

“Soldiers Of Christ, Arise”



“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” (Eph. 6:10–11)

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Introduction

- I. Near the end of his life, Roman soldiers constantly surrounded the apostle Paul.
 - A. He lived in the presence of the greatest military power ever known.
 - B. Night and day a soldier was with Paul to ensure he would not escape.
 - C. The Roman legion is considered the world’s first professional army.
 - D. “The Roman imperial army was the earliest of the world’s standing armies in which the soldiers were regularly recruited, and cared for, and finally pensioned off, by the state.” (Michael Grant, *The Army of the Caesars*, p. xv).
 - E. Their armor was distinctive, and with it they subdued the world.
 - F. Paul used figures of speech that reflected what he saw daily.
 - G. He told Timothy to “wage the good warfare” (1 Tim. 1:18) and to “endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3).
- II. Christians are to put on the “whole armor of God” (Eph. 6:10–20).
 - A. The words translated as “whole armor” (Gr. πανοπλία, panoplia) denote the “whole armor” of the heavily armed legionary.
 - B. We must position ourselves to stand for the truth (Eph. 6:11, 13–14).
 1. Unblemished in character.
 2. A genuine zeal that is tempered with wisdom.
 3. Knowledgeable of the word of God.
 - C. The welfare of the cause of Christ depends upon us making a stand.
 - D. Since we are not fighting a fleshly battle, our weaponry must not be carnal.

Discussion

I. The Armor Of God

- A. The girdle of truth (Eph. 6:14).
 1. This was not an ornament—it bound the other pieces together and gave the soldier freedom of movement.
 2. “In a culture where the people wore long loose-fitting robes, garments were tied close to the body when quick action was required. Here, the believer is summoned to stand, therefore, literally, ‘having girded (*perizoœnnymi*) your loins in truth’” (*New International Biblical Commentary*, Hendrickson Publishers).
 3. We move about this world more freely because we know the truth!
 4. Isaiah portrays the Messiah as wearing the belt of righteousness around His waist and faithfulness as the sash around His body (Isa. 11:5).
 5. The center of our armor is truth (John 17:17).
 6. The NIV renders this clause as: “with the belt of truth buckled around your waist” (Eph. 6:14).
- B. The breastplate of righteousness (Eph. 6:14).
 1. On first century reliefs only the centurions had a *metal* cuirass (breastplate); the common foot soldier had a *leather* corselet with leather shoulder pieces.
 2. The breastplate of a Roman spearman was used to protect the heart and other vital organs.
 3. God Himself wears righteousness like a breastplate (Isa. 59:17).

4. Our heart covered by righteousness (Psa. 119:11).
 5. Words are no defense against accusations, but a righteous life is.
- C. Feet shod with the gospel of peace (Eph. 6:15).
1. "But most important of all were his heavy boots (*caligae*), or rather sandals, which were in many ways more serviceable than modern army boots. Their soles, made of several layers of leather and heavily studded with hollow-headed nails, varied considerably in thickness; perhaps three-quarters of an inch was about the average. Strips of cloth or fur were sometimes placed inside the sandals, and they were fastened to the foot by ankle thongs." (Michael Grant, *The Army of the Caesars*, p. xx).
 2. "The military successes both of Alexander the Great and of Julius Caesar were due in large measure to their armies' being well shod and thus able to undertake long marches at incredible speed over rough terrain." (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*).
 3. These boots would give the soldier a firm footing during battle.
 4. They were designed to make it difficult to walk backwards.
 5. Our sound footing must be supplied by the gospel of peace (Rom. 10:15; Isa. 52:7).
- D. Taking the shield of faith (Eph. 6:16).
1. Roman shields were composed of leather or wicker.
 2. The normal size was four feet high by two and a half feet wide.
 3. "The word Paul uses is not that for the comparatively small round shield; it is that for the great oblong shield which the heavily armed warrior wore. One of the most dangerous weapons in ancient warfare was the fiery dart. It was a dart tipped with tow dipped in pitch. The pitch-soaked tow was set alight and the dart was thrown. The great oblong shield was made of two sections of wood, glued together. When the shield was presented to the dart, the dart sank into the wood and the flame was put out. Faith can deal with the darts of temptation. With Paul, faith is always complete trust in Christ. When we walk close with Christ, we are safe from temptation." (William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, p. 183).
 4. "Early legionary shields were oval in shape but in the 1st century they became rectangular, although curved to fit the body. A legionary shield (*scutum*) was made of thin sheets of wood glued together and bound round the edges with wrought iron or bronze. The center was hollowed out for the hand grip which was protected by a metal boss. The outer surface of the shield was covered with leather on which were fastened decorative bronze plates." (Leslie and Roy Adkins, *Introduction to the Romans*, p. 39).
 5. The change from small round to large rectangular shields meant the soldiers no longer needed to wear greaves (shin-pieces), and thus their mobility greatly increased.
 6. The "testudo" (tortoise formation) was a formation used commonly by the Roman Legions during battles, particularly sieges.

