

The Armor Of God #1

Some see a connection between Paul being a prisoner and the description of armor which he gives in Ephesians 6; armor which equips the Christian "soldier" to battle against his arch enemy: the devil. Perhaps. Still his comparison to Christians being engaged in a battle in which they must have armor for their protection is not confined exclusively to "prison epistles." His earliest letters (to the Thessalonians) speaks of the breastplate of righteousness (1 Thess. 5:8) and his second letter to Corinth (again, no "prison epistle") alludes to the "*armor of righteousness on the right hand and the left*" (2 Cor. 6:7). There might be a connection, but that cannot be determined upon the basis that Ephesians is a "prison epistle" since other letters also mention armor Christians must wear.

Paul urged Ephesians to "*put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*" (Eph. 6:1). He describes this armor by saying, "*Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. And also the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God*" (Eph. 6:14-17).

There are six pieces of armor Paul mentions and likens to items Christians must possess. He first mentions "*girding your loins with truth.*" Usual explanation of this figure is that the girdle held the whole of man's apparel intact and that in the same way truth is essential to holding the Christian in place. With some, "*truth*" is elusive. A cynical Pilate to whom Jesus said he had "*come to bear witness of the truth,*" retorted, "*What is truth*" (Jn. 18:37-38)? Some insist there is no such thing as "absolute truth" that all truth is "relative." Jesus did not agree. "*Sanctify them in thy truth,*" He said. "*Thy word is truth*" (Jn. 17:17).

The importance of truth should be clear to all. The wise man urged, "*Buy the truth and sell it not*" (Prov. 23:23). Isaiah decried the fact that men had no regard for truth in his day. He wrote, "*Truth is fallen into the streets*" (Isa. 59:14). The truth frees and sanctifies (Jn. 8:32; 17:17). We should never forget that ultimately truth does conquer and is victorious. A poet once wrote, "Truth crushed to earth shall rise again. The eternal years of God are hers. But error, wounded, writhes in pain, and dies among her worshippers." We should be concerned that our feet are planted in the path of right and truth for only truth can free and begat us.

Next the apostle urged that we put on the "*breastplate of righteousness.*" Often Paul uses "*righteousness*" to describe the state of being justified. Such is its meaning in Romans (1:16f; 3:21; 4:3; 10:4, et al.). That is not its meaning here, however, for another figure is used by the apostle to describe that: the helmet of salvation. The breastplate of righteousness is that sincerity and goodness that God requires of all who truly worship and serve Him. Romans 6:19-20 says, "*I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye presented your members as servants to uncleanness and to iniquity, even so now present your members as servants to righteousness unto sanctification.*" "*The grace of God hath appeared bringing salvation. Instructing us to the intent that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*" (Tit. 2:11).

The breastplate protected the heart of the Roman soldier. The breastplate of righteousness protects the heart of the soldier of Christ. The heart must be guarded thus -- "*Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life*" (Prov. 4:23). The pure in heart are blessed and shall see God (Mt. 5:8). We must ever "*let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart*" be acceptable to God (Psa. 19:24)! The breastplate of righteousness is that kind of holy living, both in thought and deed, that is the result of a lost soul securing salvation and who is grateful to his merciful Savior for the salvation He has given to him!

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