

Weapons of War

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil 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 firm.

¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;

¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

(Eph 6:10-17)

The Divine Warrior and His Royal Armor

The Divine Warrior is coming, and he is decked in his full battle array. His breastplate protects his vital organs. His intimidating helmet guards his head. He carries the sword of

the King, unsheathed in his right hand. In his left, his shield guards the oncoming blows, but is equally impressive as a striking hammer upon the unsuspecting foe. His belt is fastened, his pants hold the steel plated shin-guards. His sandals are strapped, he's walking in battle formation. He has come. And we must ask the question Isaiah asked,

Isaiah 63:1

*WHAT mighty Conqueror do we see,
Whose garments are besmeared with blood,
Whose rich apparel seems to be
All tintured in a crimson flood?¹*

Isaiah 63:2-5

*Why is your apparel red
Like one who does the winepress tread?
“The winepress have I trodden alone;
With Me from the nations was none.
“For I trod them in My fury
And crushed them in My wrath fiercely.
Their blood is sprinkled on My garment
And I have stained all My raiment.*

¹ **Joseph Stennett** (1663 – 11 July 1713), *Hymns in Commemoration of the Sufferings of Our Blessed Saviour Jesus Christ Compos'd for the Celebration of His Holy Supper / by Joseph Stennett*, Early English Books Online (London: J. Darby for Andr. Bell., 1697), 47.

*I looked for help but there was none,
Shocked that to uphold was no one.
“Therefore, My Arm brought salvation
Unto Me without frustration
And My devastating fury
Has consistently upheld Me.”²*

Thus, the Divine Warrior is depicted for us in the OT, especially in Isaiah, and especially in to two Divine Warrior bookends of **Isaiah 59:15-21** and **63:1-6**.³

Usually, when the Warrior comes in the OT, it is to **save his people** and **defeat their enemies**. Often, he ensures victory only after permitting that a **hopeless condition** arise among his own people.⁴ They are brought into slavery and bondage; their backs are up against the sea; they are utterly broken, the situation is totally impossible; their people are without a warband and have to fight giants. Sometimes,

² **A. Kirby Ricks**, *Isaiah's Poetic Prophecies: The Book of Isaiah Rendered into English Poetry* (Unknown: 2012): Isaiah 63:1-5. I have modernized his English. This fellow is a Mormon. I have looked over the sections of Isaiah 59 and 63 and find them perfectly orthodox. It fascinates me that a Mormon would want to put all of Isaiah to poetry. Would that God's people would take up that task.

³ See **Matthew J. Lynch**, “Zion's Warrior and the Nations: Isaiah 59:15b-63:6 in Isaiah's Zion Traditions,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 70 (2008): 254 [244-63]. Lynch's study shows the direct links between two divine warrior hymns of Isaiah 59:15-21 and 63:1-6, which bookend the central unit which is Zion's restoration (Isa 60-62). Compare especially 59:16-17 with 63:4-5.

⁴ See **Timothy G. Gombis**, “Power Demonstrated in Weakness: Human Agents in Divine Warfare and Contemporary Ministry,” [tingombis.com](https://timgombis.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/power-demonstrated-in-weakness-the-divine-warrior-in-ot-narr.pdf), 3, <https://timgombis.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/power-demonstrated-in-weakness-the-divine-warrior-in-ot-narr.pdf>.

when they have a warband, the entire nation, including her king, cowers. Other times, when they muster 30,000 men, the Warrior whittles them down to 300—an impossible number to fight a war. Sometimes it is political subterfuge at the highest levels that seeks to eliminate their entire race. Time and again, from Moses to Joshua to Gideon to David to Esther, the circumstances are *purposefully* dire so that all there is left, all that can be left, is faith. God's people must know that salvation belongs *only* to the Divine Warrior, the Arm of Strength, the Commander of Armies, the Word and Son of God.

Still, the enemies of God rage, and the peoples plot in vain. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the heavenly rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Messiah. But he who sits in the heavens laughs and Adonai holds them in derision. He will speak to them in his wrath and terrify them in his fury (**Psalm 2:1-5**). For the LORD has a day wherein he will punish the host of heaven, in heaven, and the kings of the earth, on the earth (**Isa 24:21**). **Do you know what any of that means?** You think you do, but do you really?

What happens when he comes up against ... *his own people*? He has, you know. “**The Word of the LORD came to me:**

Son of man, set your face toward Jerusalem and preach against the sanctuaries. Prophecy ... ‘Thus says the LORD: Behold, I am against you and will draw my sword from its sheath and will cut off from you both righteous and wicked ... And all flesh shall know that I am the LORD. I have drawn my sword from its sheath; it shall not be sheathed again’” (Ezek 21:1-5). When the Divine Warrior comes like *this*, even his own people cannot stand. The righteous get swept away with the wicked as the hordes of the east carry them away into captivity.

