

The Ensign

of the Christian Israelite Church

‘And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.’ Isaiah 11:12.

The Value of the Armour of God

by Trudy Adams

The Whole Armour of God

Ephesians 6:11-18 is a passage that speaks about our need for the armour of God. It outlines what pieces of armour are required to protect each part of the body, with a spiritual parallel designed to instruct us in our fight against the devil or Satan – a fight otherwise known as spiritual warfare.

It begins with:

‘Put on the whole armour of God.’
Ephesians 6:11a.

Immediately we learn three important things. Firstly, it is up to us to put on the armour; God won’t do it for us. It is our responsibility and our choice. Secondly, we need to put on the *whole* armour – putting on one or two pieces won’t protect us from the attacks of the devil. Satan looks for any weakness, any part of us not protected, as an entry into our lives wherein he can come ‘to steal, and to kill, and to destroy’ (John 10:10). Thirdly, the armour comes from and belongs to God – that is what makes it powerfully resilient against Satan. That is why we need the armour:

‘... that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.’
Ephesians 6:11b.

God’s armour allows us to remain strong and unmovable – in our faith, our identity, our emotions, or any other part of us that Satan

may be attacking. It empowers us to stand against his many tricks, schemes, and deliberate attempts to deceive and torment us, or to drive us away from God and life and towards evil and death. It is our job to stand strong in the victory Jesus Christ has already won for us (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Paul goes on to explain that we, as followers of Christ, are at war – but not with people:

‘For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.’
Ephesians 6:12.

It is not people themselves who are the ultimate problem in our conflicts and difficulties, but the evil within them that Satan draws on to tempt them to commit sins. Yes, people still choose to act on his suggestions and remain responsible for their actions, for which they then face natural consequences, often even with repentance (e.g. a murderer may seek and receive forgiveness and be freed from guilt and condemnation, but still serve time in gaol). But it is Satan who gives them the idea and motivation to sin in the first place, just as he did with Adam and Eve in the beginning (Genesis 3).

He isn’t operating on his own, either. He has mirrored God’s hierarchy of archangels and angels with his own spiritual authorities and

demons, forming his kingdom of darkness. His demons are actively seeking to beleague and destroy God's highest creation – his people. Satan hates God, and God created men and women in his own image (Genesis 1:27). It therefore naturally follows that Satan hates us, particularly those of us who choose to follow God and his son, Jesus Christ, the one who gives us authority over Satan and his dominion and thereby renders him powerless.

Verse 12 also highlights an important element of spiritual warfare – that it is a wrestle. This brings to mind a close, personal struggle with evil. It indicates an ongoing fight wherein we can gain the upper hand but quickly lose it if we don't stay alert. Satan is grappling with us right back. We are not fighting with him from a distance. This is face to face, hand to hand, gritty combat. That's why his attacks can feel so personal, long-lasting, and violating. It's also why we must have armour.

Paul again reminds us of this in the next verse:

'Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.' Ephesians 6:13.

We need to do everything we can to prepare for battle, everything that the crisis requires, by putting on the whole armour of God. Once we have done this, our job is to stand and wait on God to do his part. Not to try and take responsibility for overpowering the devil's whole kingdom; not to take on the role that only Jesus Christ can. But also not to run from the devil, compromise, live in fear, or flee (there is no armour for our back). Sometimes, God won't give us the opportunity to stand against the devil until we have each of the armour pieces securely in place. He does this to ensure our victory and to protect us from any counter-attacks. We must stand, unmovable in our faith, integrity and identity as Christ's followers, regardless of what attacks Satan brings against us, and we can only do this if we are wearing the whole armour of God.

The First Piece of Armour – Truth

'Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.' Ephesians 6:14a.

In Bible times, men often wore long tunics that inhibited active work. To 'gird your loins' was to prepare oneself for movement, whether that be for travel or, in this case, for battle. This was done by tying up the tunic into a knot above the knees and tucking it into a belt or girdle, thereby freeing the legs to do whatever was required. It was symbolic of a decision to move or fight. Paul is telling us to make the same decision, but in this instance for a spiritual battle. Being spiritually girded means we are watching, alert, and ready for battle. Being girded with truth means that we know the Truth, who he is and what he stands for, and that we fight for this truth.

Jesus Christ tells us that he is 'the way, the truth, and the life' (John 14:6), that 'ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free' (John 8:32), and that 'thy word is truth' which sanctifies us (John 17:17). God makes it clear he hates lies when he says, 'lying lips are an abomination to the Lord' (Proverbs 12:22). Jesus also directly links lying to Satan:

'[He] abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.' John 8:44.

