

The LORD Is a Man of War

by Jeremy James



If there is a single characteristic which typifies the church today, an attribute which might be summed up in one word, I would say it is *timidity*.

No matter where we look, we seem to find it. Not mere smatterings of timidity, but a great swathe, like a fall of snow, covering everything.

It is the rarest of rare things to hear a Christian anywhere say, with any conviction, “This is wrong!” In a church which has elevated timidity to a mark of distinction, few would dream of using these or similar words.

At a time when language is being turned upside to mean whatever the media decides it should mean, the word timidity is now somehow synonymous with peace-loving and non-threatening, tolerant and inclusive. These are such sweet-sounding words, aren't they? Our pastors and leaders use them often and with evident satisfaction, as though they signified something transparently Scriptural – but they don't.

Writing in 1977 D.M. Lloyd-Jones, the Welsh Presbyterian theologian asked, “Is there anything for which you are prepared to ‘stand’? [meaning defend]. I do not apologize for putting such questions. It seems to me that people are ready today to compromise on everything.” [*The Christian Soldier*, p.276]

He was taking his cue from Ephesians 6:14 which exhorts every believer to put on his armor and stand. But if we don't know what it means to 'stand', then we are not very likely to put on our armor!

There would seem to be a paradox here: As Christians we hate war, but as Christians we are obliged to fight a war. There is no real contradiction here provided we understand that the war is fought only against demonic opposition and the fight is largely a refusal to give ground. If we can see this, then we know what it means to stand!



In Exodus 15:3 we are told that “**The LORD is a man of war:**” As such He is the one who wins the war on our behalf. We are the ones who stand; we are the ones who refuse to give ground; and He is the One who defeats the Enemy. But if we don't stand and hold our ground, then He is not likely to act.

As pastor Lloyd-Jones knew all too well, we have today a church that cannot and will not stand. As a result it has no way to defend itself. Rather than admit to this, its leaders pretend instead that the Enemy does not exist! This is pathetic, of course, but for leaders whose most distinctive attribute is their shared timidity, this is not at all surprising.

Crossing the Jordan

We are taught about the armor of God in the book of Ephesians, an epistle which corresponds in many ways to the book of Joshua in the Old Testament.

The latter is often misunderstood. When the Israelites crossed the Jordan and entered the Promised Land their labors did not cease. There was still much to be done. In fact, the real work was only beginning.

Christians for generations have used “crossing the Jordan” as a metaphor for entry into heaven, but this is somewhat misleading. The term should really refer to the salvation that we find in Christ, when we are born again and cross from death to life. Spiritually speaking, this is when we enter into our rest, even though our real work, our service to God, is only beginning and our final rest will come only when we leave this world.

The rulers of the darkness of this world have set in place a system that keeps mankind in bondage. This system – the Satanic world system – has been tested and refined over millennia so that today it operates like a great set of interlocking wheels, quietly grinding down any residual resistance to the Enemy and his incorrigible will.



The river Jordan today.

Christ has freed the believer from the grip of this mill. Satan no longer has any hold over him. But we err greatly if we imagine that we are no longer in the line of fire! While Satan knows he will never regain the believer, he tracks him more intently than ever before. The millions who are trapped in the Satanic world system are unable to oppose his plans, but a handful of believers, who are obedient to Christ, can appeal to their heavenly Father and He will hear their request.

Demonic depravity

When they crossed the Jordan, the Israelites had to conquer and destroy the resident pagan nations. These people were Satanists, sworn servants of perversion and corruption, practitioners of depravities too vile to describe. There are many today who would argue that the Israelites carried out genocide when they destroyed these nations, but they are ignoring reality.