Why should God do this? What kind of a God takes a people and then turns against them? Do you think this is God’s fault? Is he to blame for taking up arms against them? On more than one occasion he abandoned them *because they abandoned him*.⁵

Isaiah 59:1-2

GOD’s arm is never shortened,

⁵ In what follows from Isaiah 59, I’m focusing on God’s people. The text certainly does this. However, both this passage and Isaiah have both God’s people (corporately speaking especially) and the rest of the world in mind. The pronouns keep changing to demonstrate that the passage is against everyone. See especially Holly J. Carey, “An Armored Household: Isaiah 59 as the Key to Ephesians 5:21-6:9 and 6:10-17,” *Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies* 3.2 (2018): 253. She writes, “The perpetrators of these crimes appear to be both insiders and outsiders (he switches personal pronouns throughout the chapter), resulting in a sense of overwhelming injustice from both within and without. (Note that God punishes both the community as well as those outside of it).” 262-63 [260-70].

*that it cannot reach to save:
His ear not dull, or wearied
to hear us what we crave.
But from you, do your sins divide
your God who was so near,
And cause the Lord his face to hide,
so that he will not hear.⁶*

The Divine Warrior comes against his people because **they break covenant** with him, not the other way around.

Isaiah 59:12

*Our **trespasses** against us show,
our sins we cannot choose but know:
For they are swollen above our head,
and are unto the Heavens spread.⁷*

In Isaiah 59, there are several specific sins that are called out. One concerns “**peace**.”

Isaiah 59:7-8

⁶ **William Barton** (1598?–1678), *Six Centuries of Select Hymns and Spiritual Songs Collected out of the Holy Bible Together with a Catechism, the Canticles, and a Catalogue of Vertuous Women / by William Barton*, Early English Books Online (London: J. Heptinstall for William Cooper .., 1688), 179. I am updating the spelling and language slightly.

⁷ Barton, 111.

*Destruction and unhappiness
are ever in their ways;
Nor do they know the way of **peace**;
for still their judgment strays.
They make their crooked paths of sin,
form which they cannot cease:
And whosoever walks therein
shall never know true **peace**.⁸*

What does it even mean to know true peace or to know the way of peace? Another involves God's **word**:

Isaiah 59:13

*Transgressing, denying the LORD,
Turning away from our God's **word**,⁹*

What does he mean when he talks about God's "word?" A third idea is that **righteousness** is gone from the land:

Isaiah 59:14

*Turned away backward is justice
And afar standeth **righteousness**¹⁰*

⁸ Barton, 166.

⁹ Ricks: Isaiah 59:13.

¹⁰ **Ricks**, Isaiah 59:14.

What is righteousness and why should God be so angry that it is gone? Finally, consider that **truth** no longer stands:

Isaiah 59:13-15

*Speaking oppression to uprise,
Thinking and telling from heart **lies**.*

***Truth** stumbles in the street's stir*

*And **honesty** cannot enter*

***Truth** lacks and he who turneth*

From evil a prey becometh.

*The LORD was displeased when He saw
That there was no justice nor law.*

Now here's what people just don't get. Perhaps it's easy to think of the Warrior coming in **vengeance and fury and wrath**. After all, **people deserve it**. Especially the people I don't like. But when you *internalize* that you are one of *those people* who deserve it, suddenly this thought takes on a new perspective. What if the Warrior is coming *for me*? What if he is coming for me like he did for Israel?

What people don't see, in part because it was often **cryptically mysterious** in the way the prophets wrote, in another part because it just seems so **totally unfathomable** to what

we are internalizing about our own sins at the present moment, is that when the Divine Warrior comes, something totally unexpected happens. To make things right, God does something that you can only hear someone else tell you. Allow the poets to interpret Isaiah properly in this regard.

Isaiah 63:1-2

*Who is this who does quickly come
From the boundaries of Edom
With glowing, crimson-dyed garment,
From Bozrah with such adornment,*

*Who is stately in his attire,
Treading in his strength's greatness dire?
"I Who speak in great **righteousness**,
Mighty to save from one's distress."¹¹*

Do you hear it? God comes in **righteousness**. There is no righteousness in the land, so he girds it upon his chest like a breastplate. Yes, his breastplate is no ordinary, blacksmith hammered piece of steel. It is supernatural armor, fit only

¹¹ **Isaac Watts**, "Hymn 29. Meter: C. M. The Ruin of Antichrist (Isa 63:4-7)," in *The Psalms and Hymns of Isaac Watts* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1998).

for the Divine Warrior. “He put on righteousness as a breastplate” (Isa 59:17), the prophet says.

For what purpose? *Salvation from one's distress*. Salvation is the point, not vengeance. That's the shock. Again, the Divine Warrior's armor fits this exactly. “And a helmet of salvation on his head” (Isa 59:17).

Now, to see how the Divine Warrior comes, you need to move to a parallel in Isaiah before returning to the later chapters. There is a great Messianic prophecy from earlier in Isaiah's book. You've heard it before.

