
The Armor of God

An Exposition of Ephesians 6:10-17

The apostle Paul had life long contact with the Roman army. He was a Roman citizen and very patriotic; and his admiration of the fighting forces of Rome was great.

The Roman army was at its peak of efficiency during the early Christian era. It served as police and frontier guard over all of Europe, the borders with Asia and North Africa. Paul had many dealings with Roman legionnaires.

- A Roman soldier delivered Paul from the mob in Ephesus.
- Roman soldiers saved his life when the mob in Jerusalem wanted to kill him in the temple area.
- The Roman soldiers were able to deliver Paul out of Jerusalem from the hands of the religious leaders who wanted him dead and they brought him safely to Caesarea.
- It was Roman soldiers who escorted Paul on the trip from Caesarea to Rome which is the voyage on which Paul suffered shipwreck.
- Roman soldiers delivered Paul to the Roman garrison of the Praetorian Guard for his imprisonment.

The Praetorian Guard represents everything that is famous in Roman history. Their ranks were made up of the best and most experienced combat tested centurions, comparable to the finest from West Point, Sandhurst, St. Cyr, etc. They were comparable to the best combat units of modern times, such as Special Forces, 1st Marines, Patton's 3rd Army, the Coldstream Guard, Big Red One, etc. In Roman history, the man who wanted to be Emperor had first to win the favor of the Praetorian Guard.

Every man in the ranks was a respected veteran, one of the most highly trained warriors in history. The commander of the Guard was a chiliarch who maintained the strictest discipline and combat training, even though all ranks were seasoned combat veterans.

The emperor of Rome at the time of Paul's first imprisonment was Nero (Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus), a member of one of the most distinguished families of military men and politicians; a family of genius, but Nero himself was insane. As long as Nero listened to the counsel of Seneca, he was more or less an enlightened monarch; and he managed to judge Paul fairly during the first imprisonment.

Paul wrote the epistle to the Ephesians during the period of his house arrest in Rome while he was guarded by a centurion of the Praetorian Guard. Paul witnessed to many guards during his two years under house arrest; and as these men were posted to other countries, they carried the gospel with them. Paul recognized the mission field of the military and understood very well God's plan in having him in Rome under these conditions.

This passage of Ephesians has as its background a large number of Roman military metaphors, as you might suppose. Military terminology is seen in a great deal of Paul writings; for example:

- In Gal. 6:17, Paul talks about bearing in his body the mark of the Lord Jesus. In history, this mark was a brand placed on the back of the left hand of a Roman soldier who had finished basic training. It was a high honor and the sign of a man's man.
 - Note the military terms in 2 Tim. 2:3,4. Paul wrote 2 Timothy during his second imprisonment.
 - Roman military drill is the background of the terminology in Gal. 5:25; 1 Thess. 5:14; Col. 2:5.
 - 1 Cor. 15:20-23 describes the doctrine of the resurrection of believers in terms of a military parade. There are two battalions of believers passing in review, first those who were dead, then those who are alive and remain.
 - In 1 Cor. 14:8, Paul described the military commands given by a trumpet. The idea here is that those who speak in tongues cause confusion in the ranks.
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- In Gal. 1:6, Paul speaks of legalists as having gone absent without leave (AWOL) from the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- In Phil. 4:6,7, Paul refers to the mounting of the guard.

Eph. 6:10-12 provides, in military terms, an estimate of the situation. Such an estimate is based on facts gathered and analyzed by reconnaissance and intelligence personnel.

Questions to be answered are:

Who is the enemy?

Where is the enemy?

What are his strength and disposition and his supporting units?

What is his logistical support and where are his supply lines?

What are his weaknesses?

What is the terrain like where the battle will be fought?

Ephesians 6:10

"As to the remaining teaching, receive great inner strength from the Lord and in the inner power of His endowed power."

finally ...Literally, as to the remaining, but in this context, now to get down to the final planning for attack. Paul wants the Christian to go on the offensive against unseen forces, the forces of Satan.

be strong... This phrase is from the present passive imperative of **endunamao**, a reference to inner strength or moral courage.

Success in battle is always based on moral courage. The present tense used here indicates that moral courage must be used continuously. The passive voice shows that this courage is received by the believer from the Lord as a product of grace. The imperative is the mood of command; You are ordered to receive great moral courage!

