

## *The Gift of God's Armour: Part 2*

Ephesians 6:10-20

### Is 52:7 (NIV)

How beautiful on the mountains  
are the **feet of those who bring good news**,  
who proclaim **peace**,  
who bring good tidings,  
who proclaim salvation,  
who say to Zion,  
“Your God reigns!”

### Is 59:15b-21 (NIV)

The Lord looked and was displeased  
that there was no justice.  
<sup>16</sup> He saw that there was no one,  
he was appalled that there was no one to intervene;  
so his own arm achieved salvation for him,  
and his own righteousness sustained him.  
<sup>17</sup> He put on **righteousness as his breastplate**,  
and the **helmet of salvation** on his head;  
he put on the **garments of vengeance**  
and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak...

<sup>21</sup> “As for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the Lord. “My Spirit, who is on you, will not depart from you, and my words that **I have put in your mouth** will always be on your lips, on the lips of your children and on the lips of their descendants—from this time on and forever,” says the Lord.

### Ephesians 6:10-20 (NIV)

<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.  
<sup>11</sup> Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. <sup>13</sup> Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.  
<sup>14</sup> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.  
<sup>18</sup> And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. <sup>19</sup> Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

## Introduction

-what we saw previously

- The “spiritual” city of Ephesus
- The gospel of Jesus transformed lives
- Paul reminded the believers that Jesus had won victory of Jesus over all other spiritual forces!
  - not a victory that was won by swords and spears- it was a victory that was won by the Lord Jesus dying on a cross and being raised to life again. This amazing act showed

God's power at work, is shown in his immeasurable might working in the raising of Jesus from death itself! (1:20)

- Jesus, Paul said, has now been raised to God's "right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things" (1:20-22)
- Paul also reminded them that they used to be in slavery to "the prince of the power of the air", to Satan the ruler of demons- but now in his mercy God has set his people free, made them alive with Christ, seated us next to him where we can no longer fear any demonic power. Now that we have this new life, we are to "put on" (4:24) the new self, "created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness".
- In Eph 6:10-20:
  - First, "be strong and stand firm", vv 10-13, where Paul introduces his theme.
  - Second, the six pieces of God's armour are set out in vv 14-17;
  - Thirdly, we see the undergirding final element of prayer, in vv 18-20.
- We are completing the picture by looking at the final 5 pieces of armour and the foundational element of prayer

#### (a) The belt of truth

- Relying on the truth of God in his word to combat the lies of Satan

#### (b) The breastplate of righteousness

- See Is 59:17- God, in acting to save his people, "put on **righteousness as his breastplate**".
- God, the creator of the Universe, the covenant Lord of Israel who had promised to be their God and their defender, acted in righteousness to defeat Israel's enemies
  - A slightly speculative theory: I wonder if there is a literary link between this description of armour and the list of things that Goliath wore in 1 Samuel 17:

<sup>4</sup>A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. His height was six cubits and a span. <sup>5</sup>He had a **bronze helmet** on his head and wore a **coat** of scale armour of bronze weighing five thousand shekels; <sup>6</sup>on his **legs he wore bronze greaves**, and a **bronze javelin** was slung on his back. <sup>7</sup>His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels. His **shield** bearer went ahead of him.

- What could the link be? Well, after Goliath was defeated by David (the ancestor, of course, of our Lord Jesus), his armour was stripped off him and taken away to be used by David- 1 Sam 17:54 (in fact, later David retrieved Goliath's sword to use in battle- see 1 Sam 21:8-9)
- It turns out that armour in the Bible can be re-used after being removed from a defeated foe. And there is this very interesting comment from Jesus in Luke 11:22:

<sup>22</sup>But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up his plunder.

- Here Jesus is speaking in the context of defeating Satan! I like to think that there is nice irony here: the picture of Goliath in the Old Testament, covered in armour, is a horrifying image of a powerful, evil warrior attacking God's people. Our saviour, the descendant of David, the Lord Jesus, did not need human weapons to destroy the forces of evil. He **overcame** the power of Satan by his death on the cross, and in his powerful resurrection he demonstrates that victory to all. Satan has been, like Goliath, "beheaded", and his old armour has now been confiscated by our saving King.
  - And now he takes the items of armour that had previously been used to attack us, and he clothes **us** in that armour! He gives **us** the armour like that of Goliath, so that we need fear no attack from the enemy. Just as in the book of Isaiah, God

himself fought for his people as a warrior, so God has now given us his divine armour, so we can fight the forces of Satan.

