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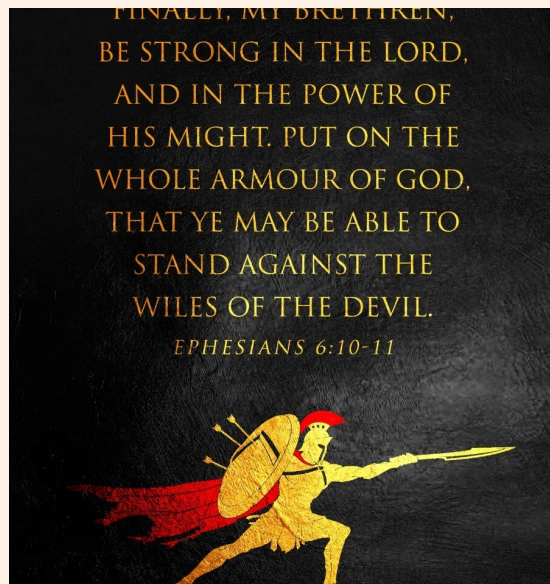
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Put On the Whole Armor

“Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breast-plate 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; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and

supplication for all the saints—and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” Ephesians 6:14-20

The Psalmist declares, “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You. Blessed *are* You, O Lord! Teach me your statutes” (Psa. 119:9-12). When we consider how we can put on the whole armor of God, the Psalmist reminds us that we must seek the Lord with our whole heart. The truths that this armor represents can be ours when we seek the Lord above all else and desire his presence in our lives.



Stand Therefore

Paul begins this section by admonishing us to stand. We are not to retreat or run away. We are not to cower in fear, but we are to stand in the power of the cross of Jesus Christ. The only way we can stand is by putting on the whole armor of God. We cannot make it on our own power and strength.

Girded with Truth

Some translations use the word “belt” in this passage. (NIV, NLT, ESV) Some translations use a phrase like: “having girded your loins with truth” (NASB, NKJV). Loin is an uncommon word in modern vernacular. It refers to the lower back but includes the crotch area. In ancient days, men would wear long robes that would get in the way of work or fighting, so they would wrap up the long, draping material. This was girding up one’s loins. The Lord knew our loins needed to be wrapped in truth. Regardless of the culture or time we live in, the Lord has seen all the paths we’ve taken and how they have hurt and derailed us. He knows we need truth.

In a world filled with “spinning” stories and facts, we need to hear the truth. David Chadwick said it this way in his **Moments of Hope** devotional: “The first piece of the armor is the belt of truth. Truth, by its very definition, is exclusive. It means something is true and other things are lies. The evil one is the father of lies (John 8:44). Every lie finds its origin in him. “Every other piece of the full armor of God is attached to the belt of truth. If you don’t begin with truth, you’ll never defeat the enemy. And Jesus said God’s Word is true (John 17:17).”

We need to know the truth about where we came from, what we are doing here, and where we are going. These are three basic questions that have been asked by men in all generations.

We have our origin in God. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. In his sermon on Mars Hill Paul began, “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples made by human hands. Nor is He served by human hands, as if He needed anything, because He Himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their lands. God intended that they would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us. ‘For in Him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are His offspring’” (Acts 17:24-27).

What is our purpose? What are we doing here? Solomon tried all the pleasures and treasures that the world had to offer. He concluded that all these things were fleeting and just a chasing after wind. He concludes with this truth: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including

every secret thing, Whether good or evil” (Eccl. 12:13-14).

Jesus said very plainly and very simply, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (Jn. 14:15).

And where are we going? What does the future hold? Again, in his sermon on Mars Hill in Athens Paul said, “Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising. Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, ‘We will hear you again on this matter’” (Acts 17:29-32).

Peter states it this way, “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of *persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet. 3:8-13). Paul says in Romans 3:4, “Certainly not!

Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: ‘That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged.’”

The Breastplate of Righteousness

Righteousness means being made right. Sometimes Scripture refers to righteousness that Christ gives us – His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21) “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Sometimes Scripture refers to righteousness that God carries out through us, like “the righteous acts of the saints” (Revelation 19:8). In daily spiritual battle, both varieties of righteousness protect the heart. We need the complete righteousness of Christ, but also the continuing righteousness that comes as a response to God’s gift. The enemy tempts us with all kinds of sinful entanglements, but righteousness protects our hearts. God’s instructions are often viewed as killjoys or burdens. But obedience to God is a protection for our hearts from being wounded by sin.

In Tit. 4:3-6 Paul writes, “But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” We are justified by the blood of Christ, and we are sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel of Peace

Paul has already spoken of the peace that Jesus made between Jew and Gentile. Eph. 2:14-18, “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in

ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.”

