

John Newlin Ministries, Inc.

- realizing the power of a life in Christ-

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PROTECTING YOURSELF IN THESE DANGEROUS TIMES:

JUST WHAT DOES PUTTING ON THE ARMOR REALLY MEAN AND HOW DO I DO IT?

These are difficult times and they will be right up to the day Jesus comes to collect his believers. My goal for each of you is that you know how to protect yourself and how to live as safely and effectively as possible in this trying environment; and of course that you are out there representing Jesus in a lost and failing world.

To that end let's focus on using some of the tools God has given us. Paul put much of this together into one message, and he presented it as the armor of God. I've encouraged all of you to use this armor in the past. Here I want to try a new look, one that should be really helpful for many.

Over the years I have seen that this subject is not entirely understood when it is presented. The problem I think is the term itself – the armor of God. Once a woman asked in the middle of my message how does a person put this on. So let's look at what Paul really meant.

Back in the time of Paul, the Roman army was everywhere in the known world, and very visible in Israel and Jerusalem. The soldiers truly wore armor and carried a shield and sword, all to protect themselves against the weapons of that day and to be ready to fight if necessary. So Paul chose something everyone knew about then to describe what in reality are great truths of God, gifts if you want to describe them that way. This is the passage:

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. – Ephesians 6:10-18 NIV

Let's take this is the order Paul presented it.

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power

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This is pretty clear. Realize deep inside you, deep in your heart who the Lord is and the incredible power he has. Really, this is required to know and receive anything from the Lord. You have to truly know him.

¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Now Paul launches into the armor metaphor, even before he explains it. Note that he says we should put it on so we can take our stand against the schemes of the devil, the leader of evil and our primary opponent in these last days. And he notes that our battle in these times is not against physical people, really not against flesh and blood, but against all the spiritual forces of darkness. These terms he uses are levels of hierarchy, levels of authority, in the devil's kingdom of darkness. Remember once how the angel in Daniel 10:13 said he was delayed in coming to Daniel by having to fight the prince of Persia (an evil angel, one of the devil's forces)? Remember also how elsewhere Jesus himself tells us to love our enemies? So difficult as it seems we have to remember that highly evil people coming against us really are just people under the control of evil forces. That is of course not to say you are not to protect yourself against such people. But you surely in Jesus' name can order away all evil spirits at such a time.

¹³ 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.

In this verse Paul warns us to put on all the armor of God so we will be ready in that moment when we truly confront evil and so we will be unmoved, ready to stand and fight. That evil could be a real opponent in a war, or a terrorist, or a mugger, or more likely just someone in your daily life that you recognize is under the control or influence of evil forces.

¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist,

Finally the first tool – truth. God is all about truth. Jesus is truth. Remember how John said grace and truth came into the world through Jesus Christ. You get nowhere with God unless you understand and live in truth. The great gift of the Holy Spirit – discernment – is of extraordinary importance in your recognizing the truth in any situation or encounter.

with the breastplate of righteousness in place,

The breastplate covers the chest, the area of the vital organs. Paul wants us to cover our vital organs, our very lives, with righteousness, to be in the right relationship with God. You can't expect to receive anything from God if you are not in the right relationship with him, if you do not know Jesus, if you have not repented and asked for and received the Lord's forgiveness for your sins. You must know Jesus. And in these last days you must be in the right relationship.

¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

Wherever you go, wherever you walk, you as a true believer and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ take him with you. Your feet walk the peace of God into any room, any group. Even without saying a word, when you as a born again, spirit filled believer walk into a place, you have changed the entire spiritual atmosphere of the place. If the Lord was not there before you entered, he is now. And the unseen evil spiritual forces around are now all in a roused and confused and no doubt frightened state. If you speak or act, you as a believer should seek to do so in line with the Lord, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one

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The shield was carried for obvious protection against blows of the enemy, whether from a sword or a flying arrow. Paul makes the point that you can use the shield to extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one. Those flaming arrows are all the challenges, the false tempting words, the attacks whatever the form that the enemy hurls against you. Your faith in God is strong and you know no one has more power or authority or is higher than God. You can do all things through him who strengthens you. All things are possible with God. The enemy has no chance against you and God. This is all about the importance and maintenance of absolute faith in God, no matter what the circumstances appear like. Jesus stressed faith throughout his time of ministry. Your faith has made you well – remember that phrase?

¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation

We all hopefully know the importance of salvation – the receiving in our very body and soul what the Lord did for us. In a quick phrase, he took our place on the cross. He died for our sins, and by his overcoming that and overcoming death in his resurrection he earned for each of us eternal life with him and the Father. If we just realize that and accept him as our Lord. Salvation. Here Paul wants us to wear the helmet of salvation. To be aware of it always. A helmet protects the head, the physical seat of the brain, the organ that physically controls the body. Salvation is key to life, your key to eternity. Your brain has to fully realize what that is and operate in the fullness of that. Again, we must be born again, we must know the Lord truly, have him as our Lord, recognize God did truly raise him from the dead. In a phrase, we must be saved.

and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

The sword of the Spirit is the word of God. This is the one offensive weapon in this tool kit. Everything else is defensive. Quickened scripture, a verse the Holy Spirit brings to your mind, is full of power and authority when spoken into a situation or a moment. Hopefully all of you have experienced this. Quote the appropriate verse, even if you don't get it perfectly right. All these Bible translators haven't agreed on the precise translations of the specific verses! Just speak it out. The message. The truth. And with it comes the power of God. The word of God is the sword of the Spirit.

¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests

Pray in touch with the Spirit. Get in touch with God. This is praying in tongues to be sure, that great gift of the Spirit, praying in that special language that God has given you. This is a way to get the message to God, to pray your heart, even when you don't know how to put it all into words. Elsewhere in the Bible Paul describes how the Holy Spirit prays with our own spirit to get this prayer out. Now surely you can be in touch with the Spirit and pray using your English language or other earthly language too. The key is being in touch with God, putting yourself in a position to hear from God and being guided by God.

With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

Lastly be alert, be aware of where you are and what is happening around you and in your world, spiritually and physically. You don't want to fall because you just were not alert. This is the same advice Jesus gives in Luke 21:36 about how you should be alert in these last days so you can escape all that is coming on the earth and may be able to stand before the Son of Man, Jesus. And while you are alert keep praying for all the Lord's people. Specifically, pray for those you know and specific needs they have. And pray generally for all the believers, all those around you. Pray as you are guided by the Holy Spirit.

So then this is putting on the armor of God. Obviously you don't put on a physical armor like the Roman soldiers did. The point is to live in the great truths and values of God, and to use the tools he has given. Live in truth not falsehood, live in a right relationship with the Lord, with God, live in and carry the Lord's peace with you wherever you go, obviously live in your salvation, live in faith in God and by such defend yourself against the evil attacks of the enemy, and wield that wonderful sword of the Spirit, the

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appropriate Word of God in any situation. And pray, pray, pray, at all times, in the Spirit, for yourself and all people. With all this stand firm against the evil one, stand, stand, stand in your faith, in all God has revealed to you, in all you know.

(For more on putting on this armor and fighting evil go to our website (or call) and request a copy of our CD *Fighting Evil: Being a Christian Soldier*. You can also watch our past television programs on this subject by going to the video section on the website.)

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May you live in the blessings of God always.

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John

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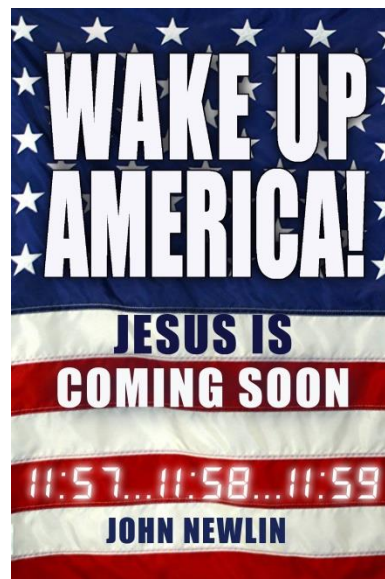
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