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On September 11, 2001, most of us awoke, thankful to be blessed with another beautiful day. We most likely expected everything to be “blissfully routine” as we began our daily activities. Little did we know that al-Qaeda affiliated, Islamic terrorists were about to unleash their fury on American soil. Up to this point the terrorists were faraway fanatics that we may have read about or heard about on the evening news. These radicals were out of sight, they weren’t a threat to us personally and for the most part we ignored them; it just wasn’t our fight.

But beginning at 8:45AM America’s eyes were painfully opened with staggering loss of life and property.

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As Christians we too are engaged in a life and death struggle. Unfortunately many of us may not sense the true danger and like our nation, may be ill prepared to deal with Satan's onslaught. Ephesians 6:12 states, *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."* Like Islamic affiliated terrorism, the battle Paul describes seems far, far away. If we're not careful, we'll find ourselves ill prepared for our part in this very real spiritual battle.

The Revelation also seems to describe this spiritual battle as John discusses dragons, beasts, Babylon the great, the dwelling place of demons and unclean spirits, where nations drink of the wine of Babylon's immorality, etc. In the midst of this darkness, by faith we can be confident of the ultimate outcome of this great battle, however, until the final victory, we exist in this unseen, cataclysmic battle space of world forces of darkness and wickedness. Satan commands a vast, evil juggernaut arrayed against our Lord and us. It is imperative that we use the best intelligence to envision the battle raging around us and prepare. We must see ourselves, not as innocent bystanders, but as full fledged participants in this fight to the death! Our souls' eternal destiny is at stake!

Ephesians 6:13 takes this to the next

logical level with a call to action, *"Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm."* Of all the preparatory actions that armies must do, perhaps two of the more important are equipping and training. Individual soldiers must train and master the various components of their fighting repertoire. In the articles that follow, we'll address each piece of God's armor that He expects His soldiers to wear and master: girding up our loins with the belt of truth, putting on the breastplate of righteousness, having our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, taking up the shield of faith, putting on the helmet of salvation and wielding the sword of the Spirit.



Each of these elements of a soldier's armor are defensive, serving to protect. The sword of the Spirit is not only used to parry the thrusts of the enemy, but also offensively to take the fight to the enemy. All of these elements of armor work together in harmony to enhance our probability of success on the spiritual battlefield. Take away even one element of God's armor and we, and possibly an entire church, become vulnerable. All the elements of the full armor of God are vital to our success. Optimize each component; consider every detail.

Morale is also a vital factor of military might in all units and it's the same with God's army. Notice these powerful, motivating words of encouragement embedded in Ephesians 6:10-18: *"Be strong in the Lord."* (10); *"Be strong in the strength of His might."* (10); *"Stand firm against the schemes of the*

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devil.” (11); “take up the full armor of God that you may be able to resist.” (13); “Having done everything to stand firm.” (13); “Stand firm therefore.” (14); “That you may be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one.” (16); “Be on the alert.” (18). Our commander-in-chief knows He will be victorious; He urges each of us to take courage, stand with Him and fight to the finish.

Ephesians 6 primarily addresses the preparation of the individual soldier. However, individual soldiers are seldom employed by themselves. Solomon wrote, “. . . one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.” Eccl 4:12 Soldiers in the Lord’s army are rarely expected to fight alone either; our Lord is always with us. Commanders motivate individual soldiers by helping them envision their role in a great, noble cause and to understand that the fighting power of the collective army is infinitely greater than that of a single soldier. Note again Ephesians 6:10, “Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might.” The Holy Spirit seems to be rallying us with similar logic. Our Lord encourages us to rely on His strength and His might, not on our own. As Christian soldiers we are to trust our commander and fight to the death, if necessary, to execute His battle plan.

It has been said that sooner or later every believer discovers that the Christian life is a battleground, not a playground, and that we face an enemy who is much stronger than we are—apart from the Lord. “Who will follow Jesus, Standing for the right, Holding up His banner, In the thickest fight? List’ning for His orders, Ready to obey, Who will follow Jesus, Serving Him today?”

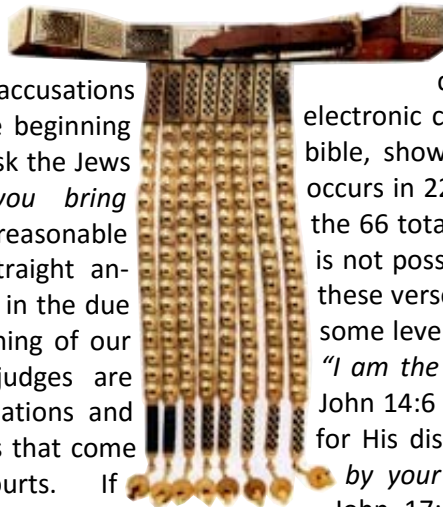
Girded with Truth

Ephriam Davis

The key word is **truth** as found in the subject matter of this article taken from Ephesians 6:14a. One has to seriously wonder and marvel why Pilate would ask Jesus the following profound question, “*What is truth?*” John 18:37-38 The historical context of this event as documented in John’s gospel account is the night before Jesus was crucified. Pilate, who was evidently the presiding judge of the Roman court, asked Jesus this question during His trial, in response to Jesus’ statement “*...I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to **truth**. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.*” When Pilate asked this question, was he genuinely interested in knowing **truth**, or was he only interested in an intellectually stimulating conversation? In **truth**, the wording in verse 38 is such that Pilate evidently did not even wait for Jesus to answer his question, but he instead went back out to speak to the Jews. This suggests that he meant it as a rhetorical question, for which he already had his own answer, and was just making point.

