



Ephesians

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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. Ephesians 6:13

Paul now uses war terminology to explain the wrestling he mentioned in verse 12. Though a wrestler will drop everything that hinders in order to have his hands free as he enters into a match, this is not the type of wrestling that Paul was speaking of. Instead, he is speaking of a warrior going into battle. In such a conflict, he will be fully adorned with both offensive and defensive gear. This is “the whole armor” that he needs to effectively fight with, and also to protect himself.

In the case of our spiritual battle, we are to “take up the whole armor of God.” There are implements which Paul will next begin to describe which are both offensive and defensive in nature. If we fail to use all of them (meaning “the whole armor of God”) we will either leave ourselves open to attack, or we will be unable to go on the offensive. Either way, we will not be effective and well-trained soldiers who are properly prepared for the battle we are asked to engage in.

According to his words, the intent of this “whole armor of God” is “that you may be able to withstand in the evil day.” The Greek word for “withstand” is one which should be fully evaluated. HELPS Word Studies defines it as:

- 1) To “take a complete stand against, i.e. a ‘180 degree, contrary position’; (figuratively) to establish one's position publicly by conspicuously ‘holding one's ground,’ i.e. refusing to be moved (‘pushed back’).”
- 2) To... “forcefully declare one's personal conviction (where they unswervingly stand); to keep one's possession; ardently withstand, without giving up (letting go).”
- 3) It “was a military term in classical Greek ... meaning ‘to strongly resist an opponent’ (‘take a firm stand against’).”

As can be seen, to “withstand” carries the connotation of both standing firm in one’s position, and also actively declaring (as if on the offensive) one’s personal convictions. One can do neither of these unless they are properly trained in the word of God. But if that is the case, then that person will “withstand in the evil day.”

This is not speaking of any specific day (such as “the Day of the Lord”), but rather it is speaking of each and every day that one may face the evil onslaught of the devil and his forces. For the Christian, every day may be “the evil day,” or it may come only occasionally. However, if Paul is writing to all Christians, as he is, then all can expect the evil day to come. We must be prepared for it so that when it arrives, we will be able to handle it.

He finishes with, “and having done all, to stand.” In other words, we will have been able to stand because we engaged in the battle with all of the necessary implements we needed in order to be effective in our warfare. We employed our defensive implements as well as our offensive ones. We were able to stay off the incoming attacks, and we were able to go after the enemy and slay him.

In the coming verses, Paul will name five implements that we can use in order to be effective in this battle. They can be compared to the “five smooth stones” that David picked up in 1 Samuel 17:40 in order to slay the giant Goliath. David was prepared for the battle, and he prevailed. If we follow through with Paul’s advice, we too will prevail in the battle against the spiritual forces of wickedness which surround us and come against us. In the end, we will stand. Paul speaks in similar terms in 1 Corinthians 15:58 –

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

Life application: We are to declare our personal convictions boldly, and we are not to cave on them. Oh! That Christians would be willing to solidify their personal convictions from a biblical standpoint, and then to actively proclaim them. We are admonished to do so, but in today’s world, we have become too peevish about “offending” others to do what we are instructed to do. Offense schmoffense! Who cares about offense when the sacred duty of upholding the

word of God is ours to defend and proclaim. Christian – grow a spine and hold fast to this sacred treasure which has been placed in your care.

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, Ephesians 6:14

Paul now begins his analogies between the physical implements of armor and those of a spiritual nature. These are certainly general descriptions which are intended to make spiritual points rather than being firm and fixed descriptions which are to be taken to unintended extremes. This is noted because it is exactly what happens when people write flowery books about the analogies being made here. One example of the non-rigid nature of the implements of armor is for that of “salvation.”

In verse 17, it is called “the helmet of salvation.” However, in Psalm 18:35, David says that the Lord gave him “the shield of Your salvation.” The helmet and the shield are both pointing to the same spiritual truth, salvation, but they are being used in different contexts to make different points about the matter of salvation. And so these are descriptions which Paul is giving in order to make specific spiritual analogies. And of course, they are very good analogies because they point to real truths in simple and yet profound ways.

He begins with the words “Stand therefore...” This is in support of the word “stand” used in the previous verse. There, it denoted the end of all of the efforts which a Christian will face in the spiritual conflicts he encounters. Here, it is a note for the beginning and duration of them. We are to stand now (active) in order to be found still standing at the end.

He then notes, “having girded your waist with truth.” To gird oneself is to use a belt in order to draw in a garment close to the body. Ancient dress was loose and flowing, like robes – either short or long. If one was to run, they would need to have these flowing garments drawn in tightly, or they would trip over them if they were long, or – even if short – they could get them caught in something like a branch. By girding the waist, it would draw the garment in so that this wouldn’t happen.

