

Ephesians

An encyclical letter from the heart of CHRIST
through the heart of Paul to the heart of the Church of all time

by

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE ARMOR OF GOD AND THE AMBASSADOR IN BONDS

"And having on the breastplate of righteousness" (v. 14).

THERE IS A VITAL CONNECTION between truth and righteousness. Truth would indeed have failed in its persuasiveness had it not brought forth the fruit of righteousness; for it would seem to be personal righteousness and not imputed righteousness which is in mind here. And, as the apostle John says, "**He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous**" (I John 3:7). And if the breastplate be protective armor for the heart, then the simile might be particularly appropriate; for "**a good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil**" (Luke 6:45).

"And shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (v. 15).

The word translated "**preparation**" is not used elsewhere in the New Testament. It seems to have the meaning of a base or pedestal (Ezra 3:3). The thought then would seem to revert to what has been said before as to standing firmly. The language may have been suggested to the mind of the writer by such passages as Isaiah 52:7: "**How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace . . .**"; but the thought is different.

The thought of the prophet (see also Nahum 1:15) is of one coming, perhaps we might say running, with good news of deliverance; the thought here is of the soldier standing, resolved and resolute, armed and equipped to meet the assaults of the enemy. But why does he say with "**the gospel of peace**"?

The thought seems to be this: the Christian soldier is not an aggressor; his armor is defensive; he is a man of peace; he has a message of peace; the sword, as a part of the armor, is accordingly brought in for mention at the foot of the list. If he must strike, it will be with the sword of GOD; but his business is to build up, not to strike down. Nevertheless, those same feet which stand so firmly are indeed ready to run to the defense and rescue of all others who may be the victims of Satanic assault. The feet, whether standing or running, are dedicated to an ultimate purpose of

peace.

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked [or the Evil One]" (v. 16).

Here the need for the armor comes more prominently into view. There is an antagonist. It might be a misnomer to speak of him as a warrior; but with malice and murder in his heart, he directs his poisoned arrows at the children of GOD.

And what is their defense? The shield of faith. And what is faith? **"Faith is the substance of things hoped for"** (Hebrew 11:1).

Faith is substantial: faith is a shield. The fiery darts of the adversary are deflected by the shield of faith. But more than that - they are quenched. It might not be profitable to enquire too particularly as to the nature of these darts; but Satan undoubtedly has access to human hearts; and his darts are deadly.

Historians tell us that the ancient warriors used "fire-arrows." "Sometimes the arrow carried a bulb filled with burning matter; sometimes the point was merely wrapped in burning tow." *

Against these missiles the shield of faith must put up its defense. And this is not done in passivity; the shield must be "taken up."

* Moule, *Commentary on the Ephesians*, p. 157, footnote

"And take [receive] the helmet of salvation" (v. 17).

Observe that this helmet of salvation is a piece of armor which the Christian warrior is to "receive": **"O God the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle"** (Psalm 140:7).

In another Epistle, the same writer speaks of the helmet as the **"hope"** of salvation (I Thessalonians 5:8). Hope in the New Testament Scriptures is not wishful wanting but confident certitude. And it is of interest to note that the prophet Isaiah speaks of GOD himself as putting on a **"helmet of salvation"** (Isaiah 59:17).

And is it not in keeping with this that the **"multitude, which no man could number"** cry out in an exultant anthem: **"Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne"**? (Revelation 7:10). GOD has indeed so identified Himself with His people that their conflict is His, and His conflict is theirs. He goes out to battle with them **"clad with zeal as a cloak"** and with the **"garments of vengeance for clothing"** (Isaiah 59:17). And the Christian soldiers may wear the helmet because it is GOD's armor, and He and they are one. In the person of His Son, GOD has come down into the conflict; He has met the antagonist; He has fought the battle, and He has overcome.

"And the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God" (v. 17). *

* For the simile of the sword in other Scriptures, see Psalm 57:4; 64:3; Isaiah 49:2.

In speaking of the sword as the Word of GOD, the Apostle reminds us that the warfare is not a carnal one: it is not flesh against spirit. GOD has spoken the decisive and the deciding word; the issue of the conflict is not in doubt. But although it is the Word of GOD, nevertheless by appropriation it has become the believer's word.

It is not a borrowed sword. He has put on the helmet of salvation - GOD's salvation; and he has taken the sword - GOD's sword. And GOD and he are so identified that his conflict is GOD's conflict; his utterance is GOD's utterance; his salvation GOD's salvation.

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; 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, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (vv.18-20).

It can surely not be without spiritual significance that the sentence which speaks of the **"utterance"** of GOD goes on to speak of the utterances of men. The **"Word of GOD"** is the basis of prevailing prayer; and nowhere is this more true than in the area of conflict; and this is the atmosphere of these appeals."

Put on the armor and pray . . . I am an ambassador in a chain . . . Pray that you may be bold, for the opposition is strong.

And what has aroused the opposition; what has excited the enemy? It is the **"mystery of the gospel."** He has told us earlier in the Epistle what that mystery is. It was a secret purpose of GOD, to the proclamation of which he had been divinely called. It seemed, as it were, to disenfranchise the Jews as the people of special privilege. Paul had gone so far as to say that in the **"new man... there is neither Greek nor Jew . . . but CHRIST is all, and in all"** (Colossians 3:10-11).

To the Jewish hierarchy this was intolerable: that was why Paul was a prisoner. Nevertheless he asks these Christians in Roman Asia to supplicate GOD that he may have boldness to continue to testify to the truth which has aroused the hostility of his persecutors.

But before he mentions himself, he remembers **"all saints"** as the subjects of prayer. He is one of them. **"For all saints, and for me."** Thus he acknowledges his dependence upon GOD and upon them; for it is through their prayers that GOD is to enable him. This appeal is made to many whom he has never seen in the flesh; but he has already declared that there is **"one body, and one Spirit"**; he may therefore count upon their responsiveness.

"Tychicus . . . shall make known to you all things, whom I have sent unto you... that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts" (vv. 21-22).

Tychicus had lived in Asia Minor; presumably he was a native son. We first hear of him when Paul was leaving Macedonia for Syria on his way to Jerusalem. He had been driven out of Ephesus; had made an itinerary tour of Macedonia; had spent three months in Greece; and had

retraced his steps through Macedonia (Acts 20:1-3).

Seven of the party who were to accompany him sailed to Troas from Greece; but on account of a plot of those who would take his life, Paul went up to Philippi; and sailing from that port, met the others at Troas. It would seem from the change in the pronoun in Acts 20:6 that Paul was joined at Philippi by Luke. Presumably these eight brethren accompanied Paul to Syria, and to Jerusalem, where he was arrested and from whence he was sent with a bodyguard of Roman soldiers to Caesarea.

And now Tychicus is with Paul in Rome! Had he followed him through all these years? It is interesting to note that two others of that ship's company were with Paul in Rome when this letter was sent - Aristarchus and Luke (Colossians 4:10, 14).

Tychicus takes the letter, but he does not go alone; Onesimus accompanies him (Colossians 4:9). As for Onesimus, who seems to have been returning to his own city, he was a "**faithful and beloved brother**." As for Tychicus, he was a warm-hearted man; in both the Ephesian and Colossian letters, Paul says that he will comfort their hearts (Ephesians 6:22; Colossians 4:8). These two brethren carry the personal greetings of Paul.

"Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen" (vv. 23-24).

With this embracing and yet discriminating and exclusive benediction, the Epistle ends. Those whose love is in uncorruptness are the "**faithful in Christ Jesus**" to whom the letter was penned.

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