

**'THIS IS WAR** The Reality of Spiritual Warfare  
**(SUIT UP\_ OR SHUT UP)**

I call your attention to a passage in **Ephesians 6:10-20**.

**<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. <sup>13</sup> Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. <sup>18</sup> And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. <sup>19</sup> Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.**

Though I've referred to this text more than once in this series, some expected me to begin with it\_ and I understand why. Yet, being told to put on the armor before understanding the reason why, would've been premature. Even here, Paul waited till the last chapter to tell the believers in Ephesus to suit up.

I don't know about you, but I didn't put on a football uniform unless I thought I was going to play. Members of a swat team don't put on body armor unless they're confronting a threat. And soldiers wouldn't put on the "full" armor unless they expected they were going to need it. I'm sure you've noticed that I take off this helmet and body armor every Sunday before I speak. Why? It's a visual. I don't really expect I'll be under attack from terrorists\_ and it's both heavy and hot. It is very uncomfortable!

**Put on the belt of truth.** Despite what the picture might seem to indicate, this was not an ornamental piece. It wasn't to hold their pants up or just to serve as a utility belt either. In many respects it was an early version of a sports cup\_ serving to protect the loins. Now\_ what is this belt and how do we buckle it on?

Some say it is an emblem of faith in Jesus who is the way, the truth and the life. Others feel it may be a reference to God's word, since His word is truth. Yet, since we'll find both faith and God's Word specifically symbolized by other articles of battle, I tend to think not. In fact, it would be more consistent with the context if it were an attribute we were to bear. Honesty and integrity comes to mind. Satan knows one of the best ways to take us out of commission is to destroy our credibility. If we're seen by the world to be hypocrites, he has, in effect, sidelined us.

Our Warrior and Chief wears a "belt of truth." In **Isaiah 11:5** it says that when Messiah came, "**Faithfulness would be the sash around His waist.**" In other words, He would be the real deal. In Paul's day corrupt vendors filled cracks of defective pottery with wax. After painting over the flaws, they'd try to sell it as if it was without defect. Some advertised their ware as pottery without wax--sincere, genuine, and pure. I believe Paul was saying that's what we must be. We cannot be hypocritical. We must be authentic and real. If we aren't truly committed to wear the belt of truth, standing side to side with Christ, our Lord and Savior, we're not ready for battle.

**Have the breastplate of righteousness in place.** The breastplate covered the vital organs such as the heart, lungs, liver, and kidneys. A Roman breastplate covered his back as well.

What the breastplate was to the Roman soldier, righteousness is to the Christian. In the spiritual realm, righteousness functions as a breastplate. So what is it? Where do I get it\_ and how do I put it into place? I mean I've struggled with putting on the gear I've been wearing each week.

Righteousness is a state of *"being"* right all the time\_ and by that I don't mean it the way many people do. Whenever anyone disagrees with me, I like being *"right."* A lot of people talk about *"rights"* people should have to do whatever makes them happy\_ but having a legal *"right"* to do something doesn't make it *"right"* in the eyes of God. Righteousness is doing the *"right"* thing at the *"right"* time with the *"right"* motives. Yet, scripture is pretty clear that none of us are *"righteous."* We've all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. **(Romans 3:23; Isaiah 64:6)** We are all weak in our flesh, and vulnerable to Satan's attacks. Yet, God would not tell us to do what we can't unless He was going to equip us to do it. So, to put on the breastplate of righteousness is to be determined to do the right thing no matter what\_ and trust God to show us the right way and to help us to follow through in it. I hope that you know that Jesus is our righteousness. It is only in Him that we can become the righteousness of God. **(2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:21)**

**Get on those Gospel shoes.** Roman soldiers wore sandals with thick soles and cleats into battle. They also had accompanying shin guards called *"greaves."* These special shoes helped them to move quickly and to engage in hand to hand combat without losing their footing\_ as well as protecting them from cuts and bruises on their lower legs and feet. In the days of my father's youth, he said they didn't wear shoes in the summer. The soles of their feet would get hard and calloused. Most of us have delicate feet.