These nations had been put there by Satan to frustrate the promise which God made to Abraham. Their iniquity increased over several generations, to the point where their destruction was inevitable. The Word of God tells us that, while our heavenly Father used the Israelites as His instruments for this purpose, it was He who destroyed them. For example, at the great battle of Gibeon, He stopped the sun in the sky so that Joshua and his army could carry out their work, and He sent massive hailstones on the thousands who fled the field of battle so that “**they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.**” (Joshua 10:11)

The battle belongs to God! It was true when Joshua crossed the Jordan, and it is still true today. Every born-again believer has crossed the Jordan and must do as the Israelites did – circumcise his heart, put on his armor, and stand!

The Israelites circumcised their flesh at Gilgal, as soon as they crossed the Jordan, but the Christian circumcises his *heart*. Why? Because “**we wrestle not against flesh and blood**” but against the demonic powers that govern this world.

The Complete Armor

Chapter 6 of Ephesians tells us what we must do to protect ourselves from these powers. The armour of God prescribed for this purpose comprises the following items: (1) the belt of truth; (2) the breastplate of righteousness; (3) the footwear of the gospel of peace; (4) the helmet of salvation; (5) the shield of faith; and (6) the sword of the Word of God.



It is truly a great tragedy in the modern church that the armor of God is largely forgotten, and on those rare occasions where its value is acknowledged its true purpose – when enumerated item by item – is often misunderstood. For the sake of brevity, we will concentrate mainly on the errors made in relation to each piece of armor.

The *balteus* of truth

The first is the belt of truth: “**Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth**” (Ephesians 6:14)

The apostle is referring to the belt that a Roman soldier wore. All six items, in fact, are connected with the military gear worn by a Roman legionnaire, a sight which everyone at that time would have been familiar with.

Jesus said “**And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain [two].**” (Matthew 5:41). He was alluding to the requirement at that time that a civilian carry the pack of a Roman soldier to the next milestone if asked to do so. The pack contained enough grain for 15 days, a pick or axe, cooking utensils, and stakes for making a camp. Our Lord could use an illustration like this without further explanation since everyone knew he was speaking about the Roman military. Paul likewise makes use of military images to illustrate certain spiritual principles.

The verb “***girt about***” is indicative of a girdle, an object more substantial than the item we know today as a belt. Paul was referring to the ***balteus*** worn by a Roman soldier. The photo below shows a typical *balteus*, a thick leather belt with heavy protective thongs hanging down the front, each overlaid with sturdy metal studs.



The ***balteus*** was designed to protect the groin. A blow to the genitals during hand-to-hand combat could momentarily paralyze a man. In that moment of distraction he could be struck down by a fatal blow to the head or torso.

As a protective device the **balteus** was more than just a belt, as readers in Apostolic times would have known. Spiritually speaking it represented the disciplines needed to protect the sexual dimension of our being. Many commentators have failed to see this, though Matthew Henry came close when he said: “This will restrain from libertinism and licentiousness, as a girdle restrains and keeps in the body.”

The powers of darkness will invariably focus on our sexual appetite in their relentless quest to control us. Of the many thoughts and images that affect our behavior, none compare with those involving sexual satisfaction. The Enemy has always sought to exploit our sensuality, to inflame our passions, and to use the imminent prospect of sexual gratification to keep us in bondage.

As we wrestle with powers and principalities, we will face temptations of this kind over and over again. In our fallen state, we are especially vulnerable to attacks directed at our sexuality and our propensity to seek solace in romantic fantasies. If we cede any ground to the Enemy, he will immediately look for a way to obtain more. Given the wide range of tools available to him today for this purpose – through social media, television, movies, magazines, dating websites, pornography, phone apps, and so forth – his opportunities are endless.

Why truth – Biblical truth – is our only defense

Given the way the Enemy has shaped society over the past forty years or so, most adults today are like five-year olds in a candy store. Their minds are overwhelmed by desires that they cannot control, and the longer they stay in the store, the more determined they are to get what they want.

The Word of God tells us in Ephesians 6:14 that truth is our only defense!

We need to look carefully at this to see what it means. What exactly is the Bible asking us to do?