This courage comes through Christian growth in maturity, the faith/grace process for Biblical perception and application.

Read 2 Cor. 10:3-6. Our weapons are the weapons of the soul; this is how the believer receives strength. The basic emphasis in Christianity is not

doing something but thinking something. Divine production follows divine thinking. The soul is armed when the believer is edified.

Bible truth applied to the life will include orientation to grace, a relaxed mental attitude, a capacity for personal and impersonal love, great inner peace and happiness, and a divine frame of reference. These are all ingredients of moral courage.

in the Lord... The Lord is the source of our strength and training.

in the power... The instrumental case of **kratos**, meaning "inner power" or self-discipline.

of his might... **ischus**, endowed power. The source for everything is the Lord Himself. See Acts 1:8. This takes us back to Eph. 5:18 and reminds us of the necessity of the Holy Spirit's control.

Ephesians 6:11

"Put on all of your spiritual military equipment so that you may have the ability to stand in the ranks, face to face with the strategies of Satan."

Put on... The phrase refers to the soldier picking up his equipment and weapons. This a verb in the middle voice, indicating that the believer receives benefit from putting on the armor.

the whole armor... **panoplia**, all armor and weapons; so, all military equipment. The English cognate is panoply.

There were three types of soldiers in the Roman army that wore armor and carried these types of weapons.

The *hastati* (from **hasta**, javelin) were less experienced soldiers under training. They were usually not well trained with the more sophisticated weapons such as the spear, machaira sword, or bow. These troops were usually not used in the main battle, but only in the opening skirmish when javelins were thrown at the advancing enemy. The new believer is the *hastati* in the Christian life. He is not trained with much in the way of weapons because he is still ignorant of a lot of God's word.

The *princeps* were somewhat more advanced. This was a young, vigorous, strong soldier, equivalent in this analogy to the vigorous

advancing Christian who is beginning to operate on a divine frame of reference.

The third line of battle was composed of the *triararii*, the veterans, soldiers who could move into any area of combat and were well trained with all weapons.

that ye may be able... *Dunamai* is the ordinary Greek word for ability. This is the ability which is the result of edification; and it is the main source of strength in the angelic conflict.

to stand... histomi; This is the readiness of the combat soldier, the Christian centurion, armed, tough, unyielding, with pride and motivation.

Standing is the first thing taught in unarmed combat or martial arts. One of the first things taught in judo, for instance, is how to break the stance of the opponent. The Gauls, against whom the Romans fought many campaigns, under Julius Caesar and others, were human tanks in the sense that their ability to take a very strong combat stance made them difficult to defeat in individual combat.

Every believer is a member of the combat team and is required to take his own part, to stand on his own. We are armed with spiritual gifts and equipment, provided by Grace, to fight against the forces of Satan.

against the wiles of the devil... *methodeia*, face to face with the strategies of Satan.

Ephesians 6:12

"Because our combat is not face to face with human beings but, by contrast, is in confrontation with demon rulers, military commanders of Satan, world-rulers of the darkness, and spirits of evil in the heavenlies."

for we wrestle ... These words refer to any sort of personal combat. In the military sense, it refers to military contact with the enemy.

not against flesh and blood ...that is, not face to face with human beings.

but ... in contrast to the foregoing

against...face to face with the following roster of the Satanic organization.

principalities... *Archon* is a word in Greek for one of the highest rulers.

This word first shows up in the Attic Greek (Athens) in the days of the Athenian democracy. The *archon* was the president or preeminent decision maker in Athens. The number two man was called *bassileus archon*, or king ruler. The third man was called *polymark*, a military ruler. The following six leaders in Athens were the *thesmoteitai* or legislators. Even though there was democracy, there was no anarchy in Athens because these leaders kept things under control.

The Satanic organization has a number of supreme rulers; how many is not known.

powers ... from *eksousias*, commissioned officers; therefore, a secondary group of demon rulers.

rulers of the darkness of this world .. The phrase ruler of this world is all one word in Greek: **kosmokrator** [world + ruler]. The word **skotos** follows; therefore the phrase should read world rulers of darkness.

These demonic rulers are Satan's supporting organization; analogous to logistics, intelligence, special weapons units, etc.

