

**ARM YOURSELVES!
Part 3**

THE WELL-DRESSED CHRISTIAN SOLDIER

Ephesians 6:13-17

“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. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

The Director of the Navigators Christian organization for many years was LeRoy Eims, an author of note of books primarily on Discipleship. He told the following story about the time when he was serving in the Marines in the South Pacific during World War II. He said, "Shortly after we hit the beach, our armored amphibious tank took two artillery shells broadside. We immediately evacuated our disabled vehicle and darted from hole to hole toward the enemy airstrip, which we were to take.

"The sergeant began to check on us to make sure that we were OK. He crawled over to me and asked, 'You all right, Eims?'

"I answered, 'Yeah, I'm OK, Sarge.'

"He looked at me and asked, 'Eims, where is your helmet?'

"I felt the top of my head and answered, 'Must be in the tank, Sarge.'

"'Where's your duty belt?' Our duty belts carried ammunition for our rifles, a canteen of water, and a bayonet.

"'Must be in the tank, Sarge.'

"'As a matter of fact, Eims, where's your rifle?' He looked at me with disgust and pity. Because of our hasty departure from the amphibious tank, I was dressed about the same way that I would be dressed for a game of volleyball. And there I was, hopping from hole to hole, from tree to tree!"

In Ephesians chapter 6 we have a most informative section of Scripture telling us:

- Why we need to fight;
- What our source of strength is;
- How we are to fight;
- Whom we are to fight and

- With what we are to fight.

Let's look at the battle-gear God has given to us with which to fight the good fight for the faith. We come now to verses 13-17 that describe the equipment that we have. A soldier is no better than his equipment. There is no better equipment than the "armor of God." Therefore, we are told to "put on the whole armor of God" (v.11) and, verse 13 says, "Take up the full armor of God." God has provided the equipment for our warfare; we do not have to manufacture it, we have but to utilize it.

Charles H. Spurgeon said, "Put on the whole armor of God, that armor which God has provided for the good soldiers of Jesus Christ - that armor which distinguishes men as belonging to the army of God. Do not merely put on a part of it, but put on the whole of it! Do not simply look at the armor and clean it up so as to keep it bright, but put it on, wear it—it is meant for you to use in the great battle for the right against the wrong! Never go out without all your armor on, for you can never tell where you may meet the devil. He is not omnipresent, but nobody can tell where he is not, for he and his troops of devils appear to be found everywhere on this earth. We are in God's army for life - we can never quit this warfare till God shall call us home!" (Sermon, Shoes for Pilgrims and Warriors)

Beginning in verse 13 through verse 17 Paul describes the armor piece by piece. How do we protect ourselves and counter the devil's diabolical tactics? The armor for our warfare is of two types: there is the Defensive Equipment and there is the Offensive Equipment.

THE DEFENSIVE EQUIPMENT

Vs. 14-17a

Paul wrote the Books of Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, and Philippians during his imprisonment in Rome. He was guarded by Roman soldiers and was, therefore, very familiar with the armor which they wore. He uses this vivid reminder as an analogy of the protective covering which the Christian soldier has. Let us look at the various parts of our uniform:

A. The Belt or Girdle Of Truth. "Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth" (v.14a)

The Roman belt or girdle was 6-8 inches wide; all the body armor and weapons were attached to it. The first thing put on by a soldier was his belt. It stabilized him, protected his lower body and it was on his belt that his sword was carried. The belt also held the breastplate in place. It was the unifying piece of the soldier's armor.

The girdle or belt of truth for the Christian soldier is not an offensive weapon; it is for our protection. Truth protects us from Satan's attacks. It does not prevent the attack but it keeps the believer from being harmed by them. The Truth of God's Word is what "holds" us all together while we fight. It must be the first thing we put on every day.

For the believer, this refers to knowing the "truth" of the Bible. Jesus promised us that the truth had the power to make us free. (John 8:32) Knowing the truth will stabilize us, protect us

and prevent us from being tripped up in the battles of life. The Christian who is ignorant of the truths of God's Word is easily defeated.

B. The Breastplate Of Righteousness. *"having put on the breastplate of righteousness."* (v.14b)

This piece of armor covered the front of the soldier's body from the neck to the abdomen. The Roman breastplate was typically made of bronze, backed with leather. It was designed to protect the most vital organs of the body. What is our most vital organ? It is our heart. The breastplate covered the heart. A blow through this was usually fatal. Proverbs 4:23 reminds us to *"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."*

That is what the *"breastplate of righteousness"* is designed by God to do. Paul here is referring to the righteousness of Jesus Christ which we receive when we trust Him as our Savior.

Isaiah reminds us that *"we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."* (Isa.64:6) How can an unrighteous person self-generate his own righteousness? He cannot! We must understand that righteousness, first and foremost, is something we are, not something we do.