¹ There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a Branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

² And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

³ And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear,

⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

As Jeremiah puts it, “A Righteous Branch shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The LORD is our righteousness’” (Jer 23:5-6).

But now listen to the prophet, for he tells you through the **imagery of the Divine Warrior’s armor** that this Messiah is the Warrior! “Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins” (Isa 11:1-5). Here’s what is being said. When the Son of God came, he dawned his regal attire as he took on human flesh. And thus, when we read the question of why this man is stained in blood, and when you know the Gospel of Jesus Christ, suddenly, you find it is not the blood of his enemies, *but of himself*.

*WHAT mighty Conqueror do we see,
Whose garments are besmeared with blood,
Whose rich apparel seems to be
All tintured in a Crimson Flood?
Like one who has the winepress trod,
Whose clothes the grape has purpled over?
Ah! ‘tis the Blessed Son of God,*

*All full of wounds, all stained with gore.
A Mighty Conqueror indeed,
Who conquers by receiving blows;
To give wounds, first Himself does bleed,
And by his death subdues his foes.¹²*

*He treads them down, though all alone,
And with their blood his clothing stained,
But first all is bathed in his own,
His own by many a wound is drained.
His blood Hell's subtle Powers confounds,
To them a mortal liquor proves,
But is a balm to heal our wounds,
A wine to cheer the souls he loves.
The vessels that contained this Juice,
A spear and ruder nails did broach;
And while his flesh they wound and bruise,
His heart was broken with reproach.
But bruised, and broke, and mangled thus,
This sacrifice our pardon gained;
And thus prepared, is Food to us,
By which we live and are sustained.¹³*

¹² Stennett, 47.

¹³ Stennett, 48.

This is the Gospel in all of its shocking good news. God is coming in judgment, but he is taking the judgment upon himself. The Divine Warrior turned on himself for me. This is the absolutely necessary background to have for understanding another passage about the armor of God, the famous last section of Ephesians.

Ephesians 6:11-24

This whole passage is **parallel** to the very **beginning of the letter**, where the doctrinal teaching of the Divine Warrior and heavenly places and spiritual blessings came into such sharp focus. He ends as he began:

- A. Grace and Peace (1:1-2)
- B. Every Spiritual Blessing (1:3-14)
- C. The Divine Warrior and Heavenly Places (1:15ff.)
- ...
- C¹. Heavenly Places (6:10-13)
- B¹. Divine Warrior: The Church with Every Spiritual Weapon (6:11-22)
- A¹. Grace and Peace (6:23-24)

It also comes at the end of the **second-half of the letter**, which has been primarily given to encourage you in your

behavior as the new man, the new creation, the new temple of God indwelt by the Holy Spirit. In it, we have seen much by way of **commands** in terms of our behavior towards one another, in the world, and in our families. And, in case we might have forgotten, we are reminded right in the beginning of Paul's discussion of the armor, just who and what it is that we are **fighting against** ... rulers, authorities, cosmic powers, and spiritual forces of evil, the devil and the evil one in heavenly places who preside over this present darkness.

The Armor of God

Then he starts talking about **armor**. He begins with language that reminds me of **Joshua**. “**Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might**” (**Eph 6:10**). Seven times (**Dt 31:6, 7, 23; Josh 1:6, 7, 9, 18**) Joshua is told, “**Be strong and courageous.**” Why? You try going into a land filled with **giants** as the military commander with a rabble of men untrained in war! But he was to know that the battle belonged to the LORD. “**The LORD your God is with you wherever you go**” (**Josh 1:9**). The Divine Warrior fights “**So that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of**

the LORD is mighty” (Josh 4:24). This is the strength of his might. And when God fights for us, who can be dismayed?

But how do you do this? “Put on the whole armor of God” (Eph 6:11). The “whole armor” “is the term used for the full equipment, both defensive and offensive, of the heavily armed foot soldier (cf. also Polybius 6.23; Thucydides 3.114; Jdt 14:3; 2 Macc 3:25; Luke 11:22) ... the emphasis is on the full protection it provides.”¹⁴

Armor is used both *offensively* and *defensively* in hand-to-hand combat. Some are purely defensive (breastplate). Others are more offensive (sword). Still others can be both (shoes, shields, swords, even helmets). In a battle, you need to lash out and you need to protect simultaneously. It isn't one or the other. War is always moving and fluid. This is made clear in the language, “Stand [*histemi*] against the schemes of the devil” (11) and “withstand [*anthistemi*] the evil day” and “stand [*histemi*] firm” (13) and “stand [*histemi*] therefore” (14). Four times, using two different words, are to *stand* and fight (*histemi*) and *stand* and defend (*anthistemi*). It is obviously a major point of the passage. Why? Because it's so tempting to give up or run away.

¹⁴ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 442.