The attitude behind Pilate’s question is basically what one would expect from an agnostic. This is someone who believes that it is impossible to know what **truth** really is. It also suggests that there is no absolute **truth**, and that **truth** is only relative. One of the fundamental elements of basic logic is the fact that the words true and false have exactly opposite meanings. When one takes a class in school and expects to make a passing grade by taking a final exam containing

“true/false” questions, is it reasonable to expect that knowledge and understanding of the subject matter is required to pick the correct answers? How many possible correct answers will one have to a well worded “true/false” question? Pilate was unable to logically find any fault in Jesus because in **truth**, He stood trial based on false accusations and false charges. At the beginning of this trial, Pilate had to ask the Jews *“What accusation do you bring against this Man?”* A reasonable person would expect a straight answer. John 18:28-31 Even in the due process of the laws governing of our judicial system today, judges are made aware of the accusations and charges against defendants that come before their respective courts. If these Jews were of honest intent, one would think they could have come up with a specific legitimate accusation, but in **truth** they did not. (Heb 4:15) In this “kangaroo-court”, they implied that Jesus was an evildoer, based only on his arrest. Furthermore, they clearly had already reached a guilty verdict for crimes worthy of death, and expected Pilate to somehow reach that same judgment. Pilate asked Jesus if He was King of the Jews, but Jesus knew he could not have known that on his own. He was in **truth** King of the Jews, but only in the spiritual sense, rather than physical. Pilate still reached the right judgment based on the **truth** saying, *“I find no fault in Him at all.”* (John 18:33-38) However, the Jews still wanted to have Jesus crucified, and managed to manipulate the system to make a “trumped-up” charge



stick saying *“Jesus of Nazareth, King of The Jews.”* (John 19:14-15, 18-19)

Answering The Question, “What is Truth?”

So, if we are going to take the first step to stand in the spiritual war that is being discussed in Ephesians chapter 6, we need to answer Pilate’s question. The results of an electronic concordance search of the KJV bible, shows that the actual word **truth** occurs in 224 verses being found in 46 of the 66 total books of the bible. While it is not possible to cite and examine all of these verses, we will look at a few to get some level of understanding. Jesus said, *“I am the way, the **truth**, and the life.”* John 14:6 As Jesus prayed to the Father for His disciples he said, *“Sanctify them by your **truth**. Your word is **truth**.”* John 17:17 From a practical, logical application of these 2 verses, we can clearly see that Jesus = truth, God’s word = truth, and therefore we must also conclude that Jesus = word. To further solidify this, we recognize the bible as “its own best commentary.” While still staying in John’s account of the gospel, we note that: *“He was with God in the beginning, the Word was = God”* John 1:1-2; *the Word became flesh and the Word was full grace and **truth** which came through Jesus Christ.”* John 1:14, 17 Therefore, Jesus = **truth** = word = God, and even though we cannot find the actual word, **truth** explicitly written in all 66 books, the entire bible is the word, and it is all **truth**.

Absolute Biblical Authority

Jesus was recognized for his ability to

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teach and speak with authority. At the end of His famous Sermon-on-The-Mount, the following was said of Him, *“And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”* Mat 7:28-29 For additional bible self-commentary, please note, *“And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him--the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.”* John 12:47-49 We as Christians should regularly study and to rightly divide the word of **truth** (2 Tim 2:15), so that we can use as many opportunities as possible to *“give a defense of the hope that is within us.”* (1 Pet 3:15) We should be very careful to give book/chapter/verse references to substantiate biblical doctrine, rather saying things like: (a) I think that it does not matter...; (b) in my opinion it is okay to just...; (c) well the elders of my church said...; (d) my preacher said we don't need...; (e) that is just our church's tradition; or (f) my parents did it this way. *“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God...”* 1 Pet 4:11a

Reactions and Responses to Truth

As so well illustrated in Jesus' Parable of The Sower and Soils, reactions and responses to the seed that is sown is entirely dependent on the soil condition upon which it falls. (Luke 8:4-15) In this particular gospel ac-

count, Jesus clearly explains that the seed is the word of God (Luke 8:11), which of course would also be **truth**. Parables were one of Jesus' favorite teaching methods to help people understand **truth**, and even more importantly, respond positively to the **truth**. One definition describes a parable as a “realistic earthly story with a heavenly meaning.” The stories we based on familiar, common everyday events and scenarios that occurred in human society, and should not be confused with fables, like “The Three Little Pigs and The Big Bad Wolf” or “Peter Pan and The Lost Boys.”

