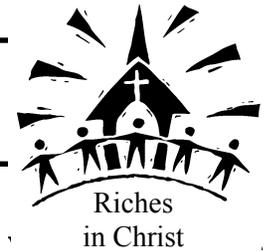

Equipped to Stand



Ephesians 6:13-17

Every human being is involved in a spiritual battle. We are either Christian combatants for godliness, or captives to Satan and the power of sin.

In order to stand firm under the barrage of our enemy, we must protect ourselves spiritually. Thankfully, God has provided both defensive and offensive weapons to use if we are to remain standing in the victory won by Jesus at the Cross.

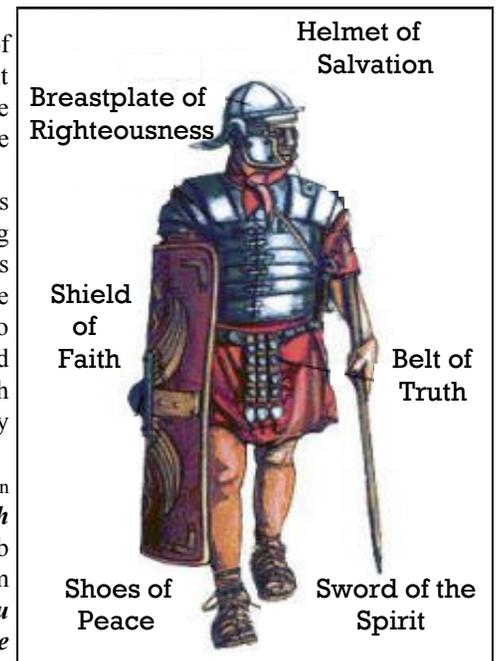
Paul was in prison at the time he wrote this letter to the Ephesians, chained each day to a strong Roman soldier. He used the illustration of a soldier's armor to describe the spiritual provision God has made for each of us to stand strong in the daily battle we are engaged in.

- I. **Belt of Truth** (v 14). The belt of the soldier was important because it held each of the other pieces of armor in place and secure.

Satan is a liar, and has been from the very beginning of time (John 8:44). One of his powerful weapons is deceit. He lies to himself and uses lies to bring people to question God and God's Word; but truth turns back his attack every time.

Jesus is *the Truth* (John 14:6) and truth comes *through Him* (John 1:17). He is the plumb line that divides truth from falsehood ... *If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the*

truth is in Jesus (Eph 4:21). His truth, spoken in love, not only repels the enemy, but helps you grow in your faith (Eph 4:15).



II. **Breastplate of Righteousness** (v 14). The breastplate was made of metal plates and covered the soldier from neck to waist, both front and back. It protected all the vital organs.

The word *righteousness* simply means *to be in right standing with God*. The Bible speaks of a human or self-righteousness (Is 64:6); yet our attempts to be right with God are nothing but *filthy rags* which get us nowhere with Him. Instead, at the moment of new birth, God gives to us the *righteousness of Christ* (1 Cor 1:30; 2 Cor 5:21). Jesus is our right standing with God (Phil 3:9) since He was perfect in all His ways and perfectly met all the requirements of the Law. We merely *put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness* (Eph 4:24).

Our feelings of unworthiness are Satan's attempt to defeat us. He uses these feelings to attack the heart so that we work to be right with God; but only Jesus can make a person right with the God of the universe.

III. **Shoes of the Gospel of Peace** (v 15). The sandals of a Roman soldier were especially equipped for combat. Each sole was embedded with nails so that the soldier could stand firmly in place, never slipping or sliding because of the terrain or the weather.

Without peace in the human heart and mind, life is a constant turmoil. Winds of change, rains of trouble, the slippery slopes of life demand a firm foundation. Jesus *is our peace* (Eph 2:14) and He gives us *peace with God* the Father (Rom 5:1) and with each other (Eph 2:14-17; 4:3).

