

# CHIEF MINISTRIES

November 2022

*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. - Ephesians 6:12*

Unfortunately, most of us don't know the first thing about fighting the kind of war this scripture refers to. For, as Ephesians 6:10-12 says, it's not a battle of flesh and blood, but of the spirit. We need to wake up to the warfare that's going on in the heavenly realm!

That confuses some people. They say, "Devils fighting in heaven? I thought God reigned in heaven!" What they don't understand is that the Bible teaches there are three different areas called heaven: (for another time, a great example of this is in Daniel, when the angel of the Lord came to him 21 days after he had prayed)

1. The heaven where God resides
2. The stellar heavens (what we call "outer space")
3. The heavens around this earth (the atmosphere surrounding this planet)

This last heaven is where spiritual war takes place. (That's why Ephesians 2:2 calls Satan "the prince of the power of the air.") "The air" is where wicked spirits operate. From there, they attempt to rule the nations to which they've been assigned. And rule them they will unless the prayers of God's people keep them from it. Over the last two months we have talked about prayer and the different kinds of prayer. This month we are going to talk about what we wear when we pray and why! As believers we should don the full armor of God daily, I remember hearing Steve Hill from the revival at Brownsville in Pensacola say; "The brighter the light the bigger the bugs." So, since we are all supposed to be light, in this dark and fallen world, and our mandate is to pray let's look at this as a "motto" for this month: "The fiercer the battle the more important the armor."

We cannot expect to win a war without weapons, and as it says in Ephesians 6:12: "*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*" Therefore, our weapons must also be "spirit based." What I mean is the Lord has provided us a covering for our natural bodies that has a spiritual backing. Let's explore this deeper.

In Ephesians 6, Paul is talking to the church in Ephesus about relationship with each other and he ends the letter encouraging the saints to stand against all the schemes of the enemy, remember as saints we are "set apart" from the world and because the enemy wants us back under his control he will use any and all means to get us to compromise and not fulfill the will of God. So Paul says in verse 11; *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. v12 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. v13 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. v14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, v15 and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. v16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; v17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, v18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints (Ephesians 6:11-18 ESV).* Let's look at each piece and discuss the significance.

## **BELT**

The first piece of armor Paul mentions in Ephesians 6:14 is "the belt of truth". What purpose did the belt serve for a Roman soldier? What purpose does the belt of truth serve for us?

And he chooses to begin describing that set of armor by talking about...a belt? What was the belt used for in the Roman army? The belt—known as the *cingulum* or *balteus*—played a crucial role in the effectiveness of a soldier's armor. It was the belt that held the scabbard, without which there would be no place to put a sword. Imagine an overzealous soldier, fired up and charging out into battle—but without his belt, and consequently without a weapon!

In addition, the Nelson Study Bible says from the belt "hung strips of leather to protect the lower body." The Matthew Henry Commentary says the belt "girds on (secures) all the other pieces of our armor." Truth should cleave to us as a belt cleaves to our body. The belt used in Roman armor, provided a place for the soldier's sword. Our sword—the sword of the Spirit—likewise needs a sheath. Truth is vital because, like a Roman soldier's belt, it allows us to carry the sword of the Spirit and use it effectively. As Christians, we are to test all things and then hold on only to that which is good—the truth—discarding all else. We are to be like the Bereans who *"sought the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so"* (Acts 17:11). If we are not convinced that our principles and beliefs are without exception 100 percent true, how can we expect to accomplish anything. To try to live God's way without total belief in its validity is like trying to hold your sword up with a belt that isn't continuous. Neither will work. Our trust in God and His Word must be solid, without break, or else we will quickly find ourselves without a weapon. No matter how effective the rest of our armor is, we are useless without our sword. We need to be rightly dividing the word of truth—knowing what we believe, and why.

