

How God Uses His Full Armor to Deliver Us from the Evil One

Matthew 6:13b; Ephesians 6:10-17

One of the touching stories of human courage and sacrifice came from the 2011 meltdown of the Japanese Fukushima reactors. In an effort to save countless other lives, one team of engineers entered the stricken reactor room and feverishly tried to stop any further radiation leaks. Their calls and emails indicated that they knew that if they stayed too long their lives would succumb to ARS (acute Radiation Syndrome), that took out dozens of similarly tasked Chernobyl workers in 1986.

To all of us on the outside it was clear even to a casual observer that a radiation leak should never be entered without all the gear necessary. Like the HazMat gear we watched in the Dallas, Texas Ebola outbreak in November, 2014; and all other biological, chemical, and radiation contaminations, the message is clear:

Wear All the Gear or Suffer All the Dreadful Consequences

In our Bibles today, come words of warning, penned by one of the greatest experts on an even more deadly and hazardous material. Those words in Ephesians 6:10-13 are similar:

Wear All the Gear or Suffer All the Dreadful Consequences.

Biological, chemical, radioactive and the powers of spiritual wickedness are all potentially deadly contaminants that must only be faced with proper HazMat gear.

Just about everyone knows that about radiation hazards, bio-hazards, and chemical-hazards; but amazingly few comprehend the deadliness of the spiritual powers of darkness.

Are We Wearing All Our Spiritual HazMat Gear?

What are the protective clothes that our Great God has for us?

In Ephesians 6:10-17, we see six clear articles we are actually commanded to wear.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 **Put on the whole armor of God**, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 **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.

Pray

We just read no less than the chief spokesman for Christ's Church, the Apostle Paul describe the must-wear gear to survive the deadly powers of spiritual wickedness. The questions are we each wearing today:

The Full Armor of God We Are Each to Wear

1. **Belt of Truth** (v.14a) Vital to every soldier was this belt from which all tools of battle hung. This belt also held the soldier's robe together. To the Christian soldier a belt of truth means that we are surrounded by "honesty," "truthfulness," "integrity," and "sincerity" that every part of our life is governed by truth. Dishonesty brings defeat! If we are not belted, if our life is not held in by truth, any type of dishonesty will bring defeat to our lives.
2. **Breastplate of Righteousness** (v.14b) The soldier's breastplate was a heavy piece of armor that completely surrounded the body. To the Christian soldier this means a pursuit of personal, daily righteousness. We learn confession and repentance of sin can only maintain this. Impurity will bring defeat, so say no to sin daily.
3. **Shoes of Peace** (v.15). The sandal soles of the soldier were impregnated with heavy, spike-like hobnails, which gave him a good footing, and also kept him safe from stepping on sharp objects. If you injure a soldier's feet he's out of commission. To the Christian soldier this piece of armor is a call to both "readiness" and "peace of mind." If our hearts are not kept in peace by Christ, then anxiety will bring us defeat!
4. **Shield of Faith** (v.16). To a Roman soldier, his shield was a portable metal-banded wall, which he hid behind in battle. It was 5 feet high, 3 feet wide and served as the deflector from the flaming darts of the enemy. Our Shield of faith extinguishes all the flaming missiles of the evil one. But doubt will bring defeat!
5. **Helmet of Salvation** (v.17a). A soldier never was far from his helmet. Nearly any object on the battlefield could immobilize a soldier if his head was unprotected. So to the Christian soldier the meaning of the helmet is assurance of salvation. A Christian who is not assured that he has salvation is just totally immobilized because he's unsure about everything. He's unsure about God's promises, His Word, His protection. He's unsure about his destiny, his purpose in life. Lack of assurance brings defeat!
6. **Sword of the Spirit** (v.17b). Quick and deadly was the sword of a soldier. Vital to any victory was the hand-to-hand combat, which ended in the defeat of the enemy. To the Christian soldier this victorious sword comes only through a personal command of the Scriptures. This is essential to effectiveness in battle. Neglecting the Word breeds weakness and will bring defeat in our lives

Are You Standing or Falling?