To answer this question we need to go back to the very beginning, to the **balteus** that the pre-incarnate Christ gave to Adam and Eve in the Garden.

When our first parents sinned, they realized that they were naked. Until then they enjoyed perfect innocence. So what had happened to make their nakedness shameful in their own eyes? Their sense of shame was so great that they both tried to cover their genital area: “...and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.” (Genesis 3:7)

Having rejected the perfect protection of God, which was theirs in perpetuity through obedience, they knew that they were now exposed to the power of Satan. They felt this exposure, this vulnerability, most keenly in their genital area.

They found reassurance and comfort, not in the apron or loin-covering that they made for themselves, but in the **balteus** that Christ later made for them from animal skins (“coats of skins”). The Hebrew word for a coat in this context can also mean an undergarment.



Note what is happening here. They had destroyed themselves and they knew it. But Christ took pity on them and provided each of them with a covering. These animal hides or leather girdles were a visible token of the protection that they would have thereafter in Christ. They could scarcely have imagined how these precious girdles spoke also of a permanent solution to their problem, a solution which would only become manifest in the fullness of time.

They found mercy in their personal relationship with the pre-incarnate Christ. This is the truth that Paul speaks about, the truth of the **balteus**.

Understanding this basic truth

When a Christian walks daily in a personal relationship with Christ, his loins are girt about with truth. The Enemy will not be able to strike at his mind and heart with lascivious images and darts of carnality. The seasoned believer is able to brush them aside and keep moving ahead, much as one might flick a bug off one's sleeve.

Have no doubt – sexual fantasies are a powerful weapon in Satan's armory! The rulers of the darkness of this world have used them for millennia with ruthless effect to trap their victims and keep them in bondage.

Consider the corrupting power of pornography. The Enemy has succeeded in making available via the smart phone scenes of utter depravity which even little children can access. The same wicked system is being used by seemingly respectable adults to purchase videos and images online that are so distressing and so extreme that only sin-loving Satanists could have produced them.



The normalization of pornography is a major sign of the End Time. When seemingly sensible adults allow their minds to be invaded in this way, they lose the ability to control their most intimate thoughts. A recent survey in the UK revealed that two out of every three adults watch pornography at least once a week. Many of these acquired this habit before the age of 12. Nearly a third of all those who watch pornography, most of whom are under the age of 30, are addicted to a variety that includes violence, sadism, and perverse sexual activity. [*The Sunday Times*, 11 August 2019]

The corruption of normal sexuality is central to the strategy that the Enemy is using to enslave mankind. It is being used as a supernatural weapon to target the individual and break down his defenses. This is why, as Christians, we need to understand that we, too, are vulnerable to these attacks unless we take steps to repel them. Only the belt or **balteus** of truth can give us the protection we need. It is nothing less than our daily proximity to Christ, a personal relationship and a special place where the power of Satan has no effect.

A survey in 2018 revealed that 70 percent of Christian youth pastors in the US had at least one teen come to them in the previous 12 months seeking help for their addiction to pornography. Given that those who seek help are generally a fraction of those who need it, this statistic is deeply disturbing. But there is more. Nearly 2/3rds of church-going men admit to watching pornography on a regular basis. The corresponding figure for pastors is 50%. Yes, half of all pastors in the US watch porn on a regular basis.

We have no reason to believe these statistics are inaccurate. While it may suit the enemies of Christianity to exaggerate the extent of the problem, there is no denying that the problem exists and that it is getting worse. The pastors themselves – half of whom watch porn – have also expressed their concern. Roughly three out of five say that an addiction to porn is the most damaging issue facing their congregation.

We could say a great deal more about the *balteus* and the role it plays in keeping us firmly on the straight and narrow. For those who are born again, truth is not a lofty abstraction or even a body of knowledge, but a living relationship with the Son of God. It is through the *balteus* that we are able to utilise the other parts of the armor supplied to us by God.

