**Protected by the Armor of God**

Ephesians 6:14-17 NKJV

*Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

 Brethren, there is something very important to know: we are at war. We might not be in a physical war, but we are in a spiritual war. Paul tells us *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly place* (Ephesians 6:12). Paul describes the spiritual enemies we battle against. Satan is obviously our primary enemy (vs 11), but he has many allies such as evil rulers and authorities, mighty world powers, and evil spirits. He uses all of them to wage war against those in Christ; however, Paul tells us how we can overcome all these evil entities, namely, by putting on the armor of God.

* **Gird your waist with truth** – The belt was the foundational piece of equipment for a Roman soldier. It “girdled” his waist, so that he was able to move freely without getting tangled in his undergarments. The belt also allowed him to carry other important equipment such as the sheath which carried his sword. Jesus makes it plain when speaking to the Father: *Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth* (John 17:17). Every promise, every command, every word which God spoke is truth. They should be at the core of all we believe. We can count on everything God says. They should surround us like a belt. His truth holds all things together. Truth is the foundation that makes all the other pieces of equipment work. For instance, no belt – no sheath. No sheath – no sword. No sword – no chance.
* **Put on the breastplate of righteousness** – The breastplate was the central piece of protective equipment on a soldier’s body. It protected his most vital organs. Without it, any hit from an enemy could prove fatal. Without God’s righteousness, it would be impossible to live an honest, upright, moral life. We would be left to our own devices to figure out what was right and wrong. When we are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remissions of our sins (Acts 2:38), we become God’s righteousness: *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him* (2 Corinthians 5:21). God’s righteousness must be worn close to our bodies. It must be central to who we are and on which we rely, for it protects our heart and soul.
* **Shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace** – While it may not seem like it, shoes and shin guards were a crucial part of any Roman soldier’s equipment. A fully-equipped yet shoeless soldier would be rendered almost useless since the ground itself would them became his enemy. When Jesus began His ministry, He started with one thing: the gospel. Mark writes *Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God* (1:14). The word *gospel* means “good news.” Paul tells us what this good news included: *And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near* (Ephesians 2:17). Our footing should be steadfast in the gospel of the peace of Jesus Christ. We must look like Jesus in peace and in love. *He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked* (1 John 2:6). We must take the high ground in times of trouble and be certain in the strength of Jesus, our foundation.
* **Take the shield of faith** – The shield was one of the most important pieces of equipment. Unlike the other pieces of armor, the shield needed to be “taken up” by the soldier since it served primarily as a defensive weapon. Our faith is precious. Therefore, it also must be “taken up.” It is our first line defense against Satan’s onslaught. This is why when we face trouble, the first thing to weaken is our faith. Once our faith is broken, we then start taking body blows. If all we ever do is take body blows, it will take no time at all for our other pieces of armor to start suffering massive damage. Most of the time, our faith will be used to defend what we believe, but there are times we might have to take our faith on the offensive. Either way, our faith must be tested in order to show if it is genuine: *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ* (1 Peter 1:6,7).
* **Take the helmet of salvation** – The helmet was the topmost piece of equipment and protected the head from any kind of head shot. We have been delivered from sin and the penalty of it through Jesus’ death on the cross. Our salvation in Christ should give us comfort, encouragement, and strength even in the most difficult circumstances. We can rely on that hope to protect our mind from the enemy’s attacks to weaken our focus. King David says it this way: *The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?* (Psalm 27:1) Our salvation should give us a new mindset into thinking that *“The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.”* (Luke 1:37).
* **Take the sword of the Spirit** – The sword was *the most* important piece of equipment for a Roman soldier. Without a sword, the soldier would simply be a target for the enemy to hit. The sword was the only primarily offensive weapon with its two edges sharpened to the point of them being able to pierce through the armor of an enemy. Paul explicitly tells us that the sword of the Spirit is the word of God. God’s word is not just another work of literature or a simple self-help book meant to give us suggestions for life. God’s word is absolute truth. It is a tool meant to be used to change who we are from the inside out: *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart* (Hebrews 4:12). It is able to change the way we think. It is able to save who we are. It is able to protect us from every spiritual foe if we wield it correctly. We can rest assured that His word is accurate and guides us into all truth and into all good things: *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path* (Psalm 119:105).

 Friend, the Lord has not set us up to fail but to be victorious in Him! For us to be victorious against the devil and not become thorny ground, we must fully-don *all* the armor of God and stand firm in *all* He has given us for our spiritual protection. Each piece of equipment has stood the test of time. Each piece is battle-tested and proven to be indestructible. The armor of God will not only preserve our spiritual life from the thorns but also nurture us into becoming good ground which produces good fruit in our life.