Peace is an attribute of the Lord’s very person and character: Gal. 5:22-23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” In Greek, peace means oneness or wholeness. The gospel, which means good news, is the forgiveness of sins and access to and oneness with God through faith in Christ. This oneness with the Lord produces peace. It produces peace with God and peace with our fellowman in as much as it is possible.

The Shield of Faith

When Paul wrote this passage, Roman soldiers carried shields that were covered with heavy animal hide. Before a battle, they would dip their shields into the water so that when fiery darts hit them, the wet hide would extinguish the darts. In a similar way, a Christian’s shield of faith needs to be regularly dipped in the water of God’s word to be replenished and fully functional – because “faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). The shield was a weapon of defense.

Paul writes of God’s protection in 2 Cor. 1:8-11, “We do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the hardships we encountered in the province of Asia. We were under a burden far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, we felt we were under the sentence of death, in order that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and He will deliver us. In Him we have placed our hope that

He will yet again deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the favor shown us in answer to their prayers.” God has not promised that we will never suffer hardship, but he has promised to be with us during our difficulties.

The Helmet of Salvation

The helmet of salvation (like the breastplate of righteousness) rests on the work of Christ to save us, but also involves us as we journey with the Lord and allow Him to work that salvation into every part of our thoughts. The battlefield of our mind is the primary place spiritual battle is fought. The Lord works His freeing truth into our perspectives while the enemy fights for strongholds to bind us.

Jesus as the Good Shepherd says, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who *ever* came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep” (Jn. 10:7-11).

We are to be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ and not conformed to this world: Rom. 12:1-2, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

The Sword of the Spirit

The explanation of this piece of armor is right

there in the verse – it is the word of God. And it is the only piece of armor that is both defensive and offensive. Greg Laurie writes, “When we are tempted, the most effective weapon that God has given to us as believers is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Jesus modeled this so beautifully during His temptation in the wilderness. When the devil tried temptation after temptation against Him, Jesus used the sword of the Spirit” (Lk. 4:1–13). When the devil tempted him three times, Jesus responded with the truth of God’s word – every time.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that the word of God is alive and powerful: “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. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must give* account” (Heb. 4:12-13).

James reminds us that we must be doers of the word of God to be blessed by it: Jas. 1:21-25, “Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”

Sometimes we may wish that fighting the spiritual battle against lies and evil were as simple as just a magic prayer that we could say. We would say the prayer and, poof, the battle would be over, and the victory won. It isn’t just a prayer we say, although prayers are essential and helpful in waging a suc-

cessful war against the flesh. The spiritual war we are engaged in calls for us to equip ourselves each day. We must get up, put on the armor, and go forth in battle. Some days we may feel we have gained great victories; other days we may feel that we have lost ground. Feelings may come and go, but the real measure of success is the transformation we experience in our lives as we put on the whole armor of God and endeavor to overcome our doubts and fears. If God is for us, who can be against us? We must go forth and battle in confidence knowing that the final victory belongs to God.

With All Prayer and Supplication

Paul reminds us in these closing verses that he is an ambassador in chains. He is in prison, but the word of God is not in prison. He was a captive, but he had not lost the battle. The battle was raging on, and he entreated the brethren to pray for him and for all the saints.

Hendriksen notes that the word “all” is used four times in this verse 18: ALL kinds of prayers and supplications are to be used: public prayers, private prayers, intercessory prayers, prayers of thanksgiving, every kind! ALL seasons are the season of prayer: all times of the day, all conditions and circumstances, all occasions, all states of mind, etc. ALL perseverance: through times of discouragement or defeat when it seems that all is lost, when victory has smiled or when it has failed let nothing hinder the prayer life. ALL the saints are to be remembered in prayer. What an intercessor was Paul. His letters abound with the word that he is praying for those whom he remembers and for those who will receive his letters.

Even though the Christian has put on the whole armor of God, he cannot win the victory except through a constant reliance upon prayer. A prayerless Christian is a contradiction of terms.

Paul concludes Ephesians with this greeting Eph. 6:21-24: “But that you also may know my affairs *and* how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you; whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and *that* he may comfort your hearts. Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace *be* with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.”

By writing this letter and communicating with the church at Ephesus, Paul encouraged their faith, and he also received a blessing. They could all receive comfort and strength by speaking and writing to one another. They were all strengthened in their faith, in their love, and in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were encouraged to love the Lord in sincerity. The NIV translates verse 24, “Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.” The ESV translates it, “Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.” What an amazing thought is conveyed by the word “incorruptible.” There must be neither decrease nor decay in our faith and love and “those who were chosen in him before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4) retain their love for him undiminished after the world itself has passed away.