Satan has a special force of high ranking demons to make attacks against prominent officials and heads of nations.

In Daniel 10:13f, the term prince of Persia refers to a fallen angel, a demon, who was busy attacking the ruler of Persia. Gabriel was delayed in bringing a message to Daniel because he was in conflict with this kosmokrator demon. The archangel Michael came to help and released Gabriel to come to Daniel.

In Dan. 10:20, the prince of Grecia is mentioned, referring to the demon in charge of mounting attacks against the ruler of Greece who was Alexander the Great at that time.

The principle is that Satan will vigorously attack any nation which protects the divine institutions, allows personal freedom to its citizens and protects the nation against immorality. In nations like that there is evangelism and missionary activity, so demon activity will be stepped up with respect to those countries.

In addition, all Christian believers are placed under direct attack in the world system, with

particularly heavy attacks against those who are advancing in the Christian way of life.

spiritual wickedness in high places ... literally, spirits of evil in the heavenlies. This refers to the rank and file of demons which perform numerous functions.

Ephesians 6:13

"Because of this, continually take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to take your position in combat, and when all is finished that you may remain standing."

The question arises as to why God allows the spiritual warfare or the angelic conflict to continue. One reason is that in every generation, God permits Satan to use his genius to attack the plan of God and the principle of grace in the plan. Pressures are brought to bear on believers so that the divine provisions of grace may be made manifest.

wherefore...because of. Refers to the previous statements regarding spiritual warfare against demons. Hence, because of Satan's organization and activities, take the whole armor of God.

take... imperative of **analambano**, to take; to seize with a prefix which adds the idea of repetition to the verb. We must seize or take again and again the armor of God. As an example, one piece of the armor is truth (verse 14). This piece of armor must be put on every day.

In any group of Christians there are two types, those who are ready and those who are not ready. A uniform of armor must be taken up and put on whenever combat is anticipated. For the Christian, combat is continuous. The emphasis of this verb is do not get caught without your armor on!

the whole armor of God...panoplia. The *hastati*, the *princeps*, and the *triarii* all wore the same basic armor. In the following verses, the individual parts of the armor are described.

that ye may be able to stand...

The following passages of scripture provide excellent illustration of the concept of the Christian's "stand."

1 Cor. 15:57,58

Psa. 16:8; 21:7; 55:22; 125:1

Gal. 5:1

Phil. 1:27

1 Pet. 5:5-11

Psa. 46:5; 66:9; 112:6; 121:3

Prov. 10:30

1 Cor. 10:12

Job 11:14,15

Acts 11:23

Phil. 4:1

1 Thess. 5:21

2 Thess. 2:15

Heb. 3:6; 4:14; 10:23

against the wiles of the devil...

See Topics: Satan and Demons which describe his particular strategies. Also, refer to notes on demon activity in the previous discussion on Ephesians 6:12.

and having done all, to stand.

Ephesians 6:14

"Stand, therefore, having about your waist the equipment belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of divine righteousness;"

With this verse begins the categorization of the Christian's armor, using by way of illustration the armor of the Roman soldier.

stand therefore... aorist active imperative of **histomi**, the ordinary verb for standing, but in this context "to stand in military rank".

Grammar Note: In verses 14 to 17 there is a string of verbs, all of which are aorist participles in the middle voice. These are the verbs such as take or put on associated with putting on the pieces of armor. The Greek aorist participles have the same standing in a context as the English past participle in that the action of the participles precedes the action of the main verb in the sentence. The idea is that before a soldier can take his place in the ranks, he must be outfitted and trained.

having your loins girt about ...The aorist middle participle of **perizunumi** means to put around.

The Roman soldier put around his waist a very wide belt which was the holder for a lot of equipment. There was a loop, for example, for the

scabbard for the machaira sword. Other loops held ropes and a rations sack. When the legions conquered a city, the soldiers would empty out the ration sack to make room for gold, jewelry and other loot they picked up.