Negative Reactions and Responses to Truth would all certainly be representative of the wayside, rocky, and thorny soils. The inspired writer Paul confronted these in several of his letters: *“...unrighteousness of men who suppress the **truth**...who exchanged the **truth** of God for the lie...”* (Rom 1:18, 25) *“Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the **truth**?”* Gal 4:16 *“For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the **truth**.”* 2 Tim 3:2-7

Positive Reactions and Responses to

Truth would be representative of the good soil and the people who heard **truth** and sought to embrace it. Some of these are illustrated in the wisdom of Solomon: *“Let not mercy and **truth** forsake you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart,”* Prov 3:2 *“Buy the **truth**, and do not sell it, Also wisdom and instruction and understanding.”* Prov 23:23 We can also find examples in the prayers of David: *“Lead me in Your **truth** and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day.”* Psa 25:5 *“You are near, O Lord, And all Your commandments are **truth**.”* Psa 119:151

On a final note, the phrase “Gird our Waist with Truth” brings to mind the idea of using **truth** to metaphorically create strong beams to support your waist as you take a stand. Just as in physical warfare, we need as much truthful accurate knowledge as possible to create an appropriate strategy to deal with our spiritual enemy. While there may be both defensive and offensive battles, sometimes this knowledge might even drive a strategy not to fight certain battles, where there might be a needless loss of life. (Luke 14:31) For example, in recent history, the US Armed forces were commanded to enter the second Persian Gulf War on the basis of information that Iraq had large stock piles of weapons of mass destruction. We later learned that information was false. We must actively obtain knowledge with proper understanding of **truth** and seek God’s wisdom to find the strategy to fight Satan.

Breastplate of Righteousness

Ron Gray

The breastplate is a valuable piece of armor to a soldier in battle, covering the front of his torso from the neck to the waist. It is made of metal or of thick leather and is designed to cover vital organs to protect the wearer from life threatening injury. The



breastplate is often replicated in a uniform style with a decoration or logo designating the allegiance of the wearer to a specific king, nation, or cause; the cause for which a soldier is willing to fight, even unto death, is literally upon his heart. Though it is designed to protect the soldier, the

breastplate is limited in coverage to allow freedom of movement during battle. It offers little or no protection to the soldier who has chosen to run from his enemy. He must stand firm. (Eph. 6:13). The breastplate, combined with the other pieces of armament mentioned, offers optimum efficiency when used in hand-to-hand combat.

This particular piece of the Gospel Armor is the Breastplate of Righteousness. It is spiritual armor that a servant of God may wear in defense against the powers of Satan. In Isaiah 59:17 we see a prophecy of God as *“he put on righteousness as a breastplate”* before he brought judgment according to their deeds with *“wrath to his adversaries”* and *“repayment to his enemies.”* Our God can wear righteousness as a breastplate, because he is righteous. Without righteousness, we

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are separated from God.

God is holy. (Psa 99:3,5,9; Jno 17:11; 1 Pet 1:15-16). Holiness is the state of being separate from all that is common or unclean. However, mankind is sinful, beginning with the first two people on earth. (Gen. 3) Every human being that has reached the age of accountability has sinned. (Rom. 3:23; Rom. 5:12). Our *sin* separates us from a Holy God. That separation comes about, not because God has no love for us, but because God cannot tolerate sin. (Hab. 1:13; Psa. 5:4-5) He does not turn his back on us willingly; our *"iniquities have made a separation"* and our *"sins have hidden his face"* from us. Isa. 59:1-2

As sinful creatures, we find ourselves in a helpless state. Having separated ourselves from the Source of life by the things that we have done, we find that we cannot fix the situation on our own. We cannot simply fill in the sinful hole, that we have dug, with good deeds in an attempt to equalize the scales of justice. Isaiah sums this up saying, *"We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment ("filthy rags" –NKJV). We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away."* Isa. 64:6

We cannot make ourselves good enough for God. (Rom. 3:10-12; Psa. 53:1-3) God's ways are not man's ways and man's standards are not God's standards. We cannot build our own breastplate of righteousness. God provides the breastplate of righteousness that he wants us to wear. Jesus gave himself as a sacrifice for our sins. He made it possible for all men – even those who participated in his unlawful execution

(Acts 2). – to obtain forgiveness and salvation, and to share in the righteousness of the Savior, our *"Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous."* 1 Jno 2

Even though man is a sinful being, he has a longing for something better, purer, more noble. When that desire for life on a higher plane intensifies, becoming a hunger and thirst for righteousness, Jesus says that desire *can* be satisfied. (Mat 5:6) The dream can become a reality.

The road that leads man away from sin and hopelessness, and toward the light of righteousness, begins in the Gospel (the "Good News") of Jesus. In the book of Romans, we find these words: *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'" Rom. 1:16-17*

Our faith in Christ and knowledge gained from his word bring on a new attitude concerning the "things" of this life and their true value. The apostle Paul tells us in a beautiful passage from the book of Philippians about the position of prominence he once held and how the pursuit of righteousness changed his set of values. *"Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ... because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own... but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on*

faith – that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death...” Phl 3:7-10

I wonder if we as Christians can realize the “surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus.” Perhaps there is nothing with which to compare the value of the purchase of eternal life that Jesus made for anyone who is willing to accept it on his terms. Paul tells us that everything else that he valued in his life, compared to knowing Christ, was just rubbish, trash, refuse, dung.

This pursuit of righteousness leads us farther along: faith began to grow and continues to flourish, repentance caused us to turn our hearts away from the vanity and emptiness of worldly things; but we are never finished with repentance as long as we live in this world. We have believed with our hearts and confessed Jesus, our Lord and Savior, as the Son of God (Rom. 10:10), but we will never stop confessing our belief in him as we look to him for an eternal home.