The Breastplate of Righteousness

The second item mentioned by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians is the breastplate of righteousness. This corresponds to the *cuirass* worn by a Roman soldier, a protective coat of metal, or connected strips of metal, covering the chest, back and shoulders. Since it is called a breastplate some believers have mistakenly assumed that it covers only the front of the torso, but this is not so. If they keep to the analogy that Paul is using, they will see that he is speaking of a *cuirass*, which comprises both a breastplate and a backplate.



The righteousness of which he speaks is not the imputed righteousness that we receive from Christ, as many allege. We know this cannot be the case since our imputed righteousness is not something we can put on and take off. Rather, Paul is referring to the righteousness of the saints, their determination to walk in complete obedience to the Word of God.

As Jesus said, **“If ye love me, keep my commandments.” (John 14:15)**. It should be obvious from this that we will continually strive to keep his commandments only because we love him. And this brings us once again to the **balteus**, our daily relationship with Jesus.

The connection between obedience and the ‘practical’ righteousness that we accrue through obedience is evident from Psalm 18 where David says:

**“The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness;
according to the cleanness of my hands
hath he recompensed me.
For I have kept the ways of the LORD,
and have not wickedly departed from my God.
For all his judgments were before me,
and I did not put away his statutes from me.”
(Psalm 18:20-22)**



This Psalm gives us further insight into the armor of God which David, the great warrior, was obliged to test to the limit during his sojourn in the wilderness. In addition to the breastplate of righteousness, he also referred to the shield of salvation and feet – or footwear – which did not slip:

**“He teacheth my hands to war,
so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.
Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation:
and thy right hand hath holden me up,
and thy gentleness hath made me great.
Thou hast enlarged my steps under me,
that my feet did not slip.”
(Psalm 18:34-36)**

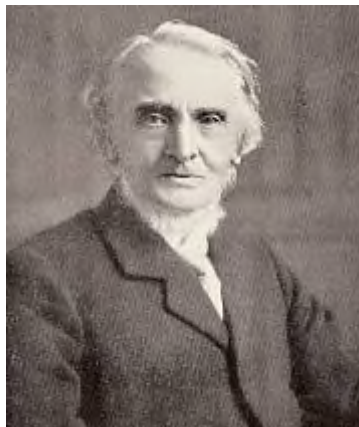
Very likely Paul had this Psalm in mind when he wrote about the armor of God. He would have been mindful also of the following passage from Isaiah, which refers to Christ at his second coming:

**“For he put on righteousness as a breastplate,
and an helmet of salvation upon his head;
and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing,
and was clad with zeal as a cloke.
According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay,
fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies;
to the islands he will repay recompence.”
(Isaiah 59:17-18)**

Paul appropriates these images from Isaiah – the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation – to illustrate the armor worn by the believer.

What does the breastplate protect us against?

What does the *cuirass* or breastplate protect us against? We know it is not specifically intended to counter the “fiery darts of the wicked” because these are neutralized by the shield of faith (which we will discuss shortly). If we look to the commentaries for guidance in this matter, we will get a variety of views, but few address the matter as clearly as MacLaren: “A habit of righteous conduct is itself a defence against temptation. Untilled fields bear abundant weeds. The used tool does not rust...The robe of righteousness will guard the heart as effectually as a coat of mail.”



Alexander MacLaren, Scottish Baptist preacher (1826-1910)

We are not speaking here of salvation through works or anything like that. Rather we are speaking of a steadfast desire to do what is pleasing to Christ. Our obedience protects us from temptation and makes it extremely difficult for the Enemy to exploit the weaknesses in our fallen nature.

This is not a popular subject. When is the last time you heard a pastor preach about temptation? It has become a taboo word in the modern church, much like sin, hell, the wrath of God, and the wiles of Satan.