God loves truth and Satan loves lies. This is one of the reasons the two kingdoms are at war.

Satan loves to tell us lies. His favourites are subtle lies cleverly disguised as truths. One of his primary weapons against us is deceit – making us believe that lies are true. He might tell us (or cause others to tell us) lies about ourselves, others, our relationships, our future, and our purpose. In fact, anything is open to attack from him. This is all designed to lower our self-esteem, remove us of hope, and drive us towards spiritual, emotional, and even physical death such as through suicide.

He also encourages us to lie to others and keep secrets from them, often about our sins, so that we will remain in and promote sin, which in turn separates us from God. (That is why confession of sins is important – it breaks the power that Satan otherwise has over us in those areas.) He especially likes to tell lies about God and Jesus Christ so that our relationships with them are hindered and we remain without their redemptive power; power that allows us to uncover Satan’s lies and overcome him.

Truth is power that gives us victory over the devil, and truth is found in God’s Word. When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, Jesus rebutted and overcame him by quoting the Word of God (Matthew 4). Satan tried to deceive him; Jesus won by speaking the truth, the verbal equivalent of a swordfight. It’s no wonder Paul mentions it first: truth is the foundation upon which everything else is built on.

The Second Piece of Armour – Righteousness

‘... and having on the breastplate of righteousness.’ Ephesians 6:14b.

The breastplate protects the heart – one of the vital organs that we need to function and live. Elsewhere, Paul tells us that ‘with the heart man believeth unto righteousness’ (Romans 10:10). The heart is generally thought of as the home of emotion and passionate beliefs even in today’s modern culture. Perhaps this idea began in the Bible, which speaks of the heart as being the place where our core attitudes, desires, morals, motivations, beliefs and feelings flow from: ‘keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life’ (Proverbs 4:23). 1 Samuel 16:7 tells us that ‘the Lord looks at the heart’ (i.e. searches and understands our motives and desires), while Psalm 37:4 says that God will ‘give thee the desires of thine heart’ if we delight in him. Whichever way it is considered, the heart is central to who we are and in vital need of protection. Satan knows its value, so he is determined to destroy it.

Paul tells us in the above verse that the heart is protected by righteousness. Righteousness is the state of being made right with God – having a good relationship with him and, through his forgiveness, no longer being separated from him because of sin. We receive righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:9). It allows us to be freed from the guilt, shame and condemnation that sin otherwise brings. It means we are cleansed, made pure and holy, and therefore able to once again commune with the holy Lord. It allows us to redeem our sense of worth and to regain hope for the future. Righteousness is therefore strongly connected to both our self-esteem and our relationship with God. It also dictates a change in the way we live our lives – instead of indulging in sin, righteousness naturally leads us to do what is right and true. It increases over time as we draw closer to God and build on good choices. It follows that it once again gives us power over Satan. Like truth, righteousness is spiritual warfare. It is the truth about who we are in God’s eyes.

Satan will therefore counter it in any way he can. When he attacks our heart, he attacks our beliefs about ourselves – our worth. Once again using lies, he causes us to question our right standing with God. He reminds us of the bad things we have done. He has other people reject us. He tries to thrust guilt, shame and condemnation back onto us even when we have sought forgiveness from God for our sins. He attacks our emotions, causing depression, anxiety, fear, grief, sadness and difficulty in our relationships with others, ourselves, and God. To stand against this, we must ‘put on the breastplate of righteousness’ and remind Satan of the truth of who we are as God’s son or daughter, no longer burdened by past sins and mistakes. In this way we protect our heart from the devil and stand in a place of victory.

The Third Piece of Armour – the Gospel of Peace

‘And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.’
Ephesians 6:15.

Shoes indicate an intent to travel. Adequate protection for our feet allows us to trek long distances across varying terrains in different weathers or, spiritually speaking, through challenges and trials. Here, Paul is instructing us to put on shoes so we can spread the good news about the Gospel of Peace (that is, the good news that Jesus gave us the way to be at peace with God). This echoes the writings of Isaiah:

‘How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!’ Isaiah 52:7 (also quoted by Paul in Romans 10:15).

We spread this news by giving an account of our faith to others when God gives us the opportunity to do so. Sometimes we do this without words, that is, by behaving in a righteous way with integrity, respect and kindness, or simply setting ourselves apart from the world through honourable living. Sometimes it’s found in the conversations we have with those who are struggling in life; providing compassionate, godly support and/or advice in their difficulties.

But why is this spiritual warfare? Because it brings hope to people who are in despair. It allows more people to be reconciled with God and to join his kingdom. That means more people leaving Satan’s kingdom. This news is not good for him.

