

GOD JUST TOUCHED ME - WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT

Chapter 12 - THE ARMOR OF GOD

We Need Armor

We live in a spiritual battle zone where we battle against evil spirits, rulers and authorities, evil forces headed by Satan (Ephesians 6:12). He has a relentless enemy with a large contingent of troops, and he is vicious (1 Peter 5:8&9). Before any army goes to war they want to know everything they can about the enemy (2 Corinthians 2:11). We need to put ourselves in God's hands and resist every thrust from the enemy (James 4:7). If we go into battle unarmed, depending only on our own strength, we are vulnerable and we will be defeated. Only a soldier with a death wish would go into combat unarmed. If we are to stand we need God's strength and we need His supernatural armor (Ephesians 6:10&11). To be strong means to be powerful through union with Christ. Weapons of this world are of no use; we need divine power (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). We face a powerful enemy whose goal is to defeat the church and lead the world astray. The tricks of the devil are multiple temptations to unbelief, to sin, and to conform to the world. Because we are the church, the body of Christ, we are the devil's enemies. Being a Christian means being a combatant. We only have two options; either surrender, or engage in the battle until Jesus returns and the enemy is imprisoned (1 Corinthians 15:24, Revelation 19:20, Revelation 20:1-3). When God arms us (Ephesians 6:13-18) the devil cannot win (Matthew 16:18). Notice that the armor belongs to God.

The Belt

The soldier in the Roman army wore a belt for three reasons. It protected his vital organs, provided a place to attach and carry his weapon, and held his cape out of the way during battle. To be truly armed for battle we need the belt of truth (Ephesians 6:14a). Any partial truth or any exaggeration is a lie and we cannot win if we are armed with lies. Our God is a God of truth (Deuteronomy 32:4). Jesus identified Himself as the truth (John 14:6) and the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth (John 14:17). When God became human He was full of truth (John 1:14). One of our powerful weapons, the word of God, is truth (John 17:17). When the enemy attacks he uses lies to deceive and mislead and never ever speaks the truth (John 8:44). Though he even sometimes quotes from scripture, he twists it and turns it into a subtle lie. The enemy's lies cannot stand up to the light of truth so we must bind truth around our middles and have it always with us, always at the ready. The truth of God's word, the truth that is the Spirit dwelling within us. The truth that is Jesus, is our protection. We are sanctified by it (John 17:19) and it fends off the devil's fiery darts (Psalm 91:4). God's truth really frees us (John 8:32). Wear it as a belt.

The Breastplate

God Himself is recognized as wearing the breastplate of righteousness (Isaiah 59:16-18). We too are called to wear a breastplate (Ephesians 6:14b). Roman soldiers wore a breastplate to protect their upper body. The Roman version of a bulletproof vest protected the body on both sides from the neck down to the middle to prevent injury to the heart. In the human body the heart is one of the two most susceptible organs under attack in combat. The heart is also critical in spiritual warfare. Within scripture the heart is referred to both as a physical organ and also figuratively as the seat of feelings and emotions. In today's world we still talk about doing something with all your heart, having a broken heart, and being good hearted, tender hearted, or hard hearted, none of which refer to the physical organ. The Old Testament identifies the heart as the moral center of the being. The New Testament recognizes the heart in terms of being the center of life where thoughts, values, feelings, and spirituality reside. A hard heart is described by God (Matthew 13:14&15). Forgiveness comes from the heart (Matthew 18:35) and thoughts are cherished in the heart (Luke 2:51). God searches hearts

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(Romans 8:27) and He knows the values we hold there (Luke 16:15). Hearts can be weighed down (Luke 21:34) and they can be troubled (John 14:1). Hearts can be glad (Acts 2:26) and can be filled with joy (Acts 14:17). God's love is poured into our hearts (Romans 5:5) and the Holy Spirit dwells there (2 Corinthians 1:22). Our hearts are even attributed with eyes (Ephesians 1:18). Finally, the heart is fragile and vulnerable, and is in need of protection from the attacks of the devil. That is the part of us that the enemy tries to turn against God and our fellow Christians. It has been said the hardening of the heart is a much more serious disease than hardening of the arteries. The best protection for the heart is righteousness, always doing what is right. A righteous person is one who is as he ought to be, in a condition acceptable to God. We are told what a righteous person is like (Isaiah 33:15&16). Sin is death, and righteousness delivers us from death (Proverbs 10:2, Proverbs 12:28). When we trust God He counts us as righteous (Romans 4:3-5). We are made the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21) and knowing who we are strengthens us. Righteousness is a quality of character that resides in the heart, blocking the invasions of the enemy.