The analogy is obvious. When one lies, it will eventually trip them up. Just think of Richard Nixon or the Clintons. But by girding oneself and drawing in the truth, there will be no room for lies. Instead, there will be freedom of movement in one’s spiritual life.

Next he notes, “having put on the breastplate of righteousness.” The “breastplate” or “thorax” was a coat of mail extending from the neck down to the thighs. Under it is found all the vital organs which needed to be kept safe and secure from incoming jabs and blows by the enemy. In the Bible, the place of emotions, wisdom, and knowledge are said to be found in these organs. If one is unprotected against attacks on these things, they will suffer harm.

If a person is attacked emotionally, they are bound to falter in their theology by caving in to unsound moral precepts. If one is attacked through their limited knowledge of Scripture, they will not be able to withstand the onslaught. This is a warning, for example, against aberrant doctrines taught by crazy cults or heretical teachers. People need to be grounded in the Bible, and in a sound interpretation of it. Likewise, a person's wisdom may be found wanting if they have not been trained in how to apply it to the knowledge they possess.

The "righteousness" described by Paul goes deeper than a personal righteousness. Rather, it is speaking of the imputed righteousness of Christ. All who call on Him are granted this. From the time we are saved, we are deemed righteous. But will we apply that properly? That is the question which needs to be answered. We are told in Philippians about this sacred trust we have been granted –

"...and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;"
Philippians 3:9

As can be seen, Paul's use of these analogies is given to get us think through underlying truths which have already been revealed in Scripture. Two passages from Isaiah were certainly on his mind as he contemplated and wrote –

"Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins,
And faithfulness the belt of His waist." Isaiah 11:5

"For He put on righteousness as a breastplate,
And a helmet of salvation on His head;
He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing,
And was clad with zeal as a cloak." Isaiah 59:17

Life application: Understanding metaphors in the Bible is an immensely important point of knowing what is on God's mind. God is the Creator, and so He knows what is best in order to make sound spiritual analogies. When He uses water as a comparison to something, it is because the properties of water, and the benefits to be derived from water, are sound analogies to what He is describing in spiritual matters. Pay heed to these things. In doing so, you will find a treasure trove of wisdom to apply to your theology. *soldiers in this spiritual battle we are facing. Help us to be sound in our walk and faithful in our speech so that we will bring You the glory and honor You are due. Amen.*

..and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Ephesians 6:15

The words of this verse have caused a great deal of variety in commentary. But what one simply needs to do is remember that Paul is in prison, probably looking at a Roman soldier,

and he is using the military wardrobe of his guard to make spiritual applications for the believer in Christ.

The Roman army was the preeminent power and it was a great and conquering force. This was because its soldiers were well trained and their uniforms were designed for waging war. This included their feet as well. A soldier whose feet hurt, or which were either not protected or which were inappropriately protected, would be at a significant disadvantage.

The feet are the base of the body, and they are that upon which everything else is supported. For this reason, the Roman soldier's shoes were carefully designed for use in both offense and defense. Vincent's Word Studies describes their footwear –

“The Roman soldier substituted for the greaves of the Greek (metal plates covering the lower part of the leg) the caligae or sandals, bound by thongs over the instep and round the ankle, and having the soles thickly studded with nails. They were not worn by the superior officers, so that the common soldiers were distinguished as caligati.”

This is certainly what Paul is describing. A guard in the prison where he was would not be an officer, but a battle-ready soldier. His shoes would have these studded nails so that he could firmly plant his feet and strike without slipping. Further, the heavy materials would, at the same time, protect his feet on top, bottom, and sides. With feet that were protected, he could then go forward in battle without worrying about suffering injuries to them. Thus, they were at once defensive and offensive.

We are instructed by Paul with the words, “having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” In other words, the gospel is our base, and it is what we are to use as the support for everything else we do. If someone comes against us, we are to stand firm on the gospel, not slipping and caving on our convictions. We are not to budge even an inch on the truth that Jesus is the way to peace with God, and that there is no other.

And with this conviction and firm base as a defense, we will stand steady. Also our feet (which are our base) will be protected from harm. In this protected state, we can then use them for offensive purposes – that of going forward in the battle, carrying the good news of Jesus Christ. Isaiah speaks of this –

“How beautiful upon the mountains
Are the feet of him who brings good news,
Who proclaims peace,
Who brings glad tidings of good *things*,
Who proclaims salvation,
Who says to Zion,
“Your God reigns!” Isaiah 52:7

Paul uses Isaiah's words in Romans 10 –

“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace,
Who bring glad tidings of good things!” Romans 52:7

Life application: The gospel of peace must be both defended and actively proclaimed. A gospel which is proclaimed, but which is not defended will not be the sound and true gospel. If the true gospel is defended, but not proclaimed, it will be a wasted message which dies with the one who bears it. Let us both stand firm on the true gospel, and let us be bold in our proclamation of this marvelous good news.