

Brief study of Ephesians 6:10-20

HOW TO USE THE ARMOR OF GOD

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By *DEBORAH MENKEN GILL*

Ephesians climaxes by introducing the armor of God. Paul's instructions to Christian soldiers could be paraphrased: "Be energized directly from God—bank on God's unlimited resources of power from which your might derives. Get

dressed for spiritual conflict with the enemy of your soul in the suit that God has provided specifically for that purpose." (See vv.10,11.)

As Paul explained in Ephesians 1:19-23, God's power not only raised Jesus Christ from the dead but exalted Him to the position of absolute authority far above any powers. And so Paul advised us to put on all the pieces of armor that God provides

and we will be able to resist the enemy and stand firm.

1. Belt of truth

The belt protects a vulnerable part—the bowels, symbolic of the seat of our emotions. God's truth is meant to give us emotional stability and prepare us for action.

Girding up the loins meant to tuck the flowing skirts of garments into

the belt so one would not be encumbered. We put on the belt of truth by knowing and living the truth.

2. Breastplate of righteousness

The breastplate protects the chest and heart, symbolic of the seat of resolve, volition, and will. Wearing the breastplate keeps our volition strong. The Christian soldier is vulnerable to discouragement when he or she compromises living by God's standard of holiness.

We put on the breastplate of righteousness

through justification (Romans 9:30) and sanctification (Romans 6:12,13). While we grow in righteousness, Christ's righteousness covers for ours.

3. Shoes of the gospel

The shoes speak of gospel readiness. Isaiah 52:7 says how beautiful to the hungry soul are the feet of those who bring the gospel. When the gospel has worked in hearts, these shoes provide stability. Psalm 37 explains that when the Word is in hearts our steps are secure and guided by the Lord. (See vv.23,24,31.)

Perhaps walking in the shoes of the gospel relates to the concept of precise tracking. We can scale the heights like the mountain deer of Psalm 18:33, whose back feet step exactly in the steps of its front feet. Our feet follow in the precise footsteps of Jesus. We put on these shoes when we prepare the Word—we let it have its full effect in us and we share it with others.

4. Shield of faith

Our first line of defense is the shield of faith. The word "shield" comes from the Greek word for door. Ancient Roman soldiers' shields were some 4 feet high and

2 1/2 feet wide. The shield of faith, like a door, can shut out doubts.

Shields were often made of leather and soaked in water before battle. Flaming arrows that struck the shield could not ignite it but were swallowed or quenched by the shield itself. When a fiery dart from the devil comes toward us, we can raise the shield of faith by saying, "I have absolute confidence in God."

5. Helmet of salvation

The helmet protects the head and brain. Ornamental helmets were worn after the vic-

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tory was won. Though the strategic victory has been won, we are in the final skirmishes of the cleanup operation. Heavy fighting is anticipated and protection is still needed. We wear the helmet of salvation so our heads can be kept high to ensure good visibility.

Make use of this helmet by receiving salvation, living in it, and rejoicing in its future hope (1 Thessalonians 5:8)—salvation from judgment in eternity.

6. Sword of the Spirit

Thank God for the incarnate Word (Jesus Christ), the written Word (the Bible), and when the Spirit quickens God's message to our hearts. It is our primary weapon of offense.

We take up this mighty sword by knowing the Word, becoming saturated in it, tuning in to the voice of God, and then acting on it—using it. Would to God we follow the example of Eleazar (2 Samuel 23:10) whose hand through the fierce battle was fused to the sword.

7. Prayer

Paul said to use our secret weapon continually, on all occasions, by being alert to needs. He also tells how to use it—in its manifold varieties.

Pray in the Spirit—in tongues as well as in tune with God's desires. Pray with supplication—earnest, humble submission. Pray with intercession—asking on behalf of others. Pray with watching—all-night perseverance. Pray with every kind of prayer.

And what should we pray for? Pray for all the saints' victory over the evil one and for opportunities, effectiveness, and boldness in witness. True prayer is not storming heaven in sympathy for someone's needs, but hearing God's voice and wrestling with God—on God's side, not against His will. Prayer is our most powerful weapon and our lifeline to our Commanding Officer.

God has given us these pieces of weaponry to ensure our spiritual success. Use them effectively for the kingdom of God. ■

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IDENTIFYING THE STRUGGLE—EPHESIANS 6:12

The real battle is not against "flesh and blood," but against supernatural entities.

"Principalities" or "rulers" comes from the Greek word *archon*, the root of some English words that have "arch" in them. For example, an arch-enemy is the principal/ chief enemy. "Powers" or "dominions" from the Greek *exousta*, seem to be related to a realm or sphere of rulership.

"Rulers of the darkness," a *kosmocrator* seems to have even more power. Perhaps the prince of Persia, with whom the angel Michael struggled in the supernatural realm during Daniel's intercession, is one such *kosmocrator*.

"Spiritual wickedness in high places" seems to be the highest level of dark power. It is impossible to know the precise identity and role of each of these forces, but the wonderful news is that none of these powers poses any contest for the strength of God's might.

—DEBORAH MENKEN GILL