Living in this world, we quickly realize that we are not isolated. No Christian *“lives to himself and none of us dies to himself.”* Rom 14:7 Whatever we do, God sees, our brothers and sisters in Christ see, and everyone who encounters us sees. Just what is it that they are seeing? Am I the living definition of a hypocrite? Am I the *“double-minded man, unstable in all his ways?”* Jas 1:8 Or do I strive to shake off the habitual sins that have lurked in the dark alleyways of my soul, truly pursuing righteousness?

“So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace along

with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.” 2 Tim. 2:22

Yes, when you choose the life of a Christian, many eyes are upon you. Some are wondering how you manage to be so calm and determined in a turbulent and chaotic world. Others seek to mock you for being transformed for Christ rather than being conformed to this world as they are. (Rom 12:2) They long to see you fall; seeking solace in the notion that no one can live up to the life that Christ demands. But, all of those who see you, whatever their motives, cannot help but see the one to whom you belong: *“By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil; whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.” 1 Jno 3:10*

Once we have obeyed the Gospel and put on Christ in baptism (Gal. 3:26-27), we must go out and *“fight the good fight of the faith,” as Paul told Timothy, and to “take hold of eternal life.” 1 Tim. 6:12* This is not a physical battle though it is fought here on earth; *“For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.” 2 Cor. 10:3-4* This is a lifetime of spiritual warfare against sin and Satan. Preparing to go to war requires the proper equipment to insure a victory against a foe that is skilled in warfare. The Breastplate of Righteousness is essential to protect our hearts from ever straying away from the goal and from our Lord who gave himself upon the cross to guarantee our victory over sin and death and to guarantee a peace that will continue throughout all eternity.

The Armor of God

Therefore put on the full armor 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. Ephesians 6:13

Based on Ephesians 6:13-17



Z	N	B	Y	Y	D	L	A	A	S	E	Y	G	Y	I
B	G	Z	N	R	S	Y	F	H	P	H	V	D	O	R
J	B	N	O	W	B	M	F	B	W	E	I	I	Y	D
U	O	W	D	Y	H	U	H	U	P	A	A	E	L	J
X	S	P	M	E	F	E	E	T	L	M	I	C	L	B
S	T	A	N	D	V	G	L	H	W	L	X	S	E	D
S	U	K	M	P	J	A	M	R	F	Y	V	N	T	D
A	D	B	U	C	K	L	E	D	L	Q	C	N	G	Q
L	N	M	N	N	H	A	T	M	A	E	Y	S	O	A
V	D	U	D	B	W	H	J	T	M	J	E	Y	S	A
A	I	O	T	X	E	W	F	F	I	D	S	M	P	R
T	P	Y	W	P	R	L	M	A	N	L	U	Q	E	R
I	K	A	R	M	O	R	T	I	G	J	D	P	L	O
O	U	P	B	R	E	A	S	T	P	L	A	T	E	W
N	N	S	P	I	R	I	T	H	M	C	T	U	J	S

HELMET	ARMOR	SPIRIT	SWORD	STAND
WAIST	SALVATION	BELT	FEET	FAITH
FULL	GOD	EVIL	FLAMING	PEACE
GOSPEL	BREASTPLATE	SHIELD	BUCKLED	ARROWS

Feet Shod With the Gospel of Peace

Russ Ward

People familiar with the Military would fully comprehend why footwear would be an important piece of armor and worthy of mention. An interesting aspect is that we are to be peace loving people girded up for war, which if not read closely would lead someone to an incorrect conclusion. We are a people set to do battle but not with mankind rather with sin and all that it represents. We wage a war not of our choosing but one that is thrust upon us because of our allegiance with Christ. *"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]."* Eph 6:12 Paul in Ephesians talks about the armor of God from the standpoint of preparation when the evil one comes so that we may be able to stand fast. I would like to challenge us today with some additional thoughts regarding his message. The armor we have for our protection is what we wear out into the world. It is what aides us in taking a stand against sin while we engage in reflecting the light of Christ in our lives. In truth this armor is not what should be seen from the outside rather it should be the hidden aspects we incorporate while the radiance of the Gospel of

peace is shown forth. Having our feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace is accompanied with the understanding that we have to live in the world created by God and corrupted by man, a world that in some respects has turned its back on God and yet we have to wade out amongst all that lies in wait. Understanding the actual design and use of the roman military sandal (caligae) may aide us in how we view our walk of faith.



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Footwear played a major role in the development of the Roman Civilization. Better shod armies travelled further across rougher terrain. The Roman Empire stretched far beyond Mediterranean boundaries and the terrain and weather conditions necessitated more sturdy footwear. During the Republic (*circa 509 BCE – 43AD*), the pragmatic Roman army devised sturdy thongs and soles suitable for military activities. The Etruscans (*Native people of Asia Minor*) had developed brass tacks and the Romans adapted these to hobnailed footwear suitable for foot soldiers required to march on hard and rough terrain. The shoe tack turned the humble sandal into militarized hob nailed sandals ideal for protection and traction; optimized to grip for the marching soldier and combatant.

