

“Being Ready”

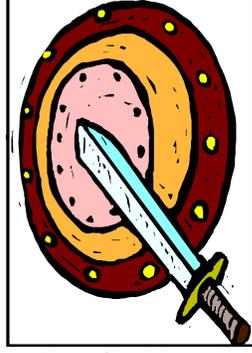
After the soldier has girded his loins and attached his breastplate, he puts on his foot-wear. In Roman days, an enemy might booby-trap a battlefield with spikes that would damage the feet rendering a soldier useless. Our feet, our means of locomotion, can take us places we shouldn't be or keep us a safe distance from trouble. Paul says our feet should be in *readiness* to bring the Gospel of Peace. If that is our mission each day, it will keep us from trouble and add purpose to our travel (1 Peter 3:15; Rom 10:15).

“Safe Behind our Faith”

Next a soldier picks up his shield. Roman battle shields could be *man-sized* to give full protection and interlocking to provide a group of soldiers protection from a barrage of arrows sent skyward by an enemy. Ephesians says that our shield of faith is capable of protecting us from **all** of the arrows of doubt and unbelief that Satan can send our way. His arrows will attack our hearts and minds causing us to question the very God that sent His Son to die for us. Faith is having a *firm conviction* in what we have learned to believe since our salvation. Paul said that he was absolutely persuaded that no evil spiritual power could separate him from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39). No arrow that Satan could shoot at Paul would move him from that belief. We need to stand firmly and confidently behind our shields. If we feel vulnerable, then we should interlock our shields with those of faithful men and women to withstand together the onslaught of Satanic negativity.

“A Helmet for our Thought-life”

What the breastplate does for our emotions the helmet does for our thought-life. Salvation is the greatest gift that we will ever receive from God. It is an endless adventure of everything that God wants His child to possess. We have to embrace each individual aspect of salvation fully so that



when Satan comes with his lies and deceits we are not caught off guard. It is not that we loved God but that He loved us (1 John 4:10); it is not that we sought God, but that He found us (Luke 19:10). When Satan says we are unworthy, we can say “God came for us!”

“The Spirit’s Sword”

Our one offensive tool is the Word of God. How masterfully did the Lord Jesus use the Word to force the devil’s retreat (Matthew 4:1-11). Remember it is the “*sword of the Spirit*”. We need partnership with the Holy Spirit to best apply with precision the keen truth of the Word with pinpoint accuracy in the heat of the conflict. Who better to defeat a unseen spiritual enemy than the Holy Spirit? And what better to use to bring about his defeat than the dreadful two-edged sword of the Word (Hebrews 4:12)? Be prepared. Put on your armor every day, soldier.

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“Spiritual Armor”

How Christianity Works Series

By Pastor Curt Carter

Ephesians 6:10-13

"A final word: Be strong with the Lord's mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand against all strategies and tricks of the Devil. For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms. Use every piece of God's armor to resist the enemy in the time of evil, so that after the battle you will be standing firm."

-The Apostle Paul New Living Version

Counter-insurgency has become the U.S. military's new tactic in the war on terror. Soldiers serving on the front lines in Kandahar, Afghanistan are told that "hearts and minds" is the strategy for winning the war.

Bombs and bullets are giving way to acts of friendship, good will and community building. The familiar physical combat is instead becoming a comparison of worldviews: America's freedom and democratic values vs. the Al-Qaeda's authoritarian, bitter jihad. Christians might call this "*overcoming evil with good*" (Romans 12:21). But even though a soldier's role is becoming more diplomatic, they still put on their body armor and helmets every day even in Afghanistan's stifling 100 plus degrees of heat. You have to be prepared.



Being prepared is Paul's concern in Ephesians 6. The soldier in Afghanistan never knows if the teenager he plays soccer with in the morning may toss a grenade in his direction by afternoon. Paul wanted believers to be prepared for Satan's relentless tactics of spiritual warfare directed against God's children. That meant diligently putting on the armor of God every day.

When asked to describe the armor of God, most believers will begin with the helmet of Salvation, breastplate of Righteousness, belt of Truth, etc - a top-down view. But in reading the scripture we find that Paul began seemingly in the middle with "*having your loins girded about with truth*" (verse 14 KJV). I pondered that for a long time until I realized that Ephesians is the first of Paul's letters written from prison. Each day he arose to observe the Roman soldiers, who were his guards, putting on their armor for the day.

"Truth for our Loins"

Over their tunics (a loose, knee-length garment) they would fasten a thick utility belt which had a stiff leather skirt attached to protect their "loins" from harm in battle. Here is where we have to remind ourselves that the battle waged against us does not begin on the physical level but on the spiritual, mental and emotional levels. Newer translations of the Bible have reduced this piece of "armor" to a simple belt, but I think we need to visualize a much larger protection for a vital part of our souls. Quite often in scripture the loins are connected with human sexuality (check 1 Kings 8:19 about the birth of David's son, Solomon).

Consider how vulnerable our human souls are to improper, sensual thoughts that give way to inappropriate and hurtful behaviors. How many lives are damaged because we do not live in the truth of God's Word concerning our sexuality? God has created us as men and women (Genesis 1:27) and wants us to enjoy our sexuality but according to the truth that He has set down in scripture. It is designed as a beautiful part of the committed marriage relationship between a man and woman which reflects the mysterious union of Christ with his church (Ephesians 5:31-33). How different would our understanding of sexuality be if we applied the truth of its spiritual meaning?

"A Shield for our Souls"

Our "heart", the seat of our emotions, is also vulnerable to attacks. Proverbs 4:23 says, "*Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do.*"

God has given us a breastplate of righteousness to protect our hearts from the brutal attacks of our Enemy. Which of us have not felt the severe pain of guilt, regret, and self-condemnation due to our failures? Satan always presses us with his accusations when we are at our weakest. But God reminds us that the remedy for our guilt is repentance, forgiveness and restoration to a right relationship with Him (1 John 1:9). Our breastplate of righteousness reminds us that any time we feel the pain of sin and failure in our lives we should *immediately* turn to God, giving no opportunity for a Satanic attack.

