

## **The Full Armor of God**

What is it?

How do we get it?

Why do we need it?

## Introduction

How seriously do you, the reader, take the Bible? Perhaps this question is too easy and you fall into one of two camps. Maybe you take it incredibly seriously and believe it to be the Word of God, or possibly you do not believe it to be anymore than a series of fables and stories that loosely fit the human experience (not to be taken too seriously at all). While this article is directed at the former, this study is based on a comprehensive study of scripture found throughout the Bible, reinforcing the fact that the Bible (in its entirety) is in harmony throughout. This article is written for believers who ardently believe that the Bible is the Word of God, revealing God's will to us that we might know and understand Him. The primary objective is to ask the following question: Do we really take it seriously? Yet I hope that skeptics may find the harmony of the scriptures within this study to be persuasive by illustrating the reliability of the Bible.

In this text I want to specifically address spiritual matters. On one hand we have the material world, which we are all familiar with, vs the spiritual realm. We have fleshly desires vs spirituality. This is a major point of contention between atheists and Christians, often a fulcrum that many debates have pivoted over. The atheist argues against spiritual things, while the Christian argues that they are real. How real do we, as Christians, believe they are? Very real? One argument I like to make has to do with the nature of God. God is love (1 Jn 4:16), and we also know that God is Spirit (Jn 4:24). Therefore we can deduce that, according to the Bible, Love is spiritual. No atheist can argue against love, that it exists, or is manifested in the flesh. But you cannot put it in a jar or measure it. It is with this argument that I believe we can at least have a common ground by which we can discuss spiritual matters.

The topic of love is a very simple way to introduce spirituality to someone who does not necessarily understand what the spiritual realm is, but things can take a very sharp turn when we dive into other topics such as the throne of God, angels, demons, heaven, hell, etc... And that is where this article is directed. Do we, as Christians, even consider these hard implications and take them seriously enough, and do we actually understand them? As for me, I can assure the reader that I find myself severely lacking on a regular basis. Perhaps this subject comes easier to you than me, and if that is the case I rejoice. However, I have sat in the pews for years hearing sermons and participated in Bible studies, enduring topics that are very hard to understand with a fleshly mind. Often these topics are presented or are veiled in the context of metaphors and figures of speech. Yet, the more I study and dig into the scriptures I find these explanations and analogs devoid of the spiritual, being more of a cop-out than being understood.

I would like to clarify my concern. I do not want to be accused of saying God does not use metaphors. It is very clear that He does. In Malachi chapter 3 it is revealed that God sits "as a refiner and purifier of silver". This is an obvious metaphor because it is clearly not saying that God is a silversmith and we are obviously not made of silver, but gives us a clear understanding that God purifies us through hardship and trials. Another example is in 1 Peter 2:5 where Peter explains that "as living stones", we are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood... What is interesting here, the phrase "