But you cannot be neutral. To “stand by,” as if you were waiting for a fully booked airplane seat to open up, is to die. Can’t you hear that your adversary is a powerful, supernatural foe who “schemes” against you and makes the day “evil?” If your stance is neutral, you will fall. You must resist with everything in you. You must stand and fight, though the battle be long, your soul is weary, and all you have are questions. To surrender is to perish. You must stand. Surely, the many Roman soldiers walking around throughout the empire would surely have provided a constant reminder of the totality of the imagery.¹⁵

So what do you do with this armor? Hang it on your wall like a trophy? Take pictures of it for a coffee table book? No. You are to *put it on*. Just how you do that will be a major focus for us. But let me say up front, this is some-

¹⁵ Lincoln sees the entire passage as reflecting the ancient Greek *peroratio* (summation) used by rhetoricians such as Aristotle (see Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC 42 [Dallas: Word, 1990]: xli-xlii, 429-60; Andrew T. Lincoln, “Stand Therefore ...’: Ephesians 6:10-20 as *Peroratio*,” *BibInt* 3 [1995]: 99-114). In this way, one could be tempted to see the imagery coming from a Roman soldier rather than the OT. Lincoln has an entire article devoted to the Ephesians use of the OT but does not have our passage as an example (see Andrew T. Lincoln, “The Use of the OT in Ephesians,” *JST* 14 [1982]: 16-57). However, he does mention plenty of OT and Isaiah imagery in his commentary. A helpful summarizing chart of these OT uses of Isaiah in Ephesians as Lincoln discusses them is Paula Fontana Qualls, John D. W. Watts, “Isaiah in Ephesians,” *Review and Expositor* 93.2 (1996): 256-58. Gombis summarizes, “Paul does not derive the armor of God from his pondering the armor of a Roman soldier, therefore, but from a consideration of the Scriptures” (Timothy G. Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians: Participating in the Triumph of God* [Downers Grive, IL: IVP Academic, 2010], 158).

thing you have to do moment by moment. You do not magically run through the text like it is some kind of **incantation ritual** you do as soon as you get up in the morning by somehow commanding God or speaking to demons saying, “*I take up the belt of truth ...*” and that by it somehow it stays on for the day no matter what. I’ve known people who have treated this passage almost like magic in just this way. Apparently, Dr. Lloyd-Jones knew the same people for he says,

Christianity is not a form of psychology. You do not just walk along the road saying, “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,” using it as some kind of incantation, or auto-suggestion, repeating the phrases to yourself. That is not Christianity at all! ... So often we are in danger of abusing the Scriptures in this way. We use them as mere phrases in that manner, or light-heartedly we sing our hymns, and we feel better for the time being ... When you turn Scripture into a drug, into something which gives you a temporary relief without your knowing why or how, the effect does not last. It gives a temporary feeling of exhilaration, but fails you when you are in the struggle and in the heat of the battle.¹⁶

¹⁶ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Christian Soldier: An Exposition of Ephesians 6:10-20* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977), 14-15.

No, as you will see, it is much more difficult than that. Difficult, but absolutely worth it, for this is the armor *of God*.

Just here, you need to consider something else. The armor in the OT was worn, as we have seen, by the Divine Warrior. Now, the armor is worn by Christians.¹⁷ The only thing this can mean is that you have become the Divine Warrior on this earth. How can this possibly be?

It isn't like this doesn't have precedent. That's the point of the hopeless situations I spoke about earlier. *Abraham* fought and rescued Lot. *Moses* took his stand by holding spreading out his hands ... in the form of the cross under the signal, "*The LORD is my Banner*." *Joshua* was commander; *Caleb* and *Samson* and *Gideon* were battle chiefs. *David* slew the giant. *Jael* the wife of Heber took out a general. *Esther* risked her life for her people. Men and women all served as types of what you are now. For at the end of the day, it was the Lord fighting their battles.

Now, he bids you to fight. You personally. You the church. The reason is that you are in union with him. Christ *in you*, the hope of glory. You have not become Christ. You

¹⁷ "Just as God waged warfare in the past to vindicate his name, to rescue his people or to judge his people, so now God wages warfare against the powers through the church. Paul casts the church as the presence of God on earth and as the chief character in God's ongoing cosmic conflict with the suprahuman powers that rule the present evil age." *Gombis, Drama*, 158.

are not the Messiah. You are desperately weak in yourself and it makes little sense for God to give you the right to wear his armor. Yet, he does. And that is the power of armor and the God who crafted them for you. It is his power, not yours.

Belt of Truth (Eph 6:14)

Let's begin with the **belt**. As a belt, this is the thing that **holds your sword**. But it also **holds up your pants**! Without the belt, you become the Emperor With No Clothes. You stand naked and exposed. You become a laughing stock to those around, for they see how foolishly you have uncovered yourself. That one little thing, a belt that you refused to put on.

