

The Great Teachings of the Bible and What They Mean for You: The Armour of God

Hi, friends! Welcome to "The Armor of God" series. Chances are, you've already heard about this powerful and important set of armour that Paul describes in Ephesians chapter 6. The breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith—these are terms you might already know. But how much have you looked into them? It turns out that, upon close examination of the function of each piece of armour and the attribute Paul assigns to it, there are some incredible lessons to be learned. Let's check them out.

Taking Up the Whole Armour of God

Paul tells us to take up the whole armour of God. But what is this armour, and how do we put it on? Is it still relevant for Christians today?

Paul, an apostle of God's first-century Church, has a story for us today:

Accused of sedition, beaten, arrested, almost assassinated, shipwrecked, attacked by a snake and placed under house arrest: Most would call this list an unfortunate run of bad luck. Paul would recognize it as just part of his job description.

Imprisoned in Rome for two years under the watchful eyes of Roman soldiers, Paul was able to write four epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon) and continue preaching "the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ" to all those who came to hear him (Acts 28:30-31).

Living for two years with soldiers of the Roman army must have made an impression on Paul. Likely he saw the soldiers' armour enough to become well acquainted with it, learned to understand the function of each piece, what purpose it served and why it was important. At some point, a God-inspired analogy began to form in Paul's mind. Just as the Roman soldiers required physical armour to fight their wars, we Christians require spiritual armour to successfully fight ours. As the pieces fell into place, Paul saw that each piece of Roman armour had a powerful correlation with our own spiritual defences. It is this analogy that the church in Ephesus received and which God has preserved for two thousand years for our benefit.

What Do We Need Armour for, anyway

"We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:8-9).

How?

How is it that, as Christians, we are expected to withstand incredible pressures and not be defeated? How can we possibly stand up against everything the world has to throw at us and still expect to emerge victorious?

The answer lies not in ourselves, but in a divine and unbeatable defence: the armour of God

What is the armour of God?

Ephesians 6:10-20

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

The armour of God is an amazing metaphor for action we need to take in our spiritual lives. Paul sets the scene for us: We are fighting a war, and the stakes are higher than they have ever been in human history.

Our enemy? Not flesh and blood, no human foe—we fight against a much more fearsome opponent whose forces are described in Ephesians 6:12. Our adversary, Satan the devil, and his host of demons have a single, driving purpose: Obliterate the children of God.

Faced with the cares of this world, we can easily forget about the severity of this battle. But make no mistake: Our spiritual lives and future in God's Kingdom are on the line. If we lose this war, we lose everything. What can we do in the face of such overwhelming odds? Is there any hope?

Paul has the answer. In Ephesians 6:13, he gives the call to arms. By putting on all of God's armour, which we will be exploring piece by piece in the following lessons, we can be assured of withstanding our enemy's onslaughts.



Are there any other references to this armour in the Bible?

Isaiah 59:17

For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing and was clad with zeal as a cloak.

Yes! Though the passages may not explicitly call it the armour of God, there are sections of the Bible that further elaborate on the topic—even in the Old Testament! Isaiah 59:17 refers to two familiar pieces of armour—the helmet and the breastplate—and introduces two other pieces—the clothes of vengeance and cloak of zeal.

We won't be looking at the clothes of vengeance, since they belong exclusively to God (Hebrews 10:30). The cloak of zeal, however, is an interesting study and one we'll be spending some time reviewing.

Romans 13:11-14

And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts.

Paul admonishes the Romans to put on both the "armour of light" and "the Lord Jesus Christ." This passage reveals both that wearing the armour of God is synonymous with having the character of God and that this armour cannot be worn if we are still wearing the "works of darkness"—a lifestyle of sin that separates us from God (Isaiah 59:1-2).

2 Corinthians 6:7

...by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left...

2 Corinthians 10:3-6

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

In these passages Paul calls it the armour of righteousness and reveals its purpose. We put on the armour and strength of God to effectively wage war against our enemy, the devil. Without it, we are helpless—but with it, we are soldiers of the living God, and "more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37).