The verse also specifically calls it the Gospel of *Peace*. Peace means freedom if not from conflict, from distress and suffering in the midst of conflict. Peace is so important to God that he links it to his identity, describing

himself as ‘the Lord of Peace’ (2 Thessalonians 3:16) and his son as ‘the Prince of Peace’ (Isaiah 9:6). The angels proclaimed ‘peace on earth’ when Jesus was born (Luke 2:14).

Why then does Jesus say, ‘Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword’ (Matthew 10:34)? The peace Jesus brings is between us and God, as his sacrifice made the way for us to have a direct relationship with God. It is true that it is our responsibility to ‘if it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men’ (Romans 12:18). But there will not be complete peace on earth until Satan is defeated in the end days. Until then, the two kingdoms remain at war, and we must pick a side (‘He that is not with me is against me.’ Matthew 12:30). Still, by spreading the Gospel of Peace, we give others the opportunity to find peace through a relationship with God, despite the spiritual battle taking place around us. Satan’s purpose is to torment and upset us – he does not want us in a place of rest, the very thing Jesus promises us if we come to him (Matthew 11:28). Remaining in peace is a way of fighting the devil.

‘The preparation of the gospel of peace’ suggests we are to adapt a readiness to speak about God at any time and, like Paul, to be able to say, ‘I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ’ (Romans 1:16). By putting on the ‘shoes’ to spread the good news, we are actively opposing Satan and his kingdom, and bringing glory to God¹.

The Fourth Piece of Armour – Faith

‘Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.’
Ephesians 6:16.

‘Above all’ – Paul immediately places particular importance on this next item. The writer of Hebrews defines faith as ‘the substance of things hoped for, the evidence

¹ For the Christian Israelite, the ‘good news’ is not just the salvation of the soul but of the life of the body.

of things not seen' (11:1) and adds that 'without faith it is impossible to please [God]' (11:6).

Faith can be hard to differentiate from hope, trust, and belief, as all four entail conviction in things that can't be seen or which are otherwise intangible, and yet they are different from each other. Belief is the foundation of the other three – it is a sound confidence and understanding that something is true. Trust is the belief that something or someone will meet our needs in the way we expect them to. Hope is the belief that something good will happen or get better in our future.

Faith is the belief that something or someone has the capacity to do whatever is required, even when we have no evidence of this. That is why we say 'I have faith in you' when someone is trying something for the first time, not 'I have trust in you', which sounds like we need them to come through for us personally, or 'I have hope in you', which sounds like we think they'll get better in the future but are actually lacking in some way now. Faith is acting like we have proof before we have proof. Actually, faith stands in place of proof – that is why the writer of Hebrews says it *is* evidence.

That is also why it pleases God so much when we have faith in him, because it is a demonstration that we believe in him so much that we don't need evidence of what he is doing or going to do. We just know he is doing it. There is no doubt. Faith also demonstrates a loyal allegiance with him (faithfulness). It leads us to pick a side. We can't have faith in God and faith in Satan at the same time.

Paul says that faith acts as a shield and that it protects us not just from one or two darts, but *all* of them. These darts are described as 'fiery'. Things that are on fire burn and spread, causing deeper and longer-lasting damage. But through faith, we are saved from all such spiritual and emotional damage. When we place our faith in God, he comes through for us in big ways.

Satan attacks our faith by causing us to doubt God. He makes us question if he really is doing anything, why he is taking so long, and if he really has our best interests at heart. Such thoughts seem innocent at first but can end up crippling our faith and then our identity. It is by raising the shield of faith that we are able to withstand all such attacks.

The Fifth Piece of Armour – Salvation

'And take the helmet of salvation.'
Ephesians 6:17a.

A helmet protects our head and brain or, spiritually and emotionally speaking, our mind. It is likely Paul is referring to the latter rather than the former in this case. He speaks a lot about the mind throughout his letters and shows us how it can determine our allegiance to either God's or Satan's kingdoms. This is most notably explained in Romans 8:5-7:

'For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God.'

Our mind is the primary space where Satan launches his attacks. It's where he causes us to compromise the truth, question our righteousness, hesitate in spreading the good news, lose our peace to conflict, and doubt our faith.

All such attacks begin with a single thought that he slips into our mind so quietly we often think it's our own (that way we don't suspect him and chase him out). He could, for example, tell us that because we have failed at something we are a failure (a lie), and if we choose to dwell on that thought, low self-worth and even depression could soon follow. Before we know it, we feel trapped in a dark space.