In a wicked, rebellious world we need the armor of God for our protection. And we need it even more as increasing numbers of those who surround us in the workplace and elsewhere are taken in by Satan’s soothing distractions.

Spiritual footwear

The Enemy has a great many ways to test our resolve. Some of his attacks are designed to catch us unawares and throw us off balance. This is where our third piece of armor comes into play: “**And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace**” (Ephesians 6:15)

The word “preparation” denotes a process which has already taken place, while “the gospel of peace” is nothing less than the joy we have in our salvation. A believer who has this joy – and who has learned through experience (his “preparation”) to remain stable within it – is not easily thrown off balance. Great storms may howl around him and yet, sure-footed as a coney, he always seems to find a secure place to stand. These are the wonderful Christians who live on the Rock!

Oh how we need these people today!

They faithfully wear the *caligae*, the hobnailed sandals that Paul refers to. Their merit lies in the part we cannot see, the studded sole. These grip tenaciously in slippery conditions and enable the wearer to maintain his poise and mobility in any terrain.



Germanicus, father of the Emperor Caligula.

This item may at first seem to be of negligible protective value, but it was highly esteemed by the Romans. When Germanicus, the Roman general, was on campaign in Germany, his tiny three-year old son became very popular with the troops. They dressed him in the miniature attire of a soldier and called him ‘Caligula’, meaning ‘little boot’. This shows that the soldiers valued their boots as highly as any other item in their armor. Interestingly, Caligula, who was made Emperor in 37 A.D., was known by this nickname for most of his life.

The Coney or Rock Hyrax

“The conies are but a feeble folk, yet they make their houses in the rocks” (Proverbs 30:26)

The coney or rock hyrax (*Procavia capensis*) is a short, thickset herbivorous mammal found in parts of Africa and the Middle East. In appearance they are not unlike oversized guinea-pigs or the marmots found in the Alpine regions of Europe. Their feet are unusual, having rubbery pads moistened by numerous sweat glands. Apparently these act like suction-cups that enable the coney to scuttle easily across a smooth rocky surface and climb swiftly up steep cliffs.



The Shield of Faith

Next we have the shield of 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)

This corresponds to the shield or *scutum* carried by every Roman soldier. Unlike the shield shown in many popular illustrations, the *scutum* was long and rectangular. When they marched shoulder-to-shoulder into battle their shields could be used to form a barrier to protect them from projectiles hurled by the enemy.

The barrier was even more effective if the rank behind them positioned their shields above their heads. Known as a *testudo* or tortoise, this rigid canopy enabled them to get close enough to their adversaries to engage in decisive hand-to-hand combat.



Soldiers would have practised this formation over and over again until they knew exactly how to hold the *testudo* in place while advancing rapidly under a hail of projectiles. Made of layers of seasoned wood, the *scutum* could withstand the force of a javelin, even one tipped with a flaming accelerant.

We quench the “fiery darts” cast by Satan and his demon hoard by trusting completely in the protection that God provides. When David wrote about his deliverance from “the hand of Saul” in Psalm 18 he was speaking spiritually about his deliverance from the hand of Satan. He knew that his personal defensive resources were laughably inadequate and that, without God’s unfailing protection, he would have been torn apart, not once but many times.

He starts by saying:

“I will love thee, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler [shield], and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.” (Psalm 18:1-2)

He is using these stirring words, not only to extol and exalt the LORD, but also to express – and shout aloud, as it were! – his unconditional delight in all that God did to protect and sustain him.

When He appeared to Abraham, not long after his victory over the four kings, the LORD revealed Himself to the great patriarch with this startling statement: **“I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.” (Genesis 15:1)**

Does the English language have nine words that are more beautiful? While we are here on earth, He is our shield. And when we arrive in heaven, He is our exceeding great reward. We will have no difficulty wielding the shield of faith if we walk with this truth pulsating in our veins.



Abraham with Ishmael and Isaac.