Soldiers up to the rank of centurion wore caligae (*The military sandal*). These came in several types i.e. scouts wore speculator; horsemen were shod with equestris; and fighting men wore clavata with iron nails protruding underneath for greater traction on rugged ground. Caligae were sturdy, thick-soled sandals with an upper that reached the instep. A lattice of soft, leather strips was tied around the shins or the bridge of the foot by a tongue. The toes were left bare until the late 1st century into the 2nd century. The class of caligae known as clavata is more than likely the image or picture that was intended when Paul spoke of the whole armor of God. (Eph 6:10-18)

The Roman army was efficient in every aspect of its design from their helmet to their feet. The fighting patterns utilized by

the army were very much dependent upon the design of the selected soldiers and in selected places in their military formations. Any chink in the formation would compromise the viability and formidability of the unit. The sandals worn by the foot soldiers were designed for comfort and support, traction, and destruction.

Comfort & Support - The sandals were designed to provide arch and heel support uniformly through the sole allowing the sandals to be worn for long and often heavy marches. The structure of the sandal was heavy to withstand the large amount of travel that took place on campaigns and from campaign to campaign. Front-line soldiers were issued 2-3 pair of sandals in the course of a campaign year and often time the cost of those after the initial pair was taken from their pay. They often had two sets of sandals at one time, one for quick travel and the other for staged battles

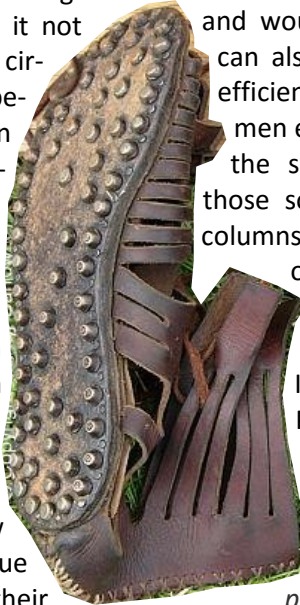
There is nothing like an old pair of shoes is there. You know what I'm talking about, ones that have conformed to you foot structure that say aaahh when you slide them on. My parents spent more on boots for me growing up simply because new soles were a third the cost of shoes and yet every time those boots came back home they never changed, never forgetting my arch or stubby little toes. The gospel of peace should be like that feeling. To have and understand the satisfaction that comes from spiritual peace should feel just like slipping on a pair of custom made boots, a feeling that envelops you; providing support and comfort, allowing you to walk to and fro, hither and yonder, in work or play, leaving you never ever

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to feel weary or worn.

Traction- The lighter military sandal had heavier straps and ties for long forced marches or regular travel. These sandals were designed with grooves or ribs for light traction in case of surprise attacks or in the event of foul weather such as rain, sleet, or snow. The knobbed sandals as they are often called were fitted with different types of traction points. The military sandal may just be the precursor to the exchangeable football cleats we see today. There were three types of traction points, hob nails, brass tacks (*short pointed spikes*), and Iron Spikes (*for extreme weather or fluctuating up and down hill terrain*).

The versatility of the gospel falls right in line with this idea of traction. Is it not amazing how the gospel fits all circumstances in life? The gospel becomes that everyday companion and just like an old friend it becomes a part of how we think, how we talk, and how we live. It keeps us from losing our step and stumbling from the paths we have selected. (**Jeremiah 6:16**) Then comes those times of stress when we begin to slip into our baser nature that is just waiting to come out in frustration, anger, discontent, etc.. We all know these pesky personal flaws unique to each of us. When they rear their ugly little heads out comes the brass tacks where wading through these dips is simply an effort in willing ourselves to move forward. The iron spikes, now these are for those really rough stretches in life when we



become disheartened, when we are susceptible to questioning our faith and God's providence and care. That is when we need supreme traction so that we don't falter and fall rather digging in deep, remembering the hope that lies within us, the confidence that with God's help we are more than conquerors. Romans 8:37

Destruction- As the column would move forward during a military engagement the men up front would form a shield wall; the second layer would interlock their shields on top of the front line shields while using their short spears (javelins) to thrust at the enemy. As the soldiers moved forward you can picture how the column in an effort to maintain its formation would simply trample the fallen and wounded foes in front of them. You can also imagine in your mind's eye the efficient destruction this group of fighting men enacted with their spiked shoes and the secondary thrust of javelins from those soldiers in the rear. Roman battle columns would bowl over the shield walls of their enemies and caused more destruction by simply trampling their enemy underfoot.

It is difficult to picture the Gospel of Peace as a means of destruction and yet I am reminded of Paul's words to the Roman Christians. *"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Rom 8:38-39 We sometimes forget our place, that the battle

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belongs to the Lord and we are simply required to stand firm in the Faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Isaiah 54:17) There are times when we forget that the armor of the Roman foot soldier was only viable when used in conjunction with other soldiers. If we go back to the example above and picture a full armored soldier standing ground alone and then in conjunction with a trained, highly skilled, and highly motivated force of many hundred of similar clad soldiers we begin to picture what Paul intended. A cohesive group with locked shields, those bearing the load of the battle in front surrounded and supported on either side and in back. Locked in one single goal, that sin may no more have rein over us (Romans 6:12), each one shod with steel spikes dug in so deep that together there is no moving back there is only this tremendous and steady push forward. I daresay that more walls have been torn down, more barriers breached, more battles won through the simplicity of the gospel represented in either word or deed than in all of the efforts of man combined.

My wife has a favorite song that comes to mind as I write these words in closing. I believe in a sense it embodies these thoughts of being shod with the Gospel of Peace. *"Oh may all who come behind us find us faithful, may the fire of our devotion light their way, may the footprints that we leave, lead them to believe and the lives we live inspire them to obey, oh may all who come behind us find us faithful."*

The Shield of Faith

Steven D. Baxley

The primary text with which this publication is concerned is found in Ephesians 6, where the "whole armor" of God is described and discussed. Included in that armor is the "shield of faith." This is a vivid description that helps the disciple of Christ understand better the role that faith plays in his life as a Christian.