## **BREASTPLATE**

A Breastplate in the natural is used to protect vital organs, like the heart and the lungs, our breastbone is attached to the ribs to provide a covering/protection for our internal organs, specifically the heart and lungs. The Breastplate of our armor, also referred to as "Breastplate of Righteousness." John MacArthur describes it much better than I, and he says; "The breastplate was usually a tough, sleeveless piece of leather or heavy material with animal horn or hoof pieces sewn on, covering the soldier's full torso, protecting his heart and other vital organs. Because righteousness, or holiness, is such a distinctive characteristic of God himself, it is not hard to understand why that is the Christian's chief protection against Satan and his schemes. As believers faithfully live in obedience to and communion with Jesus Christ, His own righteousness produces in them the practical, daily righteousness that becomes their spiritual breastplate. Lack of holiness, on the other hand, leaves them vulnerable to the great enemy of their souls (see Isaiah 59:17; 2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:8)."

## **SHOES**

Shoes, like the belt, may initially seem superfluous in a discussion about spiritual armor. They're great to have, sure, but aren't they more of a convenience than a necessity? No, they are the foundation, our feet, what we stand on, what gets us from place to place, in the natural, but also in the spiritual. Our spiritual shoes matter. We need to make sure we're equipped with them before we get onto the battlefield. A shoeless soldier could run into real trouble in the heat of battle. Unless he is fighting on AstroTurf, he is going to encounter some debris. It may be nothing more than twigs and pebbles, but to a bare foot that can cause serious pain—and one of the last things you want to deal with in the middle of a fight is worrying about where you step. In short, shoes allow us to step freely and without fear while we turn our full attention to the battle at hand. Also, Roman Shoes also had spikes on the bottom that gave them traction during the battle so the enemy couldn't push them back.

Paul did not just write about the armor of God; he also wore it. At that time in his life, he was able to call upon the shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace. He found protection and strength in the knowledge of what God's gospel meant for him and for the others he shared that good news with. His footing was sure and unshakable, and he was prepared to carry the gospel wherever God sent him.

Romans 10:14-15 says; *"How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!'"*

Paul's friends desperately tried to convince him not to make the trip to Jerusalem. They had heard the prophecies about the fate that awaited him on this journey—Paul himself said that he did not know what to expect, *"except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me"* (Acts 20:23). Paul was intent on answering that call. Knowing that the upcoming trip could very well mean the end of his life, he says to his would-be dissuaders, *"What do you*

*mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13).*

## **SHIELD**

So far, Paul's description of the armor of God has been limited to items we wear. We put on the belt, the breastplate and the shoes, and they essentially hold themselves up.

The shield is different. Paul tells us that the shield is something we must *take up*, something we are required to raise. Just strapping it to our arm won't do any good at all if we don't make the effort to hold it aloft and use it. Our Shield is referred to as a "Shield of Faith."

Our shield has several functions: A shield **guards**. While a physical shield protects us physically, faith can protect our spiritual lives even in the middle of physical trials. When Satan (through Nebuchadnezzar) attacked the values and beliefs of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, they were able to stand resolute and unwavering because of their faith. In their response, they essentially said, "God is capable of delivering us from this fate. We don't know if He will or not, but that doesn't matter. He gave us His commands, and we are going to keep them regardless of the physical outcome. We know He can just as easily raise us from the dead." *Ephesians 6:16, ...above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.*

A shield **deflects**. Satan is always hurling his fiery darts of fear, doubt and worry in our direction, but the only time they can hit us is when we let our shield of faith down—when we stop believing that God is in control; that He is working everything out for our good; that whatever happens is for the ultimate best of everyone involved, however little it seems to be that way.

A shield is the **first line of defense**. While the rest of our armor helps protect us from Satan's onslaught, it is not what you ideally want to be using to absorb every hit. You do not, for instance, go out into battle intentionally blocking everything with your head. When our faith in God's omnipotence and care is strong, it is impossible for Satan to break through our shield and land an attack. But when we allow doubt to creep in, as Peter did when distracted by the waves, we will start to sink. The rest of our armor will be battered, and so will we. But an actively raised shield of faith prevents this otherwise inhibiting fatigue.