7. “Lastly, a word must be said about the *testudo*, which could be used either in advance or retreat against a violent attack of hostile weapons. The soldiers of the front rank, closely linked together, protected themselves by holding up their shields in front of them as screens, while the rear ranks raised their shields above their heads, and in this way produced an artificial roof, against which javelins and spears might strike with impunity. The success of this formation depended upon the men keeping close together, so as to avoid any gaps in the barrier of shields. Such a disposition might be employed instead of the *orbis* in a retreat under fire, but it was most commonly used by detachments advancing to the siege of a town or a camp.” (H.M.D. Parker, *The Roman Legions*).
8. Our enemy does not always attack directly (Heb. 11:32–38).
- E. The helmet of salvation (Eph. 6:17).
 1. This headgear was generally of bronze, fitted inside with an iron skullcap lined with leather or cloth.
 2. We are to take this helmet from God—it is our salvation (Eph. 2:8–9).
- F. The sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17).
 1. “The offensive armor, as described by Josephus, consisted of the *pilum* or throwing-spear, the *gladius* or Spanish sword, and the *pugio* or dagger slung on the left and right sides respectively.” (H. M. D. Parker, *The Roman Legions*, p. 251).
 2. “Weapons for attack included the *pilum* or javelin, two of which were carried by each man. The *pilum* was 7 ft. long, the top 3 ft. being of iron. The sword (*gladius*) was a double-edged weapon about 2 ft. long and 2 in. wide. Carried in a scabbard attached to a belt on the right-hand side of the body, it was a stabbing rather than a slashing weapon and designed for use in close fighting. The scabbard was usually made of wood and leather held together by bronze. On the left-hand side of the body there was a dagger (*pugio*) in a bronze or iron scabbard suspended from another belt. Daggers seem to have been withdrawn from the legionary armory by the end of the 1st century.” (Leslie and Roy Adkins, *Introduction to the Romans*, p. 39).
 3. “Weapon training was most important. The intelligent use of the sword is mentioned particularly in a surviving Roman training manual. The method taught was to thrust, rather than to slash at an opponent; for a slash-cut rarely kills, but a thrust makes a deep penetration of the vital organs. The Roman short sword was clearly designed for stabbing, with its sharp angled point, though it could be, and certainly was on occasion, used to effect cutting strokes.” (Michael Simkins, *Warriors Of Rome*, p. 28).
 4. Our only offensive weapon is the Word of God (Heb. 4:12).
 5. Christ fought Satan in the desert with this weapon (Matt. 4:1–11).
 6. We are never wasting our time when we are sharpening our swords—don’t let it get rusty.
- G. Our armor must be put on properly (Eph. 6:18).
 1. The armor is to be donned with prayer (cf. Acts 4:29–31).
 2. Pray always—pray intensely—pray for others.
 3. We are foot soldiers—God is in control.