Jesus rebuked his disciples on occasion for not having enough faith. They were not completely without faith of course, but the little they had was inadequate. We can see from this how believers can vary greatly in their measure of faith.

It is a joy and a privilege to sit in the company of a man or woman of abundant faith! Young Christians would benefit enormously from their contact with these rare and precious souls. A frail old lady who has walked with the Lord all her life is an unsettling sight to the Enemy. He knows that her faith makes her a true warrior of Christ. While she may seem frail in human terms, her prayers pose a real threat to his plans and his cunning devices.

The Helmet of Salvation

Paul refers next to the helmet of salvation. The word for helmet in Greek is *perikephalaia* which means “to circle the head”, an apt description of its protective purpose. The Roman soldiers called it their *galea*.



Ancient Roman military helmet.

The armor of God offers two layers of protection, not one. The ***galea*** or helmet is shielding our head even while our shield is engaged elsewhere.

Spiritually speaking, the ***galea*** points to the crown of glory which is entirely the outcome of salvation. This gift was secured on our behalf by the Lamb. By wearing the ***galea*** we place ourselves under his protection and – most importantly – declare to all that we are marching in the legion of the Lamb.

When we do this we show that we are standing in his strength, not our own. If we could attach a motto to the ***galea*** it would be “...for without me ye can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

The Sword of the Spirit

This brings us to “...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:” (Ephesians 6:17). The Greek word for ‘sword’ that Paul used was *machaira*, which corresponds to the short ***gladius*** carried by a Roman soldier. It was designed for hand-to-hand combat in a confined space where only a thrusting motion was possible.



**Ancient Roman sword found in Scotland in 2017.
It dates from around 120 A.D.**

The author of the book of Hebrews, very likely Paul himself, also compares the Word of God to a sword:

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)

This verse signifies the separation of the unholy from the holy, the unregenerate from the regenerate, and the earthly from the heavenly. The Word of God can also effect a clean separation between our soul (or mind) and a dark spirit sent by the Enemy. It is primarily this interpretation that Paul had in mind in Ephesians 6:17.

Some teachers speak of the Bible itself as our sword, but this is misleading. Rather it is our knowledge and understanding of God’s Word that constitute a sword!

Many believers today, fed mostly on milk, have little or no idea how to wield their sword. Some can’t even lift it up. On the other hand (literally) they love their shield, because it gives them a place to hide. It is not even necessary to stand to use the shield; one can simply crouch underneath it and wait for the enemy to depart. The sword, however, can be used ONLY by those who stand!



Moses anoints Joshua as his successor.

We stand in His strength, not our own

Most Christians in the West have lived for too long in their own strength. Few are prepared to put on their armor and stand. They would rather hunker down and compromise than stand firm and face the Enemy.

A Christian like this can never put on the armor – or wear it correctly. He doesn't understand that we NEVER stand in our own strength. He would rather stay on the quiet side of Jordan than cross to the other side and face those super-sized Canaanites.

The word “courage” is found 20 times in the Bible. Five of these are in the book of Joshua. Meanwhile the word “encourage” is found 4 times. Two of these, in the book of Deuteronomy, relate to Joshua. This was the man approved by God to lead the Israelites over the Jordan into the Promised Land and conquer seven powerful, well-armed nations:

“But Joshua the son of Nun, which standeth before thee, he shall go in thither: **encourage him: for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.” (Deuteronomy 1:38)**

“But charge Joshua, and **encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see.” (Deuteronomy 3:28)**

The Armor of God	
1. balteus – belt – <i>truth</i> :	Having a personal relationship with Christ
2. cuirass – breastplate – <i>righteousness</i> :	Being completely obedient to God's Word
3. caligae – boots – <i>the Gospel of peace</i> :	Living in the joy of our salvation
4. scutum – shield – <i>faith</i> :	Trusting in the LORD with all our heart
5. galea – helmet – <i>salvation</i> :	Standing in the triumph of Calvary
6. gladius – sword – <i>God's Word</i> :	Having a deep familiarity with Scripture.