We must be willing to stand in peace and take it with us wherever we go (Rom 10:15). Satan may have declared war against the child of God, but we are called to be peace makers (Matt 5:9; 2 Cor 5:18-21). This peace that God has created among His people through Jesus' death at the Cross, is a peace we must "fight" to keep (Eph 4:3).

IV. **Shield of Faith** (v 16). Every soldier carried a 4 x 2 foot shield made of wood and covered steel, or usually leather. Before battle, the leather would be soaked in water so that flaming arrows would burn out more easily.

Soldiers used their shields individually, but even more so corporately. Each soldier would interlock his shield with the men around him forming a wall on all sides, and even over top of themselves. Battle was never an individual undertaking. Soldiers always fought together as one.

In Roman times, arrows would be dipped in pitch or tar and then set afire. The shield was the only protection against flaming arrows of the enemy. Faith is a defensive weapon to protect against the fiery darts of doubt and fear shot by the evil one.

Faith is not positive thinking or positive talk. Faith is not a force to get what you want. Faith is a deep-seated trust and confidence in God: He is who He says He is, and He does what He says He can do. The Christian does not put faith in faith, but faith in God. He is the only object of our faith.

We are *saved by grace through faith* in Jesus (Eph 1:15, 2:8). Possessing *one faith* (Eph 4:5) which unites us (Eph 4:13) and empowers and strengthens us in

prayer (Eph 3:12, 17). We live *by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me* (Gal 2:20).

When the arrows of the enemy attack, we stand together, united by the blood of Jesus under His banner, flown high by faith in Him. Together, we are stronger in this one faith in Christ than we could ever be by ourselves.

V. **Helmet of Salvation** (v 17). Every soldier was also given a bronze helmet, strengthened internally with metal plates or leather, which covered not only the head but the cheeks as well. A man might well survive an arrow to the leg, arm, stomach, or chest, but never a dart through the head.

Satan's attacks don't usually come physically, but in the mind. A mind which is covered and controlled by God will be protected from deceit and temptation. God's salvation isn't a "thing" to receive or possess; God's salvation is a Person: Jesus is our salvation (Lk 2:30).

When we receive Jesus and His perfect work on the Cross, He becomes our possession and we become His. He fills us with Himself (Eph 3:19), then commands us to be under the controlling influence of the Holy Spirit for daily, practical protection and service (Eph 5:18).

With Jesus inside, we receive His mind, the *mind of Christ* (1 Cor 2:16) which is never proud or self-willing, but always humble before both God and man (Phil 2:5; 4:4).

VI. **Sword of the Spirit** (v 17). This is the only offensive weapon in the armor of God. The word for *sword* is *machairan* and refers to *a short sword or dagger*. It was used for cutting meat, gardening, and close hand-to-hand battle.

Hebrews 4:12 says that the Word of God is a machairan, sharpened on both sides of the blade. It is powerful and accomplishes God's purposes. In the right hands, it lays open and bare every secret intention of the heart and thought of the mind. In your hands, the Bible wounds and even kills; but in the hands of the Holy Spirit, it becomes a scalpel powerfully and carefully accomplishing every purpose of God so that it does not return to Him void (Is 55:11; Lk 4:1-13).

The Bible is more than a book. It is all written to reveal Jesus to humanity (Lk 24:27; Rev 1:1; 19:10). It is the written embodiment of the living Word, Jesus (John 1:1, 14).

VII. **Jesus is our Armor**. David was a man of war, trained for battle by God (Ps 18:34); yet it was after battle and he had removed his armor that he was most vulnerable to temptation and defeated by sin (2 Sam 11).

Here on earth, we are never out of Satan's reach, so we must never be caught unawares and "out of Jesus." We must ever *abide in Him* (John 15). He paid the price. He won the victory. He is our protection. He is our riches. He is everything and all that we need!

The Armor of God is more than ideas or doctrines. Putting on the armor means putting on Jesus (Rom 13:14). When we are saved, we put Him on, but we must also daily remind ourselves that only *in Him we live, and move, and have our being* (Acts 17:28).