II. A Lesson From Rome

- A. The Jewish priest and general Flavius Josephus lived during the zenith of Rome's military glory.
1. He was made a citizen by Vespasian and traveled with the legions.
 2. Roman soldiers always carried their weapons with them—even in peace.
 3. "Every soldier is every day exercised, and that with great diligence, as if it were in time of war, which is the reason why they bear the fatigues of battle so easily." (Josephus, *The Jewish War*, Book III, Chap. 5).
 4. "This vast empire of theirs has come to them as the prize of valor, and not as a gift of fortune. For their nation does not wait for the outbreak of war to give men their first lesson in arms. They do not sit with folded hands in peace-time only to put them in motion in the hour of need. On the contrary, as though they had been born with weapons in hand, they never have a truce from training, never wait for emergencies to arise. Moreover their peace maneuvers are no less strenuous than veritable warfare. Each soldier daily throws all his energy into his drill, as though he were in action. Hence that perfect ease with which they sustain the shock of battle. No confusion breaks their customary formation, no panic paralyzes, no fatigue exhausts them. And as their opponents cannot match these qualities, victory is the invariable and certain consequence. Indeed, it would not be wrong to describe their maneuvers as bloodless combats and their combats as sanguinary maneuvers ... By their military exercises the Romans instill into their soldiers fortitude not only of body but also of soul. Fear, too, plays its part in their training. For they have laws which punish with death not merely desertion of the ranks, but even a slight neglect of duty. And their generals are held in even greater awe than the laws ... This perfect discipline makes the army an ornament of peace-time and in war welds the whole into a single body—so compact are their ranks, so alert their movements in wheeling to right or left, so quick their ears for orders, their eyes for signals, their hands to act upon them." (Josephus, *The Jewish War*, Book III, Chap. 5).
 5. If only we could become as familiar with our weapon (Acts 17:11).
- B. What caused their military downfall and finally the downfall of Rome?
1. Nearly all historians agree Rome brought about its own downfall.
 2. "It is the just and important observation of Vegetius, that the infantry was invariably covered with defensive armor, from the foundation of the city to the reign of the emperor Gratian. The relaxation of discipline, and the disuse of exercise, rendered the soldiers less able, and less willing, to support the fatigues of the service; they complained of the weight of the armor, which they seldom wore: and they successively obtained the permission of laying aside both their cuirasses and their helmets. The heavy weapons of their ancestors, the short sword, and the formidable pilum, which had subdued the world, insensibly dropped from their feeble hands. As the use of the shield is incompatible with that of the bow, they reluctantly marched into the field; condemned to suffer either the pain of wounds, or the ignominy of flight, and always disposed to prefer the more shameful alternative. The cavalry of the Goths, the Huns, and the Alani, had felt the benefits, and adopted the use, of defensive armor; and, as they excelled in the management of missile weapons, they

easily overwhelmed the naked and trembling legions, whose heads and breasts were exposed, without defense, to the arrows of the barbarians. The loss of armies, the destruction of cities, and the dishonor of the Roman name, ineffectually solicited the successors of Gratian to restore the helmets and cuirasses of the infantry. The enervated soldiers abandoned their own, and the public defense; and the pusillanimous indolence may be considered as the immediate cause of the downfall of the empire." (Edward Gibbon, *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. III, pp. 271–272).

- C. Is the gospel armor too heavy for you?
 - 1. Do you "earnestly contending for the faith" or apologize for it (Jude 3)?
 - 2. Our weapons are for pulling down strongholds (2 Cor. 10:3–5).
 - 3. We must attack the citadels of error—not just hold our own.
 - 4. When General MacArthur was called home from Korea he reminded congress "wars very object is victory, not prolonged indecision."
- D. Sometimes brethren need a course in enemy recognition.
 - 1. Jesus declared the man who is not with Him is against Him (Matt. 12:30).
 - 2. The Devil does not attack under his own banner; sometimes he advances under a flag of truce (2 Cor. 11:14).

Invitation

- I. The welfare of the cause of Christ depends upon your willingness to stand.
- II. Confederate General Thomas J. Jackson was one of the commanders at the first battle of Bull Run.
 - A. When both right and left flanks of the confederate army fell back, Jackson's troops held firm.
 - B. General Barnard S. Bee rallied his disorganized men with these words: "There is Jackson standing like a stone wall."
 - C. This did not mean that Jackson stood there useless like a stone statue—it meant that he and his men stood firm in the heat of battle.
- III. Christians are engaged in a great spiritual warfare.
 - A. Sometimes we think we are waging war when all we are doing is running around and making a lot of noise.
 - B. We have to take a firm stand against the advancing enemies of truth.



Aphrodisias



Athens



Corinth



Athens



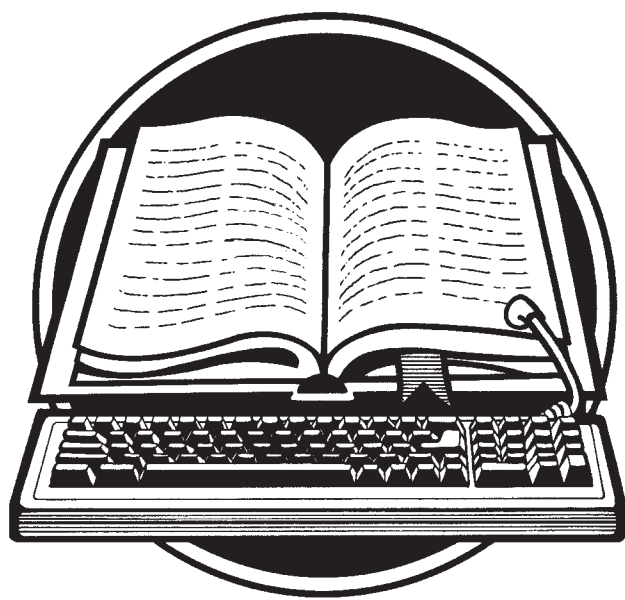
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