It is through faith in Christ that we have His righteousness imputed to us, that is, put to our account. It is important to make a distinction between imputed righteousness and imparted righteousness. When a sinner trusts Christ as his Savior and is born-again, the very righteousness of Christ is put to the sinner's account and never changes. Then, the righteousness of Christ is imparted to us for living righteously in an unrighteous world. Once God has declared a believing sinner righteous, that standing before him is settled for eternity.

Righteousness, when imparted to us, comes from the inside out. Righteousness within us affects what we do, but what we do does not make us righteous. Putting on His breastplate of righteousness is not "putting on" your own good works, integrity, or honesty. It is not "putting on" Bible reading and prayer. It is not "putting on" church attendance. Our righteousness is in Jesus Christ: *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."* (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Walking in righteousness means that one is actively concerned with integrity and uprightness in his personal life. Righteousness is right thinking *and* right doing, it is righteousness in life, it is personal holiness. If we walk in the righteousness of God we have a defensive weapon to use against the slanderous accusations and outrageous strategies of the enemy.

C. The Shoes Of The Gospel. *"and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace."* (v.15)

Roman soldiers wore sandals that had hob-nails on the bottoms to provide firm footing on the battlefield. He did not have to worry about his feet slipping in the heat of the battle, for he was always well-grounded with shoes for stability and mobility. A foot-soldier is no good if his feet

are not protected. This is a picture of the soldier being ready to stand and hold the line against the enemy or march into battle. His feet were prepared for action.

So too, the child of God must be ready to stand his ground. We can stand because the gospel has put us on our feet before God. The "*gospel of peace*" is the footwear for the Christian soldier.

The Gospel of Peace, when embraced by faith, introduces us into the family of God and inducts us into the fighting force for the faith. It may seem strange that the word "*peace*" should be used in relation to holy warfare. However, there is a war being waged against the God of Peace by Satan and his forces who have initiated the anti-peace movement. They resist any attempt that individuals make to come to terms of "*peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (Rom. 5:1)

Therefore, having shoes that are made by the Heavenly Cobbler, called "*the preparation of the gospel of peace,*" we are equipped to walk about in the devil's territory and spread the Good News about Jesus Christ. This suggests, in more modern terms, "putting shoe leather to our faith." Firm footing and a firm foundation upon the Gospel makes us ready and steady!

In Matthew 7, Jesus speaks of building a house on sand or on the Rock Christ Jesus. "On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand." If we do that, then we will be unmoved by the devil's threats, even when we are in the rough places of life.

What does all that mean? It means that a sense of perfect peace with God is the grandest thing in all the world with which to travel through life and fight life's battles! "*Your sandals shall be iron and bronze; as your days, so shall your strength be.*" (Deut. 33:25)

D. The Shield Of Faith. "*above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.*" (v.16)

The Roman shield was about 4 ft. high and about 2 1/2 feet wide. It was typically made as a curved laminate of three layers of wood strips and covered with leather. The edges were bound with rawhide stitched through the wood or sometimes bronze binding was used. The shield was the maneuverable part of the warrior's armor. It was designed to protect him from arrows and javelins, flaming and otherwise. Verse 16 says that they are "*fiery darts.*"

The shield represents the faith of the believer in the promises of God. The value of faith is not in the believer, but in the object of faith, God and His Word. This faith comes from hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). God is the one who fights for us and protects us. The more we know Him and His Word the greater our faith and therefore the larger our faith-shield!

"*The just shall live by faith*" wrote Habakkuk. (2:4) And, in view of Ephesians 6:16 the just shall fight by faith! Faith is, of course, more than belief alone. The devil believes: "*You believe that there is one God; you do well: the devils also believe, and tremble.*" (James 2:19) Faith involves trust and reliance. I may believe that a chair can support me. But until I exercise my faith and sit upon it I am not trusting it or relying upon it.

1st John 5:4 says, *“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world even our faith.”* The Christian soldier is defended by the shield of his faith. Whatever Satan throws at us can be successfully deflected by complete trust in God. As your faith gets stronger, your ability to fend off the attacks of the enemy gets stronger also!

E. The Helmet Of Salvation. *“And take the helmet of salvation.”* (v.17a)

The helmet of the Roman soldier was made of bronze, lined with leather and often with a hinged face plate fastened by a chin strap. The helmet was given to the Roman soldier to protect his brain. Regardless of how well the rest of him was protected, a blow to the brain rendered the soldier ineffective. A helmet protected the head from any injury that would hamper the ability to fight or live! Helmets are a form of security. Failure to have the proper helmet can prove fatal.

