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The Armor of God

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The Armor of God

Spiritual warfare requires spiritual weapons. When we put on God's armor, we can resist Satan and stand against evil.

Can you imagine how foolish it would be for soldiers to go out on the battlefield without any weapons or defensive gear? And yet, that is exactly what many believers do every day.

As Christians, we are God's soldiers who live on a spiritual battlefield. Therefore, Paul uses the analogy of Roman armor to describe the protective defenses God has provided for us. Each piece of armor has its specific function. It is only when we use all of the pieces together that we are able to resist Satan's various schemes and stand against his assaults.

Ephesians 6:13-17: "For this reason, take up the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand your ground on the evil day, and having done everything, to stand. Stand firm therefore by fastening the belt of truth around your waist, by putting on the breastplate of righteousness, by fitting your feet with the preparation that comes from the good news of peace, and in all of this, by taking up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God)."

The Belt of Truth

Satan's tactic: To deceive us with lies and distortions by using deceptions that have been dressed up to look like the truth, lies that have been mixed in with the truth, and misrepresentations of the truth taken out of context. He wants us to base our life on worldly philosophies and illusions of reality.

Usually, we think of a belt as an accessory. It's nice to wear a belt, but not critical unless your pants are very loose and baggy. For a Roman soldier, however, the belt was absolutely essential. Before battle, the soldier would pull up all the loose parts of the tunic that he wore as his primary clothing. By tucking it under his belt, he could run and move freely without getting tangled up. The belt also held the breastplate in place and the scabbard for his sword.

In the same way, truth is also foundational to our spiritual defenses. The belt of truth protects us from Satan's deceptions. Jesus said, "If you continue to follow my teaching, you are really my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32). You must accept the Bible as the absolute authority for truth and reality.

Buckle the belt of truth around your waist so Satan can't destroy your perception of reality through deception, because he doesn't want you to know the truth. If we are not operating on the basis of God's truth, then we are out-of-touch with reality. Without truth as the basis for our reasoning, we are easily manipulated by Satan's schemes; every decision we make will move us further away from what God desires for us.

The Breastplate of Righteousness

Satan's tactic: To berate us with accusations and condemnation by reminding us of past sins that have already been confessed to God and forgiven, and by creating false guilt about things for which God does not hold us responsible. Satan wants us to rely upon our own self-goodness for our acceptance before God. He wants us to become totally absorbed in the sinfulness of our flesh. He wants us to ignore the fact that the blood of Christ has totally cleansed us from all our unrighteousness.

The most common breastplate used by Roman soldiers was made of molten metal. It covered the torso from the neck down to the thighs. Its purpose was to protect the heart and bowels. In the Hebrew culture, it was believed that emotions originate in this part of the body. Paul associates the breastplate with righteousness.

The breastplate of righteousness protects our feelings, affections, and conscience from Satan's abuse. Our righteousness comes from Christ. Philippians 3:8-9 makes this fact clear, "More than that, I now regard all things as liabilities compared to the far greater value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things —indeed, I regard them as dung!—that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not because I have my own righteousness derived from the law, but because I have the righteousness that comes by way of Christ's faithfulness—a righteousness from God that is in fact based on Christ's faithfulness."

God does not condemn you because you are clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Fasten the breastplate of righteousness in place so Satan can't degrade your sense of worth through false guilt and accusations. Our self-worth is not to be based

on what we have or have not done. It is to be completely centered on what Jesus has done on our behalf and who we now are in Christ. As we recognize Satan's accusations as baseless and instead focus on our new identity, we are emotionally free to pursue the destiny that God desires for us.

The Shoes of Peace

Satan's tactic: To alienate us from God and others through offenses, bitterness, unforgiveness, and pride. He wants us to violate the unity and security of our relationship with God and others.

Shoes are important because they affect our mobility. There are many different kinds of shoes—each designed to accomplish a different purpose. An athlete knows the value of wearing the right shoe for a particular event. The boot of a Roman soldier provided the traction needed during combat, as well as protection from sticks and sharp rocks on the rugged terrain.

Paul equates peace with our mobility because when we are at peace with someone, we move closer. But if there are problems in the relationship, we try to put distance between us and the other person. The shoes of peace protect us from Satan's divisive ploys.

We are at peace with God—"Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have also obtained access into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of God's glory" (Romans 5:1-2).

We are to have peace in our heart—"And the peace of God which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 4:7).

We are to be at peace with one another — "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all people." (Romans 12:18)

By faith, you must believe that through Christ, God is now forever at peace with you. Prepare your feet with the gospel of peace so that Satan can't disrupt your relationship with God and others. Unity is foundational to victorious Christian living. Therefore, Satan does all that he can to disrupt our relationships with God and others. He doesn't want us to be peacemakers and reconcilers who bring others closer to God.

As we maintain fellowship with God, he will help us stand against the assaults of the evil one. But when we are alone, we are completely helpless. This is why Satan's strategy is to divide and conquer. But God's shoes of peace will enable us to resist Satan's divisive schemes and to stand in unity.

The Shield of Faith

Satan's tactic: To assail us with temptation and adversity through enticement with sensual pleasures, money and possessions, fame and power; through mental, emotional affliction and physical illness and disease; and through persecution that comes by way of ridicule, harassment, and oppression. Satan wants us to distrust God's Word, doubt his character, and question his motives.