The word translated "shield" in Ephesians 6:16 is an interesting word. The original word is the Greek word *thyreos*, and appears

only here in the New Testament. However, the word does appear outside of the New Testament. It originally referred to a large stone put against a door in order to keep it shut. From this meaning, it came to refer to an oblong shield that had the same shape as a door. The word came to be used in Greek to refer to the Roman shield known in Latin as the *scutum* (information from the Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek Lexicon).

The Roman army of the 1st century used various forms of shields, depending upon the type of unit involved. However, the most iconic shield used by the Romans Legions of this period was the rectangular, semi-cylindrical *scutum*. This type of shield had several very important advantages. First, in spite of its size, it was light enough to be

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held by one hand, allowing the soldier to hold his weapon (sword, spear, etc.) in his other hand. The shield was also large enough to virtually cover the soldier's entire body. This was important, since Roman armor was not all-covering, and the shield would provide not only a first line of defense for those parts of the body already shielded (head, chest, etc.) but also the only line of defense for those parts of the body not otherwise protected. In addition to the *scutum* providing protection to the individual soldier, it was also an important element for the entire unit in battle formation. The shields could be overlapped with each other, to provide protection for the entire line. The Roman Legion also made use of a formation called the *testudo* (the Latin word for tortoise). This formation gave protection from above, as in when the unit was attacking a wall, from which missiles, rocks, etc. were being thrown down onto them. In short, the *scutum* was a vital piece of military equipment, without which no sensible legionnaire would want to be without.

Paul uses this kind of shield as an effective illustration of the important role that faith plays in the life of the Christian.

Faith is defined in Hebrews 11:1: *"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."* Faith is the assurance of things that are expected, things that are hoped for, but not yet seen. It is the conviction that things which are not seen are nonetheless true and real. Paul expresses

this idea in 2 Corinthians 5:6-7: *"So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith not by sight."* The Christian maintains his courage, knowing that even though we are not with the Lord, we look forward to the assurance of being with him. It is by faith, not sight that the Christian lives. In Romans 8:24, Paul expresses this thought again: *"For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?"* Faith is confident in the unseen. Faith looks to the future with assurance.



A few verses later in Hebrews 11, the author writes that *"... without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."* (verse 6).

Two fundamental aspects of God's nature come through in this verse: God exists, and he is active. Biblical faith isn't that there's something or someone "out there," but rather that someone (God) is active in his relationship with the one who seeks him. Those who would please God must seek to make that relationship two-sided.

Where does this faith come from? How is it that we can have assurance in something that we haven't yet seen? Romans 10:17 answers this question: *"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."* Faith comes about through the hearing of God's revealed Word. Faith is not

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blind, although it is hope in the “unseen.” Rather, faith is based on evidence. In Jesus’ interaction with Thomas after the resurrection, this becomes clear. Thomas had refused to believe in Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, unless he could see and touch him himself. When Jesus appears again, and this time Thomas is present, Thomas proclaims his faith: *“My lord and my God!”* John 20:28 Jesus responds to Thomas: *“Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”* (verse 29) John then states how it is that men who have not seen Jesus can believe: *“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”* John 20:30-31

In discussing faith, it is important to remember the vital role that faith plays in man’s salvation. This is already understood from Hebrews 11:6, but it is more explicitly stated elsewhere in God’s Word. For example, Romans 5:1 states *“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* There is a progression of ideas here in this passage. Through Jesus Christ, we are justified by our faith in him. The result of this faith is that peace is restored between the rebellious (now-forgiven) sinner and the God of the Universe. Colossians 1:21-23 elaborates on this idea, with an emphasis not only on our former hostility to God, but also on the work that Jesus performed in order to save mankind by dying on the cross: *“And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now recon-*

ciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard....”

To return to the idea contained in Ephesians 6:16: faith functions as the Christian’s shield. The shield is the first line of defense in the soldier’s armor. Every other piece of armor serves to deflect those weapons that get past the shield. Faith, this *“assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen,”* stands between the Christian and the *“flaming darts of the evil one.”* Eph 6:16 When Satan attacks the Christian with doubt (*“is there really a God?”*, *“where is God when you hurt?”*, *“Is Jesus really the Savior?”*) the shield of faith deflects those darts. When Satan attacks the Christian with fear (*“there’s no one to help you, and you can’t do it alone”*), it is faith that turns those attacks away. As David wrote: *“When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?”* Psa 56:3-4 When Satan attacks the Christian with temptation to sin, faith turns aside his arrows.

We as Christians need to recognize just how important and vital our faith is. Without this shield, we are exposed to Satan’s attacks. Faith must be established, and then built up and nurtured. Faith is not static, but must grow stronger as we grow in Christ. As the father of the demon-possessed boy said to Jesus: *“I believe; help my unbelief!”* Mark 9:24 The apostles made a similar request in Luke 17:5: *“Increase our faith!”* Let us seek every opportunity to increase the level and strength of our faith.