But what we think on is a choice. Peter tells us to 'gird up the loins of your mind' (1 Peter

1:13), reusing the metaphor to show us that we need to make the decision to protect our minds from unholy thoughts. Paul tells us that ‘we have the mind of Christ’ (1 Corinthians 2:16) and that it is the ‘renewing of the mind’ that transforms us from worldly people to godly ones (Romans 12:2). Isaiah wrote that we remain in perfect peace when our mind is stayed on God (26:3). That is, when we actively cultivate godly thoughts. Jesus asks, ‘which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?’ and later exhorts us to ‘take therefore no thought for the morrow’ (Matthew 6:27, 34). He is of course talking about worrying, which begins and ends with the thoughts we choose to dwell on.

The ‘helmet of salvation’ explains that our minds are protected from Satan’s attacks through the knowledge that we have salvation in Jesus Christ. At the beginning of the passage, we remember that Paul began by saying we need to ‘put on’ the armour of God, an active choice and decision. This is especially true of the helmet – we have to actively take charge of our mind rather than simply letting Satan set up home there and believing everything he tells us, either directly or through others. This is not an area where we can afford to be passive. Without the helmet of salvation – the sound belief and hope that we belong to God – our mind is left unprotected. The best way to counter Satan’s attacks on our minds is by thinking on the Word of God (and on such things that fits Paul’s list in Philippians 4:8). This is, in fact, our best and most powerful weapon.

The Only Weapon – the Sword of the Spirit

‘... and the sword of the Spirit,
which is the word of God.’
Ephesians 6:17b.

In the same sentence Paul mentions the need for the helmet of salvation, he tells us to take up the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. That is because they are intricately linked – we fight Satan’s lies by focusing our minds on the truth found in the Word. This is the only weapon Paul references and the only one we

need in our fight against the devil. As mentioned, this is exactly how Jesus overcame Satan’s attacks in the wilderness, as outlined in Matthew 4. Three times Satan tempted him to leave his identity, kingdom, and beliefs behind; three times Jesus responded by saying ‘it is written’ and quoting the Word of God. In the end, the devil left. James tells us to ‘submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you’ (4:7). That is what it means to stand against him. It may not always be immediate – sometimes we may even need to resist him for years before he relents – but once he knows we’re serious and have the power of God, he will flee in fear. Sometimes, we have to get spiritually and mentally violent towards him in order for this to happen: ‘The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force’ (Matthew 11:12).

The writer of Hebrews further explains the concept of the Word as a sword, and its connection to the mind:

‘For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword ... and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.’ Hebrews 4:12.

To beat down Satan’s attack on our mind, we have to know the Word of God, believe it, and continually bring it to mind every time we feel the devil trying to tempt us away from God’s truth. The Word also allows us to see our thoughts and motivations for what they are so we can make corrections when needed and bring them back into line with God’s will. In the end, by taking these steps and getting our mind on track, the devil will flee.

The Power of the Spirit

‘Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.’ Ephesians 6:18.

While we need to take active steps to ‘put on the armour’ and stand against the devil, it’s

not something we do on our own or in our own power. That is why Paul concludes this passage by reminding us to pray continually in the Spirit. We must rely on God and his direction at all times by going to him with all of our needs in prayer (Philippians 4:6). If we don't, we're not effective spiritual warriors. In the words of James, 'the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much' (5:16).

Paul also reminds us to 'watch' with all perseverance. Once we have achieved victory over the devil in a particular area, we can't let our guard down. It echoes Peter's warning:

'Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith.' 1 Peter 5:8-9.

We must always be strengthening our stand against him, watching for weak spots in our lives where he may try to enter in. It is part of the ongoing war we fight for God's kingdom, and it's one we'll continue to fight until Jesus Christ makes his second appearance. In the meantime, we have all of his power and his might to have the courage to speak to the devil as David spoke to Goliath:

'This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee ... that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands.' 1 Samuel 17:46-47.

Paul speaks of supplication (prayer) for all the saints (those who share the same faith), indicating the need to support each other throughout times of difficulty and attack. Prayer will always be an important defence in spiritual warfare, for ourselves and for each other. It allows us to communicate with our

King, who in turn comes to protect and deliver us:

'The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles.' Psalm 34:19.

Finally, we must remember that the armour is only powerful because it comes from God. In fact, it *is* God's power expressed as armour. The power comes from having God's spirit within us, as Paul says:

'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? ... the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.' 1 Corinthians 3:16-17.

'For God hath not given us the spirit of fear but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.' 2 Timothy 1:7.

'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' Galatians 2:20.

Christian Israelites seek to have God's spirit dwell within us (to be the life of our bodies), and when we do, it gives us the power we need to overcome Satan in all his forms and to say:

'Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.' 1 Corinthians 15:57.