- This is all fairly speculative, do take it or leave it! But to come back to the text:
- **First**, the breastplate of righteousness can be seen to represent the righteous standing we now enjoy before God because of the death of the Lord Jesus as our substitute and representative. Because Jesus died to take a punishment he did not deserve, we are able to enjoy **his** righteousness as a gift which is given to us.

<sup>21</sup> But now apart from the law the **righteousness of God** has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. <sup>22</sup> This **righteousness is given through faith** in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

- **secondly**, at the same time, Paul would like us to see that this new status will be reflected in a changed life!
  - o In Eph 5:9, in urging the Ephesians to “walk as children of the light”, Paul uses the same word when he says:

The fruit of light is in all goodness and **righteousness** and truth.

- o Paul says in Romans 13:12-

<sup>12</sup> The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the **armour** of light.

- And in 1 Thess 5:8:

8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a **breastplate**, and the hope of salvation as a **helmet**.

- But remember, this is not something we *earn*, it is all a gift of grace: Eph 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

#### (c) The footwear of the readiness for the gospel of peace

- Reference to Is 52, bringing the good news of the gospel
- We see the armour is not “defensive”, it allows us to be “offensive”- no, not offending people for the sake of it, but attacking Satan and setting his prisoners free!
- Jesus in Mark 3:27, speaking about a battle against Satan:

<sup>27</sup> In fact, no one can enter a strong man’s house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man’s house.

- Satan has prisoners bound in sin and darkness, and we are to be swift to bring the news of release!

#### (d) The shield of faith

- The shield protects us from “flaming arrows”; a common weapon of war
- God himself in his role as a warrior even used these, in Ps 7:13:

He has prepared his deadly weapons; he makes ready his flaming arrows.

- A commentator remarks:

Artemis could be seen as one taking vengeance “with fiery arrows” on those who did not live according to her code... This would surely create a certain fear for those who forsook Artemis to give their allegiance completely to the Lord Jesus Christ. The assurance of this passage is that they need not fear, since the shield of faith supplied by the one true and omnipotent God is adequate to quench any of the flaming arrows sent by spirits associated with the Artemis cult...<sup>1</sup>

- The “faith” we use is not spooky or “religious”, it is simply trust in God’s word and God’s goodness even in tough times

#### (e) The helmet of salvation

- This helmet was something God put on in Is 59:17
- For us, I think it is best seen as the assurance of our present salvation, and firm hope for the future
- Because in Eph 2:5 we see: “by grace you have been saved”, we know our salvation does not depend on us, but on God; and hence we can be sure we are saved now!
- The old question: “Why should I let you in to my kingdom?” The answer has to be: “Because Jesus...!”

#### (f) The sword of the Spirit

- See Isaiah 11:3-5, where we read about the promised Messiah:

3 ... He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,  
or decide by what he hears with his ears;  
4 but with righteousness he will judge the needy,  
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.  
He will strike the earth with the **rod of his mouth**;  
with the **breath of his lips** he will slay the wicked.  
5 **Righteousness will be his belt** and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

- The “word of God” is truth from God as part of the battle with Satan to release men and women from darkness and captivity.
- In the letter to the Hebrews, the writer makes a similar point when he says in 4:12:

<sup>12</sup>For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged **sword**, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

#### (g) Prayer

- Not a separate piece of armour, but it seems to be the foundation for all the other pieces
- It simply involves asking God for stuff!
- It can be hard- we need to “keep on”, persevere
- But as we pray for each other, we can “arm” each other and strengthen our brothers and sisters for their spiritual war!

#### Conclusion

- we live in a world that in some ways is getting more and more like the 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman empire all the time.
- We face forces that are not just apathetic to the gospel of Jesus, but positively hostile. Behind the open opposition of governments and others is the power of the devil, actively seeking to stifle and oppose the gospel.
- But Paul’s message here is that we don’t need to tremble before our opponents. God has provided us with the armour we need to stand firm in the battle!
- Let’s take it up and go into life in the service of the Lord Jesus and for the glory of God, knowing that the victory of the gospel is already assured

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<sup>1</sup> C E Arnold. *Ephesians* (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 2010) at pp 458-459.