The Helmet of Salvation

Jon Hall

The Helmet is a common piece of protective equipment found in a variety of life activities. The purpose of a helmet is also well understood to be that which protects the head itself, and the brain inside, from trauma caused by a violent external impact. A football player never takes the field without strapping on a helmet. A motorcyclist, who is wise, will always put on a helmet before taking to the road. And a soldier would never enter a field of battle without having his helmet securely fastened. In life we understand the value of the protection the helmet affords us when engaging in activities that could cause harm to the head. In like manner, Christians must understand the value of the spiritual protection offered by the armor of God. Specifically discussed in this article, the Christian shouldn't engage in spiritual life without having one of the most important articles of armor properly attached. That is the "helmet of salvation." Ephesians 6:11 tells us to, *"Put on the whole armor of God,"* and we find in verse 17 that the helmet of salvation is a piece of this armor - *"And take the helmet of salvation."*

Unlike the physical activities listed in the above paragraph, which someone might engage in from time to time, the spiritual life of a Christian is continuous. Where one might

take off and put on a motorcycle helmet or football helmet at certain times, our spiritual helmet must never be removed, for we do not engage in a spiritual life only on Sunday or only when the sun is shining and the weather is nice. As a true Christian, our spiritual life, and therefore our spiritual battle, is ongoing and continuous. Because of this fact, we must never fail to wear our spiritual helmet.

We put ourselves at significant risk if we are not continually wearing the "helmet of salvation." 1

Peter 5:8 tells us that Satan is like a roaring lion, "SEEKING" whom he may devour. Satan doesn't take the weekends off, he is always looking to defeat us, and as wise Christians, we must ensure that we have our helmet on; always ready for the spiritual battle.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:8, Paul provides additional clarification regarding the helmet the Christian is to wear when he refers to it as *"the hope of Salvation."* This isn't a contradiction to his teaching in the book of Ephesians.

James tells us in Chapter 5:19-20 that a brother could wander from the truth and that if we help guide them back from error, or sin, then we save a soul from death. This helps us to understand that it's not the salvation itself that is the protection, but instead, it is the knowledge and assurance of our Salvation that provides the needed protection. This is stated more clearly in 1 Thessalonians and we therefore understand that it is also



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implied in the book of Ephesians. It is important also to understand the true definition of the word "hope" as used in the phrase "the hope of Salvation." Notice earlier where I stated that it is the knowledge and assurance of our Salvation that provides the protection. The definition of the word "hope" carries with it two concepts. The first is "desire" and this is what we often associate with the word "hope". However the second idea found in this word is "expectation." Therefore, the "hope of Salvation" that we have is both the desire and expectation of Salvation. Hebrews 4:16 says; *"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."* Christians can come boldly and have an expectation, or assurance, of Salvation because of what Christ has done in giving himself to be the perfect sacrifice. This knowledge and assurance is the spiritual helmet that provides vital protection for the mind of the Christian when worn and applied correctly and continually.

How exactly does the "hope of Salvation" provide protection for the Christian? Let's look at 4 practical ways to apply this concept to our Christian Lives. Before we start, first let's be sure we understand what it means to "wear" the helmet of Salvation. When the Christian is wearing the helmet of Salvation, we will be mindful and always cognizant that we have the assurance of a home in Heaven when this life is over, no matter how challenging this life may become. With this in mind, we see first that the "hope of Salvation" guides, or directs, our thoughts. When we continually reflect upon the Salvation we have through Christ,

it ensures that we're able to follow Paul's directions found in Philippians 4:8, where he says; *"Finally brethren, whatever things are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of a good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praise worthy, meditate on these things."* Paul tells the Christians in Philippi to FILL their minds with that which is good. The "hope of Salvation" obviously fits this category, and when our minds are completely filled up with righteous thoughts then there isn't room for anything else. This leads to the second application, and that is the fact that the "hope of Salvation" prevents us from sinning. This is because sin begins with a thought. No matter how quickly we act, we thought about it first. You may hear someone use the excuse that they did something wrong because they weren't thinking. That's not true. The more accurate reason is they weren't thinking correctly. When our mind is continually protected with the knowledge of the "hope of Salvation" we'll always be thinking correctly and therefore avoid sin. Third, the "hope of Salvation" protects us by providing comfort and assurance in difficult and challenging times; even when we may be struggling to understand why things are happening the way they are. One thing about people is that we always want to know why. In Psalm 13, David, writing during a time of suffering, states in verse 5; *"But I have trusted in your mercy, my heart shall rejoice in your salvation."* We may not be perfect at remembering this "hope of Salvation" in every circumstance, however, if we can lean on this assurance, we'll find great consolation even

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when going through some of the most challenging moments of life. Finally, wearing the helmet of the "hope of Salvation" will help us to eliminate fear from our lives. Fear of failure and fear of the unknown prevents far too many from being the people God has called us to be. Psalm 27:1 states; *"The Lord is my light and my Salvation: whom shall I fear. The Lord is the strength of my life: of whom shall I be afraid."* The rest of this Psalm continues to build on this idea. The Christian who truly has the "hope of Salvation" as their helmet will not fear the enemy; will not fear Satan; will not fear death; and will not fear the unknown. Instead we will approach the throne of God with confidence and will live a life of service to Him.