God calls each of us to stand in joy, peace, hope, and love.

Satan, the world, and our flesh call each of us to fall into anger, anxiety, fear, and selfishness.

We face the unseen but real world of ***kosmocrators***. Spirit beings of immense powers of evil. These enemies are already defeated by Christ, but their deadly powers are only resisted by us when walking in step with the Spirit of God.

The most complete guide to standing and not falling into sin, discouragement,

hopelessness, uselessness, and emptiness is right here before us in Ephesians 6. The key to powerful ministry is right here. The way God has planned for our lives to magnify the Lord and unleash His Word is right here.

There are six pieces of Roman armor to which God adds the spiritual power of prayer. What an amazing set up God has designed for fruitful, powerful, and lasting ministry. But everything hinges upon our conscious choices to obey what God has asked us to do.

Paul said it three times in Ephesians 6: stand, stand, and stand.

- **Stand in the abundant life** God gave us when His Spirit filled us, or *fall into the empty life* of grieving and quenching Him.
- **Stand in the life of peace** that passes understanding that Christ purchased for us, or *fall into the anxiety* of the cares of this life.
- **Stand in the life of hope** that God's all powerful attributes offer us, or *fall into doubting* God's goodness and questioning God's plan.

Taking the Full Armor of God is How We Stand

Simply stated, standing in all that Christ offers to us was summarized by Paul in Romans 13, as "putting on Christ" (v. 14) as our "armor of light" (v.12).

What are those six pieces of armor?

1. Buckled up by the Belt of Truth (Eph. 6:14a):

Roman soldier had a thick leather belt that held their gear in place and could cinch up their tunic for battle. Normal dress for a soldier was a large square of material with head and arm holes that draped loosely over the body. In any combat that looseness of the garment ended. No tangles were desired, and the belt held fast the cinched up tunic.

Truth is to hold us up, hold us in, and protect us from falling. This belt of truth is much like the restraints we strap around us when we get into one of those dangerous, high speed twisting, turning rollercoaster rides at some amusement park. The belt and bars that hold us are designed to keep us safe no matter how fast the car spins, twists or drops. We are held in. Truth holds us in.

This word (aletheia) means both the content of truth, and the truthfulness of our life. God wants both. He wants us to know the content of truth and live the integrity of truthfulness. Truth means we have the readiness to obey; we have the integrity of commitment to truth; and we are opposed to all deception, dishonesty. We have no loose ends of our life that dangle and trip us up. We are girded, belted, strapped in by truth.

1. Knowing the truth saves us. (Jn. 8:32; 17:3)
2. Eating the truth sanctifies us, which means it makes us useful to God. (Jn. 17:17)
3. Surrendering to the truth transforms us (Rm. 12:1-2)
4. Obeying the truth stabilizes us (2 Tim. 2:4; Heb. 12:1-2)

Our lives are to be surrounded and held together by truth we know, believe, and practice.

2. Guarded by Breastplate of Righteousness (Eph. 6:14b):

Every Roman soldier wore sleeveless armor that covered him from the neck down, past his waist, protecting his vital organs including his heart, lungs, and intestines. Made of cloth or leather sewn with pieces of animal hoofs, bones, and metal, it formed a barrier to swords, spears, and arrows.

For us as believers this righteousness is to be consciously put on. So this is not the justifying righteousness of Christ that was imputed to us. We can't put on what God has already imputed to us (Romans 4:5-6; 5:1). This is also not self-righteousness that God hates and sees as filthy rags. This is rather the constant flow of a believer's choices to obey God's Word.

When we wrap our life with righteous choices, like the soldier's armor we protect our lives from Satan's hijacking attacks.

Satan wants to cloud our emotions with anger, impatience, and selfish ambition.