Why Christian helmets? The battle with the enemy is a battle for the mind. We need something to protect the mind from being attacked. The Christian soldier is protected by the helmet of salvation. We need something to protect the mind from the sinful thoughts with which Satan bombards us. We need to have complete confidence in our *“helmet of salvation.”* There is no room for uncertainty about its adequacy or the durability of its protection. One key area is our assurance of our salvation. The enemy wants us to doubt this.

Verse 17 tells us to *“put on”* or *“take up”* the helmet of salvation. This phrase means to consciously rely on an accomplished salvation that we have and think Christianly when the enemy is trying to fill your head with lies concerning God’s love for you and for the salvation we have received.

Salvation provides the helmet that is necessary to protect our minds from the attacks of the enemy. When we are saved, we are transformed. It is this transformation that allows us to think right thoughts and wage holy war. Our salvation will be like a helmet protecting the mind from the devil.

“Since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.” (1st Thess. 5:8) God has provided no armor for the Christian soldier’s back; as long as we face the enemy, we are safe!

THE OFFENSIVE EQUIPMENT

“and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” (v.17b)

A soldier must not only have equipment that protects him, but he must also have equipment that advances the cause for which he is fighting. The previous parts of the soldier’s equipment, described in verses 13 through 17a, comprise his defensive gear. His offensive equipment is, *“the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”* This is the only clearly offensive weapon in the list of armor.

The Greek word translated sword is *“machaira”* and refers to the Roman soldier’s short, straight sword about 18 inches to 2 feet long, used for close hand-to-hand combat. It was very effective and was essential to the survival of the soldier.

We are told that our sword is the Word of God. It is the Bible that we are to use to attack the enemy. It is the Word of God that enables us to conquer him in every battle we face. It is essential for the Christian soldier to be proficient in the use of this weapon. How? By reading it, by studying it, by making it visible in our daily lives and by verbally communicating it. Let us become so familiar with the Word-Sword that we can use it in each battle we face.

When Jesus was being tempted by Satan in the wilderness, how did He fight off the attacks of the enemy? Did He use philosophical arguments? No, He used the Sword of the Word! (Matt4:1-11) He defeated the Devil by saying "*it is written!*" three times, repulsing the devil in each of the three temptations that he presented to Jesus. I believe if that was good enough for Jesus to fight off the enemy, it is good enough for us.

The old Puritan, Thomas Guthrie wrote:

“The Bible is an armory of heavy weapons,
A laboratory of infallible medicines,
A mine of exhaustless wealth.
It is a guidebook for every road,
A chart for every sea,
A medicine for every malady,
And a balm for every wound.
Rob us of our Bible and our sky has lost its sun.”

We cannot fight a spiritual fight with physical weapons “*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.*” (2nd Cor. 4:4, 5) It is the Sword of the Spirit, because the Spirit of God gives it and inspires it. The Spirit’s aid is needed for its interpretation and application.

There are many encouragements to be proficient in the use of the Sword of the Word:

- 2 Timothy 2:15 – “*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*”
- Hebrews 4:12 – “*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*”
- 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 – “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*”

“Then gird on the sword of the Spirit,
With helmet, and breastplate, and shield;
And valiantly follow your Captain,
Determined you never will yield!”

- Fanny Crosby

Conclusion

We are called to take up the full armor of God so that we will be able to resist the devil and his evil schemes. Do not let the enemy find you defenseless. Arm yourselves! Get dressed for battle! This is a very urgent command.

“The Christian was evidently intended to be in motion, for here are shoes for his feet. His head is provided with a helmet, for he is to be thoughtful. His heart is covered with a breastplate, for he is to be a man of feeling. His whole nature is protected by a shield, for he is called to endurance and caution. And that he is to be active is certain, for a sword is provided for his hand to use and sandals with which his feet are to be shod. To suppose that a Christian is to be motionless as a post and inanimate as a stone, or merely pensive as a weeping willow and passive as a reed shaken by the wind, is altogether a mistake! God works in us and His Grace is the great motive power which secures our salvation, but He does not so work in us as to chloroform us into unconscious submission, or engineer us into mechanical motion—He orchestrates all our activities by working in us “to will and to do of His good pleasure.” Grace imparts healthy life and life rejoices in activity! The Lord never intended His people to be automatons worked by clockwork, or cold and dead statues—He meant them to have life, to have it abundantly—and in the power of that life to be full of energy!” (Charles Haddon Spurgeon – Sermon, Shoes for Pilgrims and Warriors)

”The fight is on, but be not weary;
Be strong, and in His might hold fast;
If God be for us, His banner o’er us,
We’ll sing the victor’s song at last!

The fight is on, arouse, ye soldiers brave and true!
Jehovah leads, and victory will assure;
Go buckle on the armor God has given you,
And in His strength unto the end endure.”

JdonJ