What is that belt? It is the **belt of truth**. In Isaiah, it was the *breastplate* of truth. There, truth was seen as the protector of mortal wounds. Here, it is that which keeps you from lewdly exposing yourself. It was the very thing **Israel lacked**. Remember? They were full of lies, truth had stumbled in the street, honesty could not enter. Because truth was lacking, those who turned from evil became easy prey. Without truth, there was no justice or law. She was naked

and bare, wallowing in her own blood, exposing herself to the world (**Ezek 16:6-7; 22**).

Truthlessness can be something inside of you. You are a liar. You do not tell the truth. Your whole life is a web of lies. Little children have this right there inside of them. It is in their very nature to hide and conceal the truth. The heart is deceitful above all things (**Jer 17:9**). That is, it is a **liar**, and you cannot know it. Truth is absent.

Left undisciplined, this turns into **a whole culture** that is full of lies—lies to itself and to everyone around them. The abandonment of objective truth has turned into this notion that everything is subjective, that truth is a cultural convention. That has been around for a long, long time. “**What is truth,**” Pilate asked Jesus (**John 18:38**). Jesus is **the Way, the Truth...** (**John 14:6**). Jesus is Truth. You want truth, you look to him, you see who he was, what he did, what he said, how he behaved. He images truth to the world.

This cultural subjectivism where everything is fluid, no rights or wrongs, is taking dangerous turns. Entering from these high and lofty ivory towers of academia through post-modernism and linguistic deconstructionism and intersectionality, truth is becoming something only someone oppressed can have. The more oppressed you are, the more

truth you have. Dare to say that there are two genders? This is the “truth” *of the oppressor* and it must be squashed at all costs. This is how cultures destroy themselves, from the inside like the **Trojan horse** that the good people of Troy viewed as a gift from the very gods themselves, only to find themselves dead by morning.¹⁸

Truthlessness is the surest way you can destroy yourself too. When truth is lacking in your life, everyone else sees it; that’s the nature of the exposure. They see it and ridicule like those around the naked emperor. Who does he think he’s kidding? Truth keeps your spiritual pants on, so to speak. It grounds all else in objective reality, that is, it aligns you up to a world God created that is what it is.

Thankfully, Christian, **you have truth**, for the Apostle is speaking to you. If Christ is in you, then the root of truth is in you; you cannot escape it. So, you are called to put it on. What does this mean? Truth has come up before in this letter. Listen to what Paul said. **“They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned**

¹⁸ Recently, two atheist professors (Peter Boghossian and James Lindsay) were interviewed by the Christian Michael O’Fallon. They give the image of both a trojan horse and a virus. The interview is well worth watching, and more than once. See Sovereign Nations, “The Trojan Horse – Ep. 1: Deconstructing Communities,” *Youtube* (Aug 9, 2019), <https://youtu.be/YDFL3xwEEG8>.

Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as *the truth is in Jesus*, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph 4:19-24).

“Put on” the new self. “Put on” the armor. This is not coincidental language. He has already told you how to put this belt on. All he is doing now is given you an image of what happens and what you look like when you don’t. You become exposed and you have no place to put your sword. But we’ll come to the sword in just a bit.

Breastplate of Righteousness (Eph 6:14)

Let’s look next at the **breastplate**. As we have seen, a breastplate is **protection** for your vital organs. It extends from your neck to your groin. It protects your heart, your lungs, your stomach, your kidneys, and liver, and all the other things you must have to live. Its purpose is almost wholly **defensive**.

This breastplate is the breastplate *of righteousness*. This is taken word for word from **Isaiah 59:17**. The Divine Warrior put on a breastplate of righteousness amid a people who were wholly unrighteous. It is his righteousness that protected him from the onslaught of its antonyms: depravity, perversion, crookedness, vileness, corruption, indecency, sinfulness, degeneracy. Only he who is righteous can stand amidst such perversion. And remember, “stand” is the call to arms!

Righteousness (*dikaïosunê*) is that virtue of *doing what is right, doing what God requires* (Louw-Nida). It is *doing justice* (NASB Dictionaries). It is *conforming to law* (TLNT). Righteousness is *a legal standing* that you have in Christ. Through his sacrifice on the cross, whereby the Righteous One died, so by his life he credits to your account his perfect righteousness when you are justified by faith.

This standing, however, has a concrete *reality* in the new man. As we just saw, you are to “*put on the new man created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*” In ch. 5, it is the “*fruit of light*” which is “*good and righteous and true*” (**Eph 5:9**). The fruit of light is the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. How do you

put on the breastplate of righteousness? You put on these virtues. In each situation you find yourself, if you are tempted to hate, you put on love. If you are tempted to torment, you put on peace. If you are tempted to worry, you put on patience. If you are tempted to rage, you put on kindness.

How can you do this? Because the Spirit of God dwells within you. Yes, perfect righteousness is a legal standing before God. And perfect righteousness is something you will not attain in this life. Nevertheless, the perfect God dwells within you and he has given you the power to put righteousness on as a breastplate. He does this so that you will not be mortally wounded by your own unrighteous stupidity in this dangerous war against the powers of hell.