These *"gospel shoes"* have to do with peace that accompanies the good news. **Isaiah 52:7** says: **How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'** Nothing pushes the devil back more than when we're sharing the Gospel\_ the good news that Jesus restores peace between man and God. He reconciles sinners. Want to set the enemy back on his heels? Declare the good news about Jesus. The people of God have lost much ground in the past **30** years in America. We've promoted and backed every agenda but the one mission we were left with\_ to take the Gospel into all the world.

**Take up the shield of faith.** Several types of shields were used in the Apostle Paul's day. A small shield was used when fighting with the sword which covered over the whole area of the soldier's arm. A 2<sup>nd</sup> type known as a door shield was as thick as the palm of your hand. It was **2 ½** feet wide by **4** feet high. It was made of bronze or gold or heavy wooden planks glued together; covered with linen, canvas, or animal hides; and trimmed with solid iron or metal. When Roman soldiers advanced in battle, they would overlap these large shields, locking them together to make a wall of defense that would be able to stop spears and flaming arrows. There is a shield that can protect the Christian soldier.

This verse teaches the shield of faith can quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. But hear me\_ our trust can't be in our faith. We must rely upon, depend upon, and lean upon the only One who stood toe to toe with Satan and was undefeated. **Hebrews 12:2** reminds us that in our struggle we must look to Jesus, the **"author and perfecter of our faith."** Faith in God's Son is the shield. Lock your shield firmly to His...

**Take the helmet of salvation.** Obviously the helmet protected the Roman soldier against blunt force trauma to the head. Though a football player can suffer severe concussion even wearing a helmet, and headgear doesn't make one immune from all head injury, many lives have been saved because of them. **(Soldier in Afghanistan)** The image of the helmet seems to be to guard the mind from the accuser's attacks. Satan wants to confuse us, fill our heads with doubt and worry.

Yet, if we will heed the words of Paul to renew our minds (**Romans 12:2**) and in **2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 10:4-5**, where he says: **"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."** Seize every thought and surrender it to Jesus and the devil will not be able to unsettle our minds. His slanderous jeers will melt away when we have it firmly set in our minds that we are saved. We are not worthless losers. We are loved victors!

**Take up the sword of the Spirit.** A Roman sword was short, but sharp and deadly. It was meant for close quarter combat. Though used defensively to block an attacker's blade, it was primarily for offense. If someone was only to hide behind their armor to keep from being hurt while trying to hold their ground, there'd be little need for a sword. A sword has the ability to cut, wound, and even destroy an enemy.

More than one Greek word is used for the "word" of God. **"LOGOS"** speaks of the revelation/ message of God\_ but **"GRAPHE"** refers specifically to the written word\_ and **"RHEMA"** to the spoken word. **"RHEMA"** is the word we find in our text. So, it's not the Bible lying on your coffee table that drives the enemy back. It is the Word of God that you believe in your heart and now proclaim aloud. The words that come from the written Word of God and then wielded by the Spirit of God have great power. This is the **"Sword of the Spirit"** – and when it is spoken in faith, the Holy Spirit empowering us, the devil retreats. In **Luke 4**, when Jesus was confronted by the tempter, it was this Sword He used to defeat him. Man lives He said by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. His sword play? Simple repeated, forward thrusts. **"It is written."** **"It is written."** **"It is written."** And the devil left Him alone.

**Finally, pray.** This is not given a designation as a part of the armor\_ but I cannot help but see it as the chain mail undergirding everything else, filling the chinks in the armor. Paul says, **"Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests."** Call upon God for directions, support our comrades in arms, plead for strength, and resolve to keep up the fight.

I'm afraid I hear more complaining than battle cries among God's people. To be honest, the words from own lips can sound more like acknowledging defeat than declaring victory. *"God, it's too hard. I don't know what to do. I don't know how much more I can take. Why don't you stop Satan?"* The reply that came to my heart was something like this: *"I told you this is war. I am with you and I have I given you all you need to win this battle. Suit up\_ or shut up."*