, be assured that God wants to equip you to meet that challenge. By trusting in Jesus, we can all receive the full armour of God – for today & tomorrow & for whatever comes...