There were loops on the belt for darts. The belt was tied in several places to stay in place, so that no matter how the soldier moved about, fell down, climbed hills, etc., the belt was always in place with weapons at the ready. There were designs stitched into the belt which designated various campaigns in which the veteran had fought. Instead of campaign medals or ribbons, the soldier would weave into the belt something he had taken during the battle.

with truth... *Aleitheia*, refers to truth taught accurately. This is the belt of the Christian soldier.

and having on.. Having put on the breastplate of righteousness.

the breastplate... *thoraka*, English cognate is thorax. This was attached to the belt and provided protection for the upper torso, front and back.

In the ancient world, breastplates were of layers of cloth, sometimes with metal greaves attached. The Greeks introduced a bronze breastplate, with bronze plates covering vital areas or the torso, held together with leather or cloth connections. Some Samaritans noticed that horses' hooves, cattle horns, etc., were made of very hard material, so they began to use horn sewed to cloth to protect from blows.

The Romans had the ideas for armor design which provided light weight combined with ease of movement and protection from blows. The best type was called the thorax stadias, or breastplate which stands by itself. This breastplate was attached to the belt by leather thongs passed through rings on the bottom to keep it solidly attached. It was anchored to the belt and it was above the belt. Note: The belt had to be put on first, then the breastplate.

of righteousness... The righteousness of God is basic protection for the believer. The belt of truth combined with the breastplate of righteousness is the basis for the edification of the Christian.

Eph. 4:12,16,29

Ephesians 6:15

"Having shod your feet by means of full preparedness in the good news of God's peace."

And your feet shod ...to bind with sandals. The sandal was the combat boot for the Roman army. This is a reference to the foot soldier slogging it out. The infantryman fights with the least glamor and the highest casualties.

While the Greek soldier wore greaves to protect his ankles, the Roman soldier wore a heavy soled sandal which had metal studs on the bottom for good footing on uneven or slippery ground. This shoe was known in Latin as the caligula, so the foot soldier was called caligatus. Officers wore different foot gear.

with the preparation of - etoimasia, refers to full preparedness, being able to march great distances in order, with others, and over a long period of time, to use weapons effectively.

the gospel of peace... We are to be ready at any time to minister the gospel. All believers are included in this command. Every Christian is in full time Christian service, always on the front line.

Even a Christian who does not want to fight is in the conflict. A soldier may be untrained or in poor condition and drop beside the road before the enemy is reached or he may be killed in the first skirmish.

The primary thrust of evangelism is through the individual. There is a place for those with the spiritual gift of evangelism; but these men can reach only a specialized segment of the population. Individual believers circulate throughout the community in various functions. They have jobs; they belong to clubs; they have certain friends. The principle of witnessing for Christ is that you do it in your own environment.

Preparation implies the ability to fight. Preparation means flexibility and the ability to use God's Word in witnessing. Knowledge of the basic doctrines of salvation is necessary for witnessing and not salesmanship techniques. You need to know about reconciliation, propitiation, redemption, imputation, regeneration and the

barrier, as a start. You do not have your shoes on your feet without this preparation.

Notes on personal witnessing

- Witnessing for Christ is the responsibility of every believer. Acts 1:8; 1 Pet. 3:15; Mk. 5:18,19.
- The effectiveness and clarity of the believer's witnessing depends, in large measure, on his understanding of the last judgment. Sins will not be the issue! The only reason that a person will stand at the last judgment is that he rejected Christ during his lifetime. John 3:18; 3:36. All sins have been judged at the cross, and there is no double jeopardy.
- The basis for the indictment of unbelievers is human good and not sins. The witnessing Christian must make the issue clear.
- Witnessing is impossible apart from the filling of the Holy Spirit. John 16:8-11. The Holy Spirit must minister to the unbeliever to apply the doctrine of salvation.
- The context for witnessing is that part of the word of God called the gospel. 1 Cor. 1:18; Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12.
- The dynamics of witnessing depends on the believer's mental attitude. One cannot be an effective witness if he is ashamed of the gospel, if he does not have the capacity to be occupied with Christ, or if he is not oriented to grace.
- In Rom. 1:14-16, the apostle Paul says I am debtor, I am ready, and I am not ashamed. A fisherman has a desire to fish. One is not a fisher of men without a desire to win souls.
- There are two sources for a Christian's witness: (1) the testimony of his life, 2 Cor. 3:3, and (2) the testimony of his lips, 2 Cor. 5:14-21.
- There is a reward for witnessing. 1 Cor. 3:11-16; 2 Cor. 5:10. Rewards in heaven are an extension of edification; the only things that are rewarded in heaven is what is done on the basis of grace. Thus, every reward in heaven is an eternal memorial to the grace of God. Grace means that rewards do not reflect any personal glory or merit. It is the Lord who

enables us to labor for Him and who provides the divine production leading to the life rewards defined as gold, silver and precious stones.