They tempt you to unrighteousness in order to expose you at the vital point, like Smaug the Dragon who was missing just that one little scale near his heart. If they can shoot the arrow through that whole where your heart is exposed, they think they can win. That's why you thank God that this is the Warrior's breastplate and that Jesus already wore it, thus securing the victory over them. But do not take your legal standing to mean complacency. You are called to put

this breastplate on and if you do not, the enemy seeks to attack you in ways you cannot begin to imagine.

*BE strong, my brothers, in the Lord,
and in his powerful might:
Put on your soul his armor whole,
to make you stand in fight.
Stand therefore, having girt your loins
with truth, which you profess:
And having done the breastplate on
of perfect righteousness.¹⁹*

Shoes of the Gospel of Peace (Eph 6:15)

In this way, you make yourself ready for battle. But you've only begun. Perhaps the thing of **least importance** in the armor might feel like the **shoes**. Certainly, if you were someone from the grasslands of Kenya or the jungles of Brazil, the shoes wouldn't make much sense. For me, they may be the most underappreciated of all the armor. The hottest day I've ever been in was in **Lingle, WY** sometime around 1988 on a July afternoon. The temperature reached into the upper 110s F, and as my uncle lived by the North Platte

¹⁹ Barton, 104.

river, my brother and I decided to take some innertubes and float it. We were taken north of the house a few miles and I left my sandals in the car. As we floated by to the place where their house should be, we discovered that we were a few football fields away. The only way back to the house was to cross this sun-scorched, thistle infested wasteland—barefoot. I never forgot my shoes again!

Just before the famous Suffering Servant prophecy of Isaiah 53, the prophet says, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns’” (Isa 52:7). He then proceeds to tell us the most vivid gospel message in all of the OT, about the coming servant who will suffer and die and be raised from the dead for our transgressions.

Paul seems to be taking his shoes off the “gospel of peace” from this passage in Isaiah. Peace, you will recall, was precisely what the people of Isaiah 59 did not know and did not have. This was because their ways were evil. Wickedness creates peacelessness. We’ve addressed that with righteousness. But peace does not come merely through trying to “be good.”

In Ephesians, this word (*eiréné*) appears several times. It both begins and ends the letter. But its most concentrated usage is found in this context: “He himself is our *peace*, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ... that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making *peace* ... thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached *peace* to you who were far off and peace to those who were near” (Eph 2:14-17).

Again, it is the *new man* that is in view, but now it is in the context of the violent divisions that occurred over race and religion. Again, we live in a peaceless age, where racism abounds in the hearts of conservatives and liberals alike. Some is overt; others are covert. Most try to disguise it. But the point is, in Christ—and *only in Christ*—these divisions have turned peaceful. This is the whole reason why I needed to tell you that the coming of the Divine Warrior was not what you thought. Something stayed his hand of wrath. Peace!

The Gospel tells us that we are no long identified by our old man’s external markers. We are Christians. I’m not talking about “you,” but “us.” We are in Christ. Only together do we make one man. The new man is not you, he is us.

That's the gospel—that God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself, and that you are to be reconciled now to him through faith. Living as though these divisions still exist can only mean that you have not internalized the reconciliation Christ has given to them, or that you do not yet **have it yourself with him**. The good news is that if you turn to him, he gives you peace.

Again, this is more than just peace with God, though that is vital and the starting point. It is **peace with one another**. It is only through hearing this news and being ready to tell it to others by putting your shoes on that you can act in such a way towards others that embodies this message.

All that we have seen about households: **wives and husbands; children and fathers; slaves and masters** ... these all necessitate that the good news has come and that you all see and know and believe that he has brought peace between you. For these are relationships that by definition are often filled with **anything but peace**. It is the objectivity of peace with God that allows you, in space and time, to give that news to one another, thereby reminding yourselves of the peace he won at such a great cost. It is also the only message that can transform those who have not been reconciled and

do not yet know this peace of Christ that passes all understanding. You have to put on your shoes and at all times be prepared to speak the gospel, to believers and unbelievers so that they might know the good news of this peace, a peace that the world does not know and will not know unless they are told.

*Still let your feet be shod,
Ready His will to do,
Ready in all the ways of God
His glory to pursue:
Ruin is spread beneath,
The gospel greaves put on,
And safe through all the snares of death
To life eternal run.²⁰*

Shield of Faith (Eph 6:16)

Unique to Paul's list is his next piece of armor. It isn't that the idea of a **shield** is new. Throughout the Scripture, God is a shield, though in the NT, this is the only time the word (*thureos*) appears. As far back as Abraham God said, **"I am your shield; your reward shall be very great"** (**Gen 15:1**).

²⁰ John Wesley and Charles Wesley, "CXL. The Same.—Hymn 28: The Whole ARmour of God," in *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, ed. G. Osborn, vol. 5 (London: Wesleyan-Methodist Conference Office, 1869), 41. The songs takes us through all of the armor.

