

THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD!

Ephesians 6:14-17

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Sunday AM, January 9, 2011, Part 1

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 21st 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 hold, 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.
4. **The shield of faith (v. 16)**
5. **The helmet of salvation (v. 17)**
6. **The sword of the Spirit (v. 17)**

We’ll consider the final three pieces of armor next week.

Let’s return for a moment to the notion of the gospel of peace. What gives you peace as you engage in spiritual warfare? The gospel of peace gives the Christian soldier sure-footedness even in the middle of conflict. In what or in whom do you look for peace? Do you look for peace in the things of this world such as career, health, strong marriage, children, or grandchildren? There is nothing wrong with these things in and of themselves. But hear this, if your peace resides with these items or anything else other than the gospel of peace, your peace is fleeting and will not last. If these things go, your peace goes. Any peace that is not God’s peace is nothing more than a placebo, a sugar pill. Notice the distinction Jesus made between the peace He offers and the peace this world offers. Jesus said in John 14:27, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” You can only have the lasting peace when you find it in God, who offers you the gospel of peace in His Son, Jesus Christ.