Satan wants to confuse our thinking with error and lies.

Satan wants to desensitize us to sin, so we lose our compassion.

Satan wants enflame our natural tendencies to hide, rationalize, and blame our sins on others.

We are safe only when we have our thoughts captivated by Christ (2 Cor. 10:5), and when we set our minds on things above (Col. 3:2). Without that righteousness by choice, we are constantly getting not lead poisoning we hear about so much lately, but the deadening mind-poisoning Satan uses to sidetrack and debilitate us each time we allow him to.

3. Firmly Planted in the Shoes of Peace (Eph. 6:15):

Rome's legions marched across the rough, jagged, treacherous paths of the ancient world with a steady cadence. Their feet were protected by specially designed war gear, strapped on reinforced sandals with built in spikes for traction and stability in hand to hand combat.

The Greek word the Spirit guided Paul to choose is *hetoimasia*, and speaks of being ready for action. When a Roman soldier went to war he knew he was ready to march, climb, and grapple and his feet would firmly stay beneath him.

For us as believers the peace we have with God means we have nothing to fear.

- **God is no longer our enemy:** He is our Father and our Protector.
- **God has already defeated our enemies:** the devil and death.
- **God surrounds us with His Presence and His peace** because we trust the goodness, wisdom, power, and presence of our Almighty Father.

When we strap on those truths of our salvation we can walk confidently through life with a boldness prompted by the Spirit of God. When our steps are guided by God; our pathway is illumined by His Spirit; and our Good Shepherd is leading and protecting us: we are firmly planted and wearing our shoes of peace.

The wicked are like the raging sea, restless and tossed, endlessly dashed upon all their rocky circumstances along the shores of life (Isaiah 57:20). The work of God within us is His incomprehensible peace: that keeps His quietness and assurance overflowing each day of our lives (Isaiah 32:17).

4. Shielded by the Missile Defense of Faith (Eph. 6:16):

Paul defines which of the Roman shields he was talking about with the word *thureos*. This was the battle field, 30-inch-wide and 60-inch-high piece of wood, leather and metal that made a defensive wall that kept arrows, spears, and rocks from harming the soldiers.

Often enemies added a pitch soaked cloth, wrapped around their arrows and ignited as it was shot. Without this shield the impact would not just deeply wound and burn the soldier, but the flaming splatters of fiercely burning pitch would light on fire anything they landed on. The *thureos* shield deflected or extinguished each arrow. Often at the end of battles the Roman soldier's shields looked like smoking porcupines as their shields bristled with all the extinguished arrows of their enemies.

Each day we walk through life Satan's dark realm has well placed archers, arrows ignited and ready to shoot.

Impure thoughts are a flaming arrow that the shield of faith can extinguish.

So are the flaming darts of anger, pride, fear, despair, covetousness, jealousy, and every other well aimed fleshly temptation.

If Satan's team lands an arrow (as we saw in his attack on Eve in the Garden) the impact and splatter of his fiercely burning pitch can ignite within our minds doubts about God's goodness, distrust about God's plan, and disobedience to God's Word.

Satan wins if he can make this flaming dart start a wedge between us as believers, or between us, and our Father.

Only the shield of faith, (holding onto the truth of God and acting upon it even when it is unseen), can extinguish these flaming arrows.

Take up the shield today, because without that shield, it is impossible to please God.

Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV) But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

5. Surrounded by the Assuring Helmet of Salvation (Ephesians 6:17a):

Soldiers couldn't survive long in the dangers of war without that helmet. The waves of enemy missiles flying, and the long battle swords swinging, would soon wound or kill them. Roman helmets were made of metal to protect and leather to cushion. Often the sides extended down for face protection. A head wound took a soldier out of battle.

Paul explains that again Satan's goal is to attack the secure reality of our eternal life. Our assurance of salvation, when shaken, debilitates our trust in God and sidelines us from battle. Much like the 36 to 48-inch-long, double edged battle sword called in Greek the *rhomphaia* (that word is found in Rev. 1:16, 2:12, 6:8), Satan's realm is swinging the razor sharp doubled edged sword of doubt and discouragement.