Shields are both **defensive** armor and **offensive** weapons. Someone writes, “This image of the shield ... is almost universally interpreted as defensive. The shield is needed to fend off the fiery darts of the attacking evil one. But to identify the shield as defensive does not tell us whether the one wearing the shield is on the defensive or the offensive in a battle. Ancient depictions of siege warfare in both word and picture show that shields were carried by the forces putting a city under siege, fending off the fiery arrows of the defenders.”²¹ You can also use a shield quite effectively as an instrument of harm, striking the opponent with it.

In this case, the shield is that **of faith**. It is the idea of faith as a shield that is unique to Paul. How is faith a shield? This is the only piece of armor that has a little more said about it. “**With which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one**” (16). To extinguish is to **put out a fire**. The picture does not seem to be one of Satan shooting an arrow at your heart, but rather something like lobbing fiery arrows over the wall to start your granaries and your houses and your stables on fire. That is, the point is **not to hurt you**, but to **throw your entire life into chaos and destruction**. It is a lot

²¹ **Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld**, *Ephesians*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2001), 301.

like Satan going after all of Job's things, but not touching the man himself.

Faith, Paul says, extinguishes these fiery arrows so that they will not burn down the city inside the walls—that is, your life and the life of the church. So what does it mean to use faith as a shield? It seems to mean that you must trust and have confidence in God's power to fight the Devil, to extinguish his arrows, and to bring you out of the misery he is inflicting. You believe his promises and trust his power.

This is why it was so important to see **God's brute power** as the Divine Warrior early. That is why it is so important to see the **power of God in Christ** who has done what he came to do in human flesh. Throughout Ephesians, faith has been a topic. He is therefore reminding them here that he has “**heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus**” (**Eph 1:15**). Your faith is real. You were “**saved by faith**” (**2:8**). This faith is powerful, precisely because it is not of yourself. Christ “**dwells in your hearts through faith**” (**Eph 3:17**). This faith is life-changing. So,

*Chiefly take the shield of faith,
that so your valiant hearts
May quench thereby, most powerfully,*

*the wicked's fiery darts.*²²

Helmet of salvation

The next piece of armor is the **helmet**. This is clearly a defensive piece of equipment. However, ancient helmets were also ornate and were often designed to terrify the enemy. The curious word he chooses for the helmet is **salvation**. Actually, this was Isaiah's word, as this one is also taken straight out of **Isaiah 59:17**.

“Salvation” (*soterios*) is the word from which we get *soteriology*—the study of salvation. While not used in Ephesians other than here, its sister word (*soteria*) is used in **Eph 1:13**. There he talked about how, “**In him, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.**”

To be saved is to be saved **from something**. In this case, it is from **sin, death, and the devil**. It is also that you are saved **to something**. In this case, you are saved **to God, eternal life, and perfect holiness forever**. This salvation is something that is guaranteed by being justified by faith. Anyone who trusts in Christ alone has this promise sure. And, they can have assurance of this promise simply by looking to Christ alone.

²² Barton, 104.

But how is salvation a helmet? On one hand, it **protects your head**. When thoughts come in that seek to cause you to despair, when doubts arise in your mind that any of this is real, the very idea that you are saved by Christ's blood through his perfect obedience, **faith protects your mind**. The assurance that you can have is of great protection through such terrible thoughts. I'm saved! Be gone, Satan.

At the same time, the fact that you are saved surely has to be a very **intimidating thing to our enemy**. There is nothing they can do to pluck you out of God's hand (**John 10:28**). They have been rendered powerless, both powerless to keep people who hear and trust this message from being saved and delivered from their bondage, and powerless to keep those who have from being lost and doomed eternally. Such protection can only help your mind if you continually are reminded of the salvation that Christ has won for you.

But not just you alone. Again, this knowledge is for all of you—together. We have to stop reading the Bible only individualistically. I belong to you and you belong to me. Christ loved his church and gave himself up for her (**Eph 5:25**). Together we are saved into one body, one man, one temple. Surely, this has to be a great defense when one of us is attacked, for it allows us to come to the aid of our brothers

and sisters in need. Put on the helmet of salvation and stand firm against the mind-tricks of the devil for,

*Your Rock can never shake:
Hither, He saith, come up!
The helmet of salvation take,
The confidence of hope:
Hope for His perfect love,
Hope for His people's rest,
Hope to sit down with Christ above,
And share the marriage feast.²³*

The Sword of the Spirit—The Word of God (Eph 6:17)

The final piece of armor is the **sword**. I began by having you think about the unsheathed sword of the Divine Warrior. That sword was drawn against his people because of their sin. In other places, the Angel-Warrior draws it out against Jericho (**Josh 5:13**), against Balaam (**Num 22:22-23**); and David sees him with it too (**1Chr 21:16**). The sword is primarily now an **offensive weapon**. It is terrifying, thus, you take the sword in order to hack the enemy to pieces.

²³ Wesley and Wesley, 42.