The Boots

The roman soldier's combat boots, shoes or sandals bound to their feet to keep them on, allowed them to trek over long distances through rough terrain and obstacles. The shoe was an important part of their combat equipment that prevented injury to their feet, allowing them to stand and fight when necessary. Mutilated feet are disabling, making one easy prey for the enemy. Our enemy, the accuser, tries to put a guilt trip on us to load us down with guilt and discouragement and convince us it all originated with us. He wants us to believe that we are God's enemies because we are not perfect. Our combat boots for spiritual war are the Gospel (Ephesians 6:15). Our instructions from our commander, King Jesus, are to stand firm (1 Corinthians 16:13), and having done all, to stand (Ephesians 6:13). The Gospel, meaning good news, is called the Gospel of Peace because Jesus is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). We have a God of peace (1 Corinthians 14:33) who gives us His peace (Romans 15:33). We are called to live in peace (Colossians 3:15) and to bind ourselves together with peace (Ephesians 4:3). The devil's way is to seek sin and pleasure, but we are to seek peace (2 Timothy 2:22). Peace is quietness, rest, accord, and the serene state of a soul certain of its salvation through Christ, fearing no ill will from God and contented with its earthly lot, whatsoever it is. The good news is that through Christ we do have peace with God (Romans 5:1). The enmity that came between God and His creation because of sin is gone (Colossians 1:19&20). The good news is that our Savior is the power of God (Romans 1:16) and has been given all power (Matthew 28:18). The good news is that this salvation is for everyone that wants it (Romans 10:11-13). The good news is that God not only saved us from sin and death, but also claims us as His own (Ephesians 1:13). All this good news brings a peace of mind that exposes the assault of the enemy as pure nonsense and makes it fruitless. However, there is no such protection for those who are unshod (Romans 10:4&5). You cannot think rationally and make rapid sound decisions when you have a troubled mind.

The Shield

The Roman army had two kinds of shields used for distinctly different purposes. One was a very large shield shaped like a big door. When a volley of flaming arrows or spears came the large shields were held together to form a wall on the ground or a roof overhead to prevent injury. The other type of shield was a smaller round one called a buckler. It was used in hand-to-hand combat for self-protection. A fully armored person, in spite of everything, did not have full body protection. Even in modern times, a sound principle of hand-to-hand combat is that if you cannot inflict a fatal blow, then

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inflict a painful blow in an unprotected area. If your opponent is suffering a sufficiently severe pain, his attention will focus on that pain making him more vulnerable. Our enemies in spiritual warfare know that and will use it. Both types of shields are mentioned in scripture, but it is the larger one that is the shield of faith (Ephesians 6:16). It can cover the entire body and block attacks on all exposed areas. Faith is a saving belief, trust, and confidence in Jesus, knowing that He is who He said He was, and that He died to save us from sin and death. Faith is an unquestioning belief that does not require proof (Hebrews 11:32-34). Faith makes us a part of the family of God (Galatians 3:26). Faith is the means by which we live (Romans 1:17) and by which we are justified before God (Romans 3:28, Galatians 2:16). Through faith we are credited with the righteousness of Jesus (Romans 3:21-26). The peace of God comes through faith (Romans 5:1). Faith does not waver even when everything around us indicates that there will be complete failure and destruction (Hebrews 11:32-34). What is impossible for man is possible for God (Mark 10:27). Faith comes from knowing who God is, and believing that He will do what He said He would. When you are unjustly accused or ill-used the shield of faith can sustain you. When the enemy attempts to make you blame God and turn from Him because of unfavorable conditions, the shield of faith can deflect the hurt and keep you untouched. The shield of faith protects all those areas not otherwise covered by armor.

The Helmet

The final piece of defensive armor listed is the helmet. The helmet the Roman soldier wore covered and encircled the head, providing protection from injury. Our helmet is the helmet of salvation (Ephesians 6:17a). In the human body the head, which houses the brain, is the other most susceptible body part under attack in combat. The brain is also critical in spiritual warfare. It is a mysterious organ associated with intelligence, personality, thought, and will, none of which are physical. The scriptures identify us as body, soul, and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23). The soul includes our minds, wills, and emotions. The soul can become sorrowful (Mark 14:34), troubled (John 12:27), and fearful (Isaiah 35:4). The mind is the battlefield on which the spiritual battles are fought (Genesis 6:5, Matthew 15:18&19). The enemy puts wrong thoughts and feelings into our minds. These thoughts and feelings include doubts, fears, unjust anger, evil desires, and anything ungodly. He tries to masquerade these thoughts and feelings as our own. Then temptation comes from the evil desires within, and temptations become sin when we dwell on them and allow them to become actions. It is possible for the mind to become spiritually gangrenous (Romans 1:28), and it can also be transformed (Romans 12:2). The way to keep out the bad is to fill up with the good (Philippians 4:8). Jesus came specifically to set us free from the bondage of sin (Galatians 1:4). Salvation is a gift (Romans 11:6). However, we have an enemy who is out to destroy us (1 Peter 5:8). We are living in his sphere of influence, and we are in a war that will last as long as we are in this world. Knowing who you are, and whose you are, is a sure defense. Wear the helmet of salvation.

The Sword

The last item listed in God's arsenal is the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17b). It is the only item in the list that is not defensive, but is an offensive weapon. The Word of God is sharper than any two edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). No soldier would go into combat unarmed. Just having defensive armor is not sufficient because the enemy will continue to batter you until either you fall or you run him off. The enemy we face would see us spiritually dead and eternally separated from God. The scriptures identify two kinds of battle swords. One is called a long sword or a broad sword and would be used from horseback or a chariot. The other is a smaller sword or dagger

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used by the foot soldier to repel an attacker. The Sword of the Spirit is a smaller sword, used by the Spirit to subdue the impulse to sin. When Jesus was in the wilderness and was tempted by Satan He used the Word of God as His only weapon (Matthew 4:4, 7, &10). He did not engage Satan in conversation or argue with him, He simply quoted scripture to him. God's Word is a very powerful thing (Jeremiah 23:29). When devils try to vilify us, it can purify us (John 15:3). When demons try to keep us in darkness, it lights the way (2 Peter 1:19). When all else seems to be failing, it can save us (Romans 1:16). Anytime you are under attack by the enemy use the sword of the Spirit.

Thank God for His loving protection in times of spiritual battle. Wear the armor until Jesus returns.