

Dress for Battle

Live Like a Christian

From the opening pages of the Gospels to the book of Revelation, there are many times when it appears that the forces of evil will overcome the Son of God. But in all seeming defeats, Christ emerges victorious. From the cross and the tomb, Jesus Christ rose victorious. As persecutions came upon the early church, it survived, grew, and stands even today. Paul put Christians in prison so the Jews could execute them as the Roman Governor turned his back on Roman Law. Then Paul himself, after seeing Jesus and following Him faithfully, was imprisoned in Rome. From his prison cell, Paul wrote, *"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me"* (Philippians 4:13). Could Paul really do anything he wanted to do?

The Apostle referred to **all things which Christ wanted him to do**. Paul had learned that when the Lord commands, He also enables and provides everything needed. God never called on a faithful servant to accomplish anything without giving the necessary capabilities and supporting grace. In writing to Timothy, Paul mentions, *"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me"* (1 Timothy 1:12). Then in verse (18) requests Timothy to *"fight the good fight."* Timothy was well aware of the continual fight that is ongoing for the eternal spirits of people. *"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"* (Ephesians 6:12). Since Christ has placed His followers in this battle, He also gave us equipment for defense and attack.

Paul tells the Ephesians, *"Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil"* (Ephesians 6:10-11). *"Stand firm 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; in addition to all, taking up THE SHIELD OF FAITH with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, which is the Word of God. With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints"* (Ephesians 6:14-18).

Girded, or belted together, with the truth. Jesus defined truth as God's Word (John 17:17). That truth will protect the spirit's vitals when absorbed and applied correctly, as a breastplate protects a soldier's vital organs. By knowing and understanding God's Word, all the lies and deceptions of Satan and his servants can be deflected and ignored. An error will not harm the individual securely bound by The Truth.

Having your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Jesus commanded His followers, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit"* (Matthew 28:19). Without adequate preparation in The Truth contained in the Gospel of Christ, going to make disciples of the nations' peoples will do as much good as a workman with no tools. **The Gospel is the Christian's tool bag.**

Take up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. The shield used by a military fighter is to stop the projectiles from penetrating the body. Shields could be locked together for the Roman soldier to form a complete covering they called the

Turtle. This Turtle allowed them to advance into enemy territory. Our Faith allows us to press on, toward our goal of eternal life, through all of Satan's opposition. Together, the followers of Christ watch out for and protect each other in the fight.

The helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Jesus confronted all adversaries sent against Him. Jesus knew His Father and the plan of salvation when He faced the Roman Governor who turned Him over to the executioners. Jesus went to the cross, knowing it was the only way to save a sinful population. He has given us that same knowledge to be believed and used to cover and encourage our eternal spirit. With all the world against His children, *"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?"* (Romans 8:31).

The only weapon given for attack is the Sword of the Spirit, The Word of God, the Bible. The Word preached on Pentecost was all that was needed to convert over 3000 into Followers of Christ. A few days later, Luke relates, *"The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith"* (Acts 6:7).

Are we ready, clothed with God's armor, and prepared with the Gospel, to go forth as soldiers to spread the Word of God to others?