Ephesians 6:16

"In addition to all this, having taken up the shield of the believer's faith, wherewith ye shall be able to extinguish or cut off the fire arrows of the wicked one."

above all ...or, in addition to all. This phrase does not mean that the following item of equipment is greater, but that it is simply to be added to the above.

taking ... The word is an aorist active participle of **analambano**, to pick up something, as from the ground, repeatedly. The main verb is stand in Ephesians 6: 14, so this action precedes the action of the main verb.

the shield of faith ...thureos.

The Romans had a long, rectangular, knees-to-chin shield which protected from arrows and spears and could be knelt behind during an arrow barrage. It was quite a bit heavier and clumsier than the smaller Greek circular shield; but there was a series of exercises, a manual of arms, designed to give the soldier flexibility and strength in the use of the shield. Groups of soldier who were besieging a town could form close together and hold their shields over their heads to make a huge testudo, or turtle, to protect the group from missiles.

The Romans were known by some of their enemies as the soldiers who carried a door (**thureos**) into battle. The Franks of Cisalpine and Transalpine Gaul ridiculed these smaller men because of the great cumbersome shields they carried. But the barbarians were surprised in battle when the little Romans, with their great discipline, their consummate fighting skills and their mental attitude of victory, wiped up the ground with the disorganized, vacillating Gauls.

In this verse, the Roman shield stands for the faith of the believer in the promises of God. The value of faith lies not in the person exercising it, but in the object. Faith is something that all people possess and use every day. It is a non-meritorious

system of thinking and decision making. Most of what we learn, we learn by faith.

Topics: Faith; Faith Rest

wherewith ...by means of which

ye shall be able ...future active indicative of **dunamai**, a verb of ability or power. Implied in the future tense is that there will be a training period in the use of the shield before battle comes. In the Christian life, the training period is the time during which promises and doctrines are learned and practiced.

to quench ... aorist active infinitive of **sbeinumi**, to extinguish, to break off, to chop off.

the fiery darts ... missiles which have been set on fire, a reference to fire arrows.

Persians used fire arrows against the Greeks in the days of Xerxes. Herodotus makes reference to these in his description of the attack against the citadel at Athens, referring to arrows dipped in tar and set afire before shooting them.

Thucydides, in his book on the Peloponnesian wars describes the Spartans in the siege of Platea, "The Plateans constructed a wooden frame which they set upon the top of their own wall opposite the mound (built by Spartans). They were trying to outbuild each other to get the high angle of fire for their arrows. They also constructed curtains of skins and hides to protect the front of the wooden platform. These were designed to protect the woodwork and the workers against the blazing arrows of the Spartans."

The Roman historian Livy, in his History, described the siege of Saguntum in which the Saguntians had designed giant darts to be fired by a catapult. "There was used by the Saguntines a missile called follerica, with the shaft of a fir tree, and round in all its parts, except at the point from which the iron projected. This part, which was square, they bound with tow and smeared with pitch."

"But what caused the greatest fear with this weapon, even though it should stick in the shield and did not penetrate into the body, was that when it was discharged with the middle part on fire, it bore along a much greater flame produced

by the mere motion, and obliged the soldier to drop his shield and expose himself."

of the wicked ... The phrase is literally, of the wicked one or the source of the fiery darts.

Ephesians 6:17

"And receive the helmet of salvation, and the sword provided by the Holy Spirit, which is the Word of God."

and take ... The phrase means to receive, (imperative), as an item of equipment.

the helmet of salvation ... The **perikephalaia**, literally means something placed around the head, so, in the military term meaning helmet.

It is the soul which is said to be saved; and the soul is in the head with its mentality, volition, self-consciousness, emotion and sin nature. So it is appropriate the helmet represents salvation.

