

## THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD!

Ephesians 6:14-17

Pastor Doug Roman, Bible Baptist Church

Sunday AM, January 16, 2011, Part 2

Warren Wiersbe rightly said, “The Christian life is a battleground, not a playground” (Wiersbe, *Be Rich*, 163). I am convinced that we need this passage. I know we need it because this is God’s word. But it is particularly necessary for us 21<sup>st</sup> century Westerners who live lives of relative ease and prosperity. We need to take off our sun visors, Hawaiian shirts, cargo shorts, and flip flops (vacation ready) and exchange them for the whole armor of God (battle-ready).

**Big Idea: Put on the whole armor of God to stand, fight, and conquer in spiritual battle.**

Three introductory observations concerning the armor of God imagery.

1. Because it is imagery, it is not precise. The full significance of every piece of armor cannot be pinned down precisely.
2. Because it is imagery, it is not exhaustive. The Apostle Paul does not intend to exhaust the armor of a Roman soldier. We should not press the meaning of each piece of armor too far.
3. Because it is imagery, it is profitable insofar as we accept its significance as stated. The imagery is intended to evoke a mindset in the believer.

The Christian soldier is called to “stand therefore,” which is the fourth command in vv. 10-20. The force is “suggesting the stance of the soldier in combat, standing firm, resisting, and prevailing against enemy” (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 447; cf. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 837; 1 Corinthians 10:12; 15:1; 1 Thessalonians 3:8; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; Galatians 5:1). All but one piece of the armor is defensive. This is significant. Why? This detail is significant because the Christian soldier is not to retreat. Shortly after Christian leaves the Palace Beautiful, he meets Apollyon in the Valley of Humiliation. What would Christian do? Fight or flight? “Then did Christian begin to be afraid, and to cast in his mind whether to go back, or to stand his ground. But he considered again, that he had no armor for his back, and therefore thought that to turn the back to him might give him greater advantage with ease to pierce him with his darts; therefore he resolved to venture and stand his ground” (Bunyan, *Pilgrim’s Progress*, 37-8). We can “stand” because we have put on the armor of God.

1. **The belt of truth (v. 14)**. This piece of armor is preparation for vigorous activity. As a Christian soldier, we must have a subjective knowledge and belief of the objective truth which comprises the Christian faith.
2. **The breastplate of righteousness (v. 14)**. This piece of armor protects the torso of the soldier. The righteousness of Christ can withstand all the assaults of the Devil. The righteousness of Christ should translate in the noble and moral Christian soldier.
3. **The shoes of the gospel of peace (v. 15)**. This is a reference to the military footwear, the hobnailed shoes which kept the soldiers footing sure in battle. The “readiness” is not the desire to take the gospel of peace to others but the peace that the gospel gives to the Christian soldier which enables him to fight with readiness, or sure-footedness.

The next three pieces of our armament (shield, helmet, and sword) are not “put on” but “taken up”. During moments of an absence of conflict these may be set down but once the conflict begins these are to be taken up for the battle.

#### 4. **The shield of faith (v. 16)**

The shield refers to “a long oblong shield” (BDAG, 462). The dimensions may have been something like four feet tall and two feet wide and a hand’s breadth thick. It was made of wood with a thick coating of canvas and leather to put out the “flaming darts of the evil one.” This was a big shield; we need a big faith!

How does faith act as a shield? Is it faith in faith? No. Faith never points to itself, it always points to its object (Lloyd-Jones, *The Christian Soldier*, 305) as we discover in Romans 4:18-21. It’s not faith in faith but faith in God! Genesis 15:1, “Fear not Abraham, I am your shield.” David echoed this truth in Psalm 84:11, “For the LORD God is a sun and shield.” Whatever the forces of hell may do, they cannot penetrate the shield and protection of God Himself. We must also remember that we are also more super-conquerors in Christ according to Romans 8:38-39. Finally, the witness of the Spirit is another layer of protection as found in Romans 8:16.

5. **The helmet of salvation (v. 17)**

This piece of armor protects the head of the soldier, thereby protecting the faculty of the mind. The battle is not only fought on a physical level but also on a mental level. Is the battle really worth fighting on a personal level? Is the battle really worth fighting on the local church level? Is it really worth fighting on the universal church level? It is! But in order to understand that the battle is worth fighting we must understand the idea of salvation. There are three stages of salvation:

- Past, our justification. *We have been saved.*
- Present, our sanctification. *We are being saved.*
- Future, our glorification. *We will be saved.* 1 Thessalonians 5:8, “for a helmet the hope of salvation.”

We must be confident in the possession of our salvation. 2 Peter 1:10, “Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.” 1 John 5:13, “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.”

6. **The sword of the Spirit (v. 17)**

This is the only offensive weapon mentioned in the armor of God. The Apostle Paul uses the Greek word translated “sword” here three times (Romans 8:35; 13:4; Ephesians 6:17). Hebrews 4:12, “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” This sword is a shorter sword intended for close combat; a perfect “cut-and-thrust weapon for close work” (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 852). This is not Call of Duty the video game. We are neither detached nor distant from this battle. Remember the word that the Apostle Paul uses in v. 12, “wrestle”. This is nothing less than hand-to-hand combat.

**Conclusion**

Lt. Col. Oliver North gave a speech at the NRA Annual Meetings in 2009. In the speech he said, “When they [American military men and women] gather in prayer circles and huddled up before a mission, they’re not going out to play football, they’re going into mortal combat and they know that some of them are liable not to come back.” This is dangerous business. This is why we need to take off our sun visors, Hawaiian shirts, cargo shorts, and flip flops (vacation ready) and exchange them for the whole armor of God (battle-ready).