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Sources: *Burton Coffman Commentary*

Thayer’s Greek English Lexicon

Praying for Paul

There are few followers of Christ that seem to be more dedicated than the Apostle Paul. He was beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, in all types of danger, tired and hungry, all for following Jesus. Nothing seems to phase his commitment to Christ. Before his conversion to Christianity, when he was simply known as Saul, he was an individual with a clear focus. He wanted to persecute Christians. In Acts 8:3 it is recorded he made havoc of the Church. He had these believers thrown into prison. He was a man of action and did not sit on the sideline. Others may have thought Christianity foolishness, but Saul was determined to do something about such foolishness. After his conversion on the road to Damascus his focus changes but his resolve is stronger than ever. Perhaps it seems a little surprising when this man of dedication asks for prayers in Ephesians 6:19. Pray for Paul that he might speak boldly. He has spoken boldly all his life. Was Paul weakening? Was his faith a bit in doubt?

No, not for a moment. Paul knew the emboldened power of prayer. He also knew that none of us are free from the weakening power of temptation. He knew he could preach the word yet be lost (1 Cor. 9:27). Paul never took for granted his salvation. He was very aware of the ongoing battle between right and wrong inside him every day. Paul believed that others praying for him would provide additional strength. In Hebrews 12:1 he expresses the strength provided by thinking of the great faithful servants of God that went before us. We are not alone in our struggle in life.

He was very aware of the ongoing battle between right and wrong inside him every day.

I am thankful others pray for me and hopefully I return the help by praying for others. As I grow older and my physical strength is not what it used to be, I appreciate help. Sure, I can grunt, groan and likely get the job done by myself. How much easier and surer if I have some help. God wants to provide us some help through the avenue of others.

Jesus sought help in the painful hours prior to his crucifixion. He chose three of his most trusted followers to be with him as he prayed. Sadly, they

provided little help as they fell asleep. Yes, Jesus made it through without their help but what a comfort or strength they could have been had they stayed awake. In Paul's request for prayers his focus is on boldly speaking the great mystery of the gospel. He knew that he had the power of salvation and eternal life in his speech. He did not want to misspeak, not speak or in any way hamper the precious message. He held in his message the power of eternal life or punishment. The same holds true for us today.

Do we take for granted this most precious gospel? Millions of dollars are poured into research to find cures for the disease of this physical body. How we pray for our family and friends when stricken with cancer. How we long for the hope that more life will be given to them. This is as it should be. We are taught to pray for the sick. Jesus healed the sick. However, these diseases can only end our journey here on earth. Jesus came to heal us from our spiritual disease of sin. The sin that causes us to be separated from God and eternally separate us from his glorious presence.

As war rages on in the Ukraine and Gaza my heart is saddened for the thousands that have died. This is someone's son or daughter, husband or wife, or father or mother now gone. Even as the news each day comes on it carries the message of a life tragically lost. Have you seen the eyes of a parent as they look into the casket of a departed child? The pain is difficult to measure. How much is the pain in God's eyes as he sees the rejection of his life saving message.

Paul knew the importance of his mission as an Apostle with the message of life. He wrote in Hebrews 10:15 of the beauty of preaching the gospel of peace and glad tidings of good things. Jesus said the harvest is plenteous, but laborers are few, so we need to pray for more laborers (Mt. 9:37-38). I remember listening to a dear elderly sister in Christ tell me of her challenges in this life. Her strength was very much gone and she was confined to her house. She said with a smile that she could still pray. We all have our limitations but one of them should not be prayer. The words may not be eloquent or grammatically correct, but God knows my heart. He knows my desire and intent.

The publican in Luke 18 did not know quite what to say. He is embarrassed and humiliated by his own sin. He does not look up but finally just asks for mercy. God understood because he prayed from a heart of humility. The world needs the message of the gospel as much as it did in Paul's time. We cannot pray for Paul, but we can pray for those that preach the same message today. As Jesus said, we need more laborers. Pray that those who preach his word do so boldly.

It was not popular in Paul's time, as he well knew, since he was in chains for preaching it. The mes-

sage seems to be less popular today than only a few years ago. Pray not only for those that speak from the pulpit, but for those that preach without words. Peter instructed wives with unbelieving husbands to live lives that would bring them to the Lord by their example. Our actions speak volumes. The question is simply are we praying? If not, then let's make it a priority. If we are, then let's continue and increase.

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FINALLY, MY BRETHREN,
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EPHESIANS 6:10-11



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