Roman soldiers had large shields that were almost as big as a refrigerator door (about 30 inches wide and 50 inches high). The front line of soldiers holding these shields would create a wall of protection against the flaming arrows of the enemy.

Imagine holding that shield as you feel the impact of one fiery arrow after another. Some are deflected while others become embedded within the shield. Barrage after flaming barrage comes whistling at you. You can smell the smoke. You feel the terror. You want to drop the shield and run away from your ferocious enemy. But that would be a fatal mistake because that shield is the only thing protecting you from the next wave of fiery missiles.

Paul portrays our faith in God as our shield against the severe attacks of the devil. The shield of faith protects us from Satan's influences and assaults. Psalm 28:7 says, "The Lord strengthens and protects me; I trust in him with all my heart. I am rescued and my heart is full of joy; I will sing to him in gratitude."

By faith, you must believe God's Word and trust his holy presence to protect you and sustain you in your current situation. Take up the shield of faith so that Satan can't destroy your trust in God through doubt.

When you are in the midst of a ferocious battle, you are preoccupied with your immediate circumstances. When things are going poorly, and you seem to be losing ground, fear can overtake you. You begin to wonder why God is not doing more to help you. Then the questions begin—Doesn't God care about what's happening to me? Will He abandon me? Is God even here? The more we doubt God's commitment

to us, the more we depend on ourselves. And as we do, our shield is being lowered. When we doubt God and His love for us, we expose ourselves to Satan's attacks. We must hold on to God's promises to be with us and sustain us!

The Helmet of Salvation

Satan's tactic: To dishearten us about the present and the future through worry and anxiety, intimidation and fear, and discouragement and hopelessness. Satan wants us to be discouraged and defeated, without hope of future salvation.

The helmet primarily protected the Roman soldier from cavalymen who would swing a three to four-foot-long double-edged sword at their head. The head is a strategic target because it provides direction for the rest of the body. If the head can be wounded, it can also make the rest of the body vulnerable and ineffective. Paul says salvation is our spiritual helmet. Salvation is more than a state of being; it is a person. Jesus Christ is our salvation. By his death on the cross, we are forever saved from the penalty of sin (Romans 8:1). Now Jesus is also saving us from the power of sin every day (Romans 6:14, 18-22). And, in the future, he will even save us from the presence of sin. The helmet of salvation protects us from despair with the hope of future glory.

When you become discouraged, you must focus your thoughts by faith on the certainty of Christ's return and the glory of your eternal future. Take the helmet of salvation so Satan can't defeat you with negative thinking.

Despair is the beginning of defeat. Hope provides motivation. It keeps us going during the tough times. Our hope is in Jesus for future salvation. And it is not a vain hope. It is a hope based on what Jesus has already done, is now doing for us, and promised he will do in the future.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:8, Paul refers to "as a helmet our hope for salvation." In Romans 8:24, he writes "For in hope we were saved." The helmet of salvation gives us the hope, confidence, and assurance that we need to withstand Satan's assaults. It is a hope that is focused on what Christ will do for us in the future.

The Sword of the Spirit

Satan's tactic: To deter us from using specific scriptures against him through ignorance of God's Word, disbelief in the power of God's Word, and through foolish self-reliance. Satan wants us to be negligent in using God's Word for spiritual

warfare.

The sword can be used for defense. But it is also the only offensive weapon that God supplies as part of his armor! This sword is given to us by the Holy Spirit and is identified as being the Word of God. The sword does not represent the larger, more general body of truth (Greek word=logos) which is depicted by the belt of truth. Instead, the emphasis here is on the specific application of particular phrases and verses (rhema) from within the Word of God.

It is foolish and dangerous for any Christian to attempt battle with Satan without the involvement of the Holy Spirit. He will guide us to the specific scriptures we are to use for our situation. Then He gives force to the verses we direct at Satan and his evil accomplices causing their retreat.

Jesus demonstrated the effective use of the sword of the Spirit when he was being tempted in the wilderness. Satan was even so bold as to distort scriptures in his temptations. But Jesus met every assault with a specific and accurate scriptural response. The sword of the Spirit protects us by driving away Satan.

Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any double-edged sword, piercing even to the point of dividing soul from spirit, and joints from marrow; it is able to judge the desires and thoughts of the heart."

Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God so Satan can't defend strongholds of deception. It is important to know the Word of God and to understand what it means so we can apply it to specific attacks from Satan. That is one thing that we can do to inflict damage on the kingdom of darkness.

Warfare Prayer

Ephesians 6:18 tells us, "With every prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit, and to this end be alert, with all perseverance and petitions for all the saints."

The armor is God's gracious gift for protection-which is put on with prayer. It is to be used in the context of our personal relationship with Him. We are not only to put on the armor; we are to pray faithfully and strategically as we live on this spiritual battlefield.

Warfare prayers are like air raids on the enemy. Prayer is our supreme weapon in spiritual combat with the enemy.

Pray in the Spirit — “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how we should pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes on behalf of the saints according to God’s will” (Romans 8:26-27).

Pray at all times — “constantly pray” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Be prayerfully alert — “Be devoted to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving” (Colossians 4:2).