The Romans had the best helmet of the ancient world. Many other nations used helmets of cloth wrappings, animal hides or bones, or hooves, etc. The Roman helmet had chinstrap, visor, and came down to cover the back and sides of the neck. Officers' helmets had a ridge on top on which was mounted plumage or some sort of brush, depending on the rank.

The parts of the Roman helmet were: a lining of leather, softened for comfort and good fit; the helmet itself which was a bronze casque for the soldier, or iron alloy for officers; a metal crest for the plume; and a chinstrap. The highest ranking officers had gold and silver alloy helmets for parade dress.

The helmet represents many principles of doctrine associated with salvation.

Request Topic: Salvation Doctrines

and the sword of the Spirit ... The **machaira** was mentioned before. The word **machaira** was chosen here, and in Heb. 4:12, by the Holy Spirit during inspiration.

There were many types of swords used in the ancient world:

The **romphaia** was a broadsword used mostly by the Gauls of Julius Caesar's time. It was used with both hands, was six to eight feet long, sometimes with one edge, sometimes two, and used to hack

off limbs and heads. The barbarian soldiers made great slicing sweeps with the broadsword, leaving himself open for thrusts of the **machaira**.

The Persians used the **zephos**, a thrusting weapon with a point, rounded like a pencil, but with no cutting edge.

In the **akinakes** sword, the emphasis was on the handle and the ornate decoration. It was actually a dress sword and was not considered a serious combat weapon. The **dolon** was a sword hidden in a cane or riding crop and used mostly by assassins.

The **machaira** is described by Vegetius in his Military Instructions to the Romans. "They likewise taught not to cut, but to thrust, with the sword. For the Romans not only made jest of those who fought with the edge of a weapon, but always found them an easy conquest. A stroke with the edge, though made with ever so much force, seldom kills, as the vital parts of the body are defended both by bones and armor. On the contrary, a stab, although it penetrates only a few inches, is usually fatal. Besides, in the attitude of striking with the broadsword, it is impossible to avoid exposing the right arm and side. On the other hand, the body is covered when a thrust is given and the enemy receives the point before he sees the sword."

The user of the **machaira** is always covered, always protected, always on balance, and always ready for defense or attack.

of the Spirit, the Word of God...The sword source is the Holy Spirit, namely, the word of God.

Maturity and the ability to do God's work comes through years of study of God's word and practice in using doctrinal principles. Following is a review of the doctrinal ideas found in:

2 Timothy 2:15.

Study ... is from the Greek word **spoudzo** meaning to be industrious, eager, to be diligent, to exert oneself. It has a stronger meaning than study. It is actually a way of life which includes the proper mental attitude and motivation to learn Bible doctrine daily. This word could be translated make every effort and it is a command.

to show yourself or, "to make every effort to represent yourself...". It means to make every effort to concentrate, to be objective to doctrine. to give priority to the word of God. The reason that you are entering the Lord's work is to live the life of Christ.

approved ... "to pass an exam". The emphasis is on success, not failure. To be a successful Christian worker, you must study (Test #1), and you must use what you study (Test #2).

Can you teach to the glory of God? The test is on the accuracy of what you teach. Can you work to the glory of God? The test comes when you apply, whether you use grace or legalism, whether you depend upon man or God. Can you fix a car, iron a shirt, type a letter to the glory of God? The test is on whether you know how to do this.

workman ... **Ergateis**, is an agricultural worker, a laborer, a routine worker. This word indicates one who is involved in the mundane, routine, ordinary, distasteful, or dull things in life. In the ancient world it meant feeding the cattle, working in the fields, cleaning out the barn, etc.

Any task can be done as unto the Lord; the Christian life is fantastic. The emphasis here is on doing small, routine things as unto the Lord. Stay in fellowship and wait for God's promotion.

needeth not to be ashamed ... The phrase means literally, with the previous word, a not ashamed workman. You do not have to be ashamed of your station in life if you have an honest vocation. Every believer is in full time service. A Christian worker must keep grace oriented and not despise the ordinary things, or those who live an ordinary life. And he must have these qualities before moving out.

rightly dividing with the word of truth ... "to cut straight, to line out a straight path." Use Bible doctrine to keep from straying into the cults, into the movements, to stay with accurate interpretation and application of the word of God. This enables a life with no detours, no hangups and no blind alleys.