(Perhaps taking a good sword class would help you wield it better too.)

But what is this sword? It is called two things here, not one. The first is that it is the sword *of the Spirit*. There isn't really a parallel anywhere else in Scripture. Isaiah 59 does have the curious language of the armor-clad Warrior coming on the “winds of war” (Isa 19:21), where “wind” is the same word for “spirit” in both Hebrew and Greek. But curiously, just two verses later, the war turns to gospel. “‘And as for me, this is my covenant with them,’ says the LORD: ‘My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children's offspring,’ says the LORD, ‘from this time forth and forevermore’” (Isa 59:21).

The second thing it is called is *The Word of God*. It is tempting to read “word of God” here as referring to something like prophecy or the giving of law or something like that. That might be akin to Isaiah's “words I have put in your mouth.” In this way, it is especially the new covenant promise of the Holy Spirit that is in mind.

However, equally possible is that it is something like *the Divine Warrior himself*! Drawing his language from Isaiah

63, John sees what we have seen today. “He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty” (Rev 19:13-15). The Word of God with a sword is something we have seen in Ezekiel already. The Word came to him, the Logos with a sword.

The “rod of iron” comes from Psalm 2, which we also heard. It is about this Word of God. I stopped just prior to the Gospel when I gave it to you earlier. “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill. I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel’” (Ps 2:6-9).

The Spirit has been seen many times in Ephesians. “You were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit” (Eph 1:13). “We both have access in one Spirit to the Father” (2:18). He strengthens with power through his Spirit your inner being

(3:16). Together, we are in **unity of the Spirit** in the bond of peace (4:3). You are to be “**filled with the Spirit**” (5:18). Therefore, you are to take up this sword and dash to pieces the enemy with these truths.

Further, you are to believe this word that you are being told, for it is the “**word of truth**” (Eph 1:13) by which you are “**washed**” clean (5:26). You must use this word as a sword against Satan. But most importantly, you must know that this sword is the very **Son of God himself**. You are not doing the hacking of the enemy, he is. He has already done it by putting Satan to open shame at the cross and rising to the Right Hand of God far above the principalities in the heavenly places.

That takes you right back to the point that at the end of the day, though you put on the armor, he still fights the battle, just as he has always done. He does it through weapons such as these.

*Brandish in faith till then
The Spirit's two-edged sword,
Hew all the snares of fiends and men
In pieces with the Word.*²⁴

²⁴ Wesley and Wesley, *ibid*.

I've given you a lot of poetry today, speaking the words of the prophets through lyrics that might touch your heart as well as your mind. For you need both to rationally equip and to motivate you to do so. The battle is engaged, but Christ has given you all that you need to stand firm. Therefore, I conclude with these words from the Wesley brothers,

*To keep your armour bright,
Attend with constant care,
Still walking in your Captain's sight,
And watching unto prayer;
Ready for all alarms,
Steadfastly set your face,
And always exercise your arms,
And use your every grace.*

*Soldiers of Christ, arise,
And put your armour on,
Strong in the strength which God supplies
Through His eternal Son;
Strong in the Lord of hosts,
And in His mighty power,
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts²⁵*

²⁵ Wesley and Wesley, *ibid.*

Isaiah 59:15-21	Isaiah 63:1-5
"Truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. The LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice.	"Who is this who comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah, he who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness , mighty to save ."
¹⁶ He saw that there was no man , and wondered that there was no one to intercede ; then his own arm brought him salvation , and his righteousness upheld him .	² Why is your apparel red, and your garments like his who treads in the winepress?
¹⁷ He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak .	³ "I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel.
¹⁸ According to their deeds, so will he repay, wrath to his adversaries, repayment to his enemies; to the coastlands he will render repayment.	⁴ For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come.
¹⁹ So they shall fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun; for he will come like a rushing stream, which the wind of the LORD drives.	⁵ I looked, but there was no one to help ; I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold ; so my own arm brought me salvation , and my wrath upheld me .
²⁰ "And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression," declares the LORD.	⁶ I trampled down the peoples in my anger; I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth."
²¹ "And as for me, this is my covenant with them," says the LORD: "My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children's offspring," says the LORD, "from this time forth and forevermore.""	

Isaiah 59 (also Wisdom 5:17-23; 1Th 5:8)		Ephesians 6	
(see Isa 11:5) 59:14-15	Righteousness as belt Truth is a virtue	14	Belt of truth
59:17	Breastplate Of righteousness		Breastplate of righteousness
(see Isa 52:6-7) 59:8	Feet bring Good News They do not know peace	15	Shoes: Gospel of peace
		16	Shield of faith
59:17	Helmet of salvation	17	Helmet of salvation
(see Isa 49:2) 59:19	Mouth like a sharp sword “winds of war” (for Spirit see also vs. 21)		Sword of the Spirit
59:21	My Words in your mouth (Rev 19:13, 15)		Word of God

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