Every born-again believer is a warrior and servant of Christ, just like Joshua. The only difference is that we are not instructed to destroy the unbelievers in our midst but to live at peace with them and hold our ground.

Christians today focus intently on the first part – living at peace with their neighbor – and virtually ignore the second part. Even worse, they make one concession after another in order to appease the Enemy, as though peace at any price was a mark of righteousness!

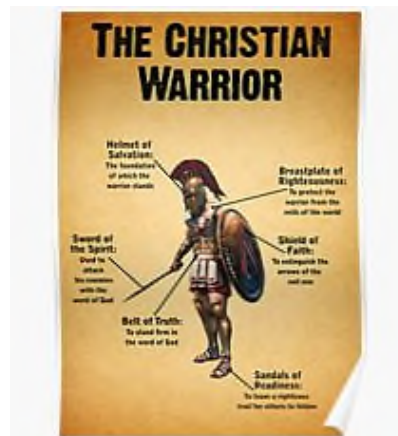
As we said in our opening paragraph, the great mark of the visible church today is not its righteousness but its timidity.

Few pastors and preachers are clad in the armor of God! They flee from controversy and confrontation as fast as their little feet will carry them.

One must ask whether any of them have truly crossed the Jordan?

Ephesians 6:10-20

- 10. Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.**
- 11. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.**
- 12. 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.**
- 13. 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.**
- 14. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;**
- 15. And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;**
- 16. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.**
- 17. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:**
- 18. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;**
- 19. And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,**
- 20. For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.**



CONCLUSION

A complete study of the armor of God would go beyond the scope of this paper. We have prepared it mainly to highlight the importance of Ephesians 6 and to show just how much is missing in the church today because believers have failed to study it.

A good understanding of the complete armor of God will be even more important in the years ahead as Christians in Europe and America are oppressed and persecuted as intolerant, narrow-minded bigots. We can see even now how powers and principalities, the rulers of the darkness of this world, are filling the minds of 'ordinary' people – unbelievers all – with a zeal for New Age, mystical ideas, and a corresponding hatred of God's Word.

We will likely witness an anger and animosity that will shake those believers who know little about the armor of God and even less about the hatred that Satan has for Spirit-filled believers. The attacks will come not only from extremists and fanatics, but from unexpected places, from respected members of society, and even from those whom we thought would stand by us in times of trouble.

Demons can also be expected to attack Christians directly, targeting those who have foolishly opened themselves to supernatural signs and wonders, charismatic phenomena, and interfaith worship, or who have adopted contemplative prayer techniques, *lectio divina*, and similar mystical practices.

The Enemy will use both fear and seductive devices to lure believers off the Rock! Some of these incursions may come in our dreams, so we will need to pray to our heavenly Father to protect us while we sleep.

We will also need to pray for each other, to ask the LORD to strengthen the saints, especially those whom we know personally. This is immensely important and should never be forgotten. Consider verses 18-19 of Ephesians 6, where Paul himself asks for the prayers of the saints, that he might continue to speak boldly "the mystery of the gospel." If a man with Paul's extraordinary record of service finds it necessary to make this request, then we can be CERTAIN that we too need those prayers. We should never be slow to ask a true believer to pray for us.

Finally, we would encourage our readers to make a careful study of Ephesians 6, verses 10 to 20. There is far more in these wonderful verses than we have had time to consider – being strong in the LORD; the wiles of the devil; what it means to "wrestle"; the nature of principalities and powers; the evil day; the fiery darts; and the vital role of prayer and supplication.

If you are hesitant about any of this, then remember the words of Hebrews 13:5 – “...for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” If we are sincerely living the truth of these words, then we will WANT to put on the armor of God every morning and go boldly into a sunlit day that will never come again.

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February 6, 2020

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