Doubting God's goodness often comes when we look at our struggles with our health, finances, and relationships, and question why God isn't doing a better job at helping us. That opens the way for a flood of further doubts leading to discouragement and despair about how we could even be saved as we think of all our sins, failures, weaknesses, and struggles. As the words to that 1863 hymn entitled, *In Christ Alone*, reminds us:

When Satan tempts me to despair
And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin.
Because the sinless Savior died
My sinful soul is counted free.
For God the just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me.

Behold Him there the risen Lamb,
My perfect spotless righteousness,
The great unchangeable I AM,
The King of glory and of grace,
One in Himself I cannot die.
My soul is purchased by His blood,
My life is hid with Christ on high,
With Christ my Savior and my God!

The helmet of salvation is a firm confidence in our Heavenly Father's character and power. This helmet is not getting saved, because Paul is telling believers to put it on. The first element of salvation is defined by doctrine of justification, which is trusting in the finished work of Christ, already accomplished on the cross for us (2 Cor. 5:21). Justification ignites the second element of salvation, which is sanctification.

God wants to make each of His children useful for His plan and uses His Word and trials, under the guidance of Spirit of God to shape us more and more into likeness to Christ (1 Th. 5:23). The final element of salvation is yet future, our conformity to Christ forever is finally accomplished when we are glorified fully like Him forever as 1 John 3:2 reminds us.

So secure assurance is based on:

A past event we trust called justification,

A present work in our lives we see called sanctification, and a

A future completion we hope for called glorification.

Salvation's helmet has three aspects: past, present, and future.

We know our sins are forever gone.

We see our sinful ways presently being sanctified away.

We await the end of the struggles as we become like Him when we see Him as He is. We know the ultimate victory is ours.

6. Armed by the Ultimate Weapon of God's Sword (Ephesians 6:17b):

The up close war tool of the Roman soldier was not the 3-4 foot battle sword called the rhomphaia, it was the lethal, hand-to-hand sword called in Greek, machaira. Just 16-18 inches long, and always at his side, the sword of the Legionnaire was his supreme battle tool. He could deflect an attacker thrusts, and inflict precise mortal wounds. Romans were unmatched in their skills in hand-to-hand combat.

As believers our sword is “of the Spirit”, a weapon originated and energized by the Spirit of God, for us to wield in spiritual warfare. No enemy can stand against the Word of God; and God's Word is the sword. When we hold firm to what God says, He cuts down all our enemies.

Like the Roman sword, this sword of the Spirit is both defensive and offensive. In deflecting an attack it is used in a precise manner, directly meeting the attack with a specific and appropriate Word from God. Our shield of faith makes a wall of protection, but the sword goes directly at the specific attack and defeats it on the spot. Like Jesus demonstrated in His sword thrust Scriptural responses to each of the Devil's three attacks (Mt. 4:4, 7, 10), we must know and use the Word. Believers who do not know how to deflect a direct attacks with Scripture, are far more likely to be wounded, and devoured by our adversary the devil.

Our sword of the Spirit is also our chief offensive weapon against both the enemy without and the enemy within. The Word of God that defends us also transforms us from the inside out. God's Word of truth can change us from liar-hearted to truth-tellers, from greedy-hearted to givers, from bitter-hearted to tender forgivers, and from fearful-hearted to emboldened soldiers of God.

God's Word in the hands of a skilled Christian soldier can be used by the Spirit of God to turn many captives in Satan's dark prison from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive the forgiveness of all their guilty sins, and go from eternal paupers to the riches of the inheritance of Christ.

That is the amazing evangelistic power of our sword the Spirit gives us. May we use it to quell Satan's attacks, and release many captives by the power of the Gospel unto salvation for all those who believe.