Unfortunately, there have been far too many who choose to live without the benefit of the protection offered by the "hope of Salvation." Even as Christians, I fear we often lay the helmet aside just when we should be tightening the strap to be sure it is securely in place. When a professional football player takes his helmet off on the field of play, his team is penalized. If a soldier is caught on the field of battle without a helmet, they will likely get some strong encouragement from their commanding officer to correct the situation and may even be disciplined. If a motorcycle rider chooses not to wear a helmet in a State where it is required by law, they will likely be pulled over and given a ticket. In all of these cases, there may also be more severe consequences. The football player hit by another player while not wearing a helmet may be severely injured. The soldier may be killed in battle, and the motorcyclist risks the same fate if involved in an

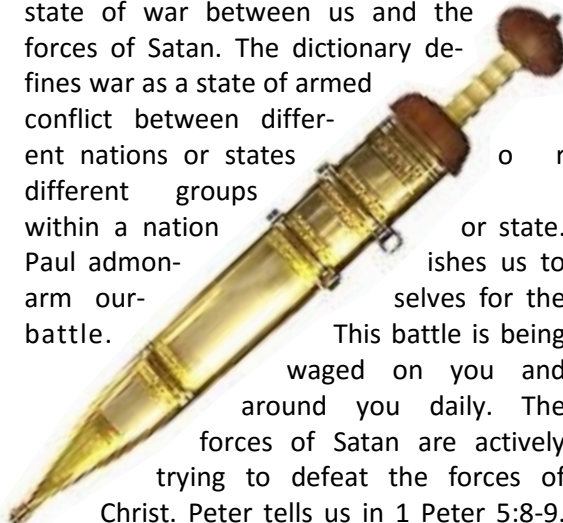
accident. For the Christian, however, we risk something far greater. That is our eternal soul. When we choose not to use the protection offered by the "hope of Salvation", we're likely to allow our thoughts to be something other than pure and holy; we're likely to give in to the sin that we're now thinking about; we're likely to give up in the face of trials and tribulations; and we're likely to allow ourselves to be overcome by fear.

God has provided us with everything we need to be confident of our eternal salvation. Let us be sure to always have our helmet of Salvation firmly attached so that we might always benefit from the protection it is able to provide.

The Sword of the Spirit

David Parks

Paul describes to us in Ephesians 6 a state of war between us and the forces of Satan. The dictionary defines war as a state of armed conflict between different nations or states or different groups within a nation or state. Paul admonishes us to arm ourselves for the battle. This battle is being waged on you and around you daily. The forces of Satan are actively trying to defeat the forces of Christ. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 5:8-9.



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“Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.” We are the armed resistance against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

In Ephesians 6 most of the Paul’s description of the Christian soldier is about what he will use to protect himself from the enemy. That is for good reason as the enemy very much wants to kill you and will if you let your guard down. However Christ calls us to vanquish the enemy, not just defend ourselves. The weapon he gives us is the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. That is all well and good to say but how does this work? It’s about **truth**. Jesus made this clear in John 14: 15-17. *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the **Spirit of truth**, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”* The Holy Spirit reviled the truth to the apostles and they wrote it down for us. We know this from John 16: 13. *“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.”* And again in John 17: 17 Jesus prayed, *“Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.”* So we see the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God is simply the truth revealed by the Spirit to mankind.

We are called to tell men everywhere simply the truth. The truth is, they have sinned and separated themselves from God. And salvation is in no other name than the name of Jesus. John 16: 7-11: *“Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”* This is the battle we fight. We are to tell the world the truth about sin, righteousness and judgment.

Let’s look at sin. The Word reveals to us that we have sinned. Many people are quite comfortable in their ignorance of God’s word. The Word has the power to convict them of sin and their lost state before God. Hebrews 4: 12-13 *“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”* This is the first step in coming to Christ, being left naked and exposed before God. No one can read or hear God’s word and not be convicted of one’s own sin. Even the righteous let alone the alien sinner all find themselves falling short of the Glory of God. This caused Paul to say the following in Romans

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7: 24-25, *"Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin."* This is the essence of using the sword of the Spirit. That is to defeat Satan's grip on the world by bringing men everywhere to knowledge of their sins. Those with honest hearts will fall to their knees confessing the name of Jesus and be baptized for the remission of their sins before it is too late.

Let us move on to righteousness. Truth is not just about what not to do it is about what to do. The word reveals a new way. This way is different than the way of the world. It is a way of love for your brother and mankind. The truth is about righteous living. James 1:27 describes this, *"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world."* James tells us that righteous living involves not just our heart but how we express love with our actions. The greatest love we can have for someone is to tell them the truth about the gospel and how it applies to them and their state. It's not always easy to tell someone they are lost and in their sins but that is how the sword was meant to be used.

Lastly let's move on to Judgment. Talking about judgment is not as popular as it once was. I have heard people talk about a fire and brim stone preacher as a negative. The truth is there is a hell and most people are going there. You can be convicted of a crime if you know someone is about to be

killed and do nothing about it. It is no less an injustice when it comes to their immortal soul. Revelation 20: 11-15 *"Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."* Most people come to the Lord when the Spirit convicts them of their sin and the judgment that is coming as a result of their sin. It is only when one realizes the truth of the judgment to come can he fully appreciate the love Christ showed toward him on the cross.

In closing a sword that stays in the scabbard is not of much use. It is when we use a sword and practice with it we become good at using it. Christ has called you to arms to do battle with the forces of evil. He expects us to defeat Satan by using our swords to convict men everywhere of sin, righteousness and judgment.

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