A shield can **incapacitate**. When Christ was being tempted by Satan, His faith in the Word and commands of God repelled Satan for a time (Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Christ was tempted in all things, so this was certainly not the only encounter Christ had with the devil). The boss (the metal knob in the middle) on the Roman shields allowed soldiers to give their enemies a stun-inducing shove that would allow them to follow through with an attack. Our faith in God, as demonstrated by Christ, can also give Satan a good shove backwards and give us a chance to fight back by *doing* God's will and work. Because God tells us that faith cannot just be in our minds, it must produce actions—works of obedience and service (James 2:20).

Lastly, when the Roman army joined its shields together, it became an almost unstoppable force. And if we in God's Church join *our* shields—that is, strengthen each other with our faith, building up and serving within the Body as we are able—we will become an unstoppable force able to take on any challenge.

## **SWORD**

The sword is the only item listed by Paul that serves in an offensive capacity. Even if we have all the rest of the armor equipped perfectly, without our sword, we amount to little more than heavily armored moving targets. The Sword represents the Word of God.

The all-powerful sword (Word) of the living God is able to cut through every defense our enemy can raise—down to the very division of bone and marrow. When wielded by a servant of God, nothing can withstand its ability to cut straight to the core of a matter and uncover the truth. As soldiers in God's army, it is our responsibility and duty to use His Word to discern the truth and then follow it. When God's Word shows us something wrong in ourselves, we can use this spiritual weapon to "surgically" remove the offending thoughts and actions (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

Unlike all other pieces of the armor of God, which are solely defensive, the sword is uniquely suited for both defensive and offensive roles. A solid defense is invaluable, but the sword is the only way we can complete the work we have been given to do. Swords are used for close combat, not long-range warfare.

God's Word is truth, plain and simple. We can have perfect confidence in the fact that His words are accurate, true and unerring. When followed, they guide us without fail in the paths that we need to walk. Notice that Jesus used the Bible to counter Satan's attacks (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10). We must also learn to live "by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

## HELMET

Last but not least, is the helmet. In the natural, it protects our head, our head (skull) protects our brain (mind). What is the main area we as believers are attacked? Our mind, if the enemy can get us thinking wrong thoughts about ourselves, those around us, even God, then he has won. What does God call the helmet...it is referred to as the Helmet of Salvation. When we accepted Jesus as our savior, that was the point of our salvation. Isn't it befitting that the main area the enemy attacks, is our mind covered by the Helmet of Salvation and if our helmet is in place and we know (in our mind) who we are and Whose we are, we are protected from the lies the enemy will try to have us believe. So how do we know if that thought is from Him or the enemy? Satan desires to go round after round offering wrong thinking and encouraging us to ponder his thoughts. "You're worthless, stupid and a failure. Everything you touch is a mess." The Holy Spirit will lead you in the path of peace and ask you, "Do you think you should agree with this thought? Is this thought from God or Satan?" God knows how to teach you to win and through Jesus' death and resurrection, He produced a knockout blow to Satan. Remember, we win! We are instructed to be careful of what we allow in our minds, in Philippians 4:8 the word says; *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things (ESV).* God thoughts are ALWAYS Bible based!

When the apostle Paul described the armor of God, he was talking about more than a simple set of helpful tips. He was talking about the impregnable defenses of the Almighty God. These are keys to withstanding the attacks and onslaughts of the enemy of old, Satan. They are ultimate and infinitely powerful tools available to us as believers, that we need to don daily.

So, in closing, we are God's army marching in this land today. If we band together, we can prevent the wickedness in high places from ruling our families, communities, and nation. The time has come for us, as believers to pray in faith. So, put on your full armor and take your place in the ranks of the faithful army of God in prayer and intercession for our country and the nations of the world, that ALL may come to know the saving grace of the ONLY Living God!

***Ms. Chief (aka Ms.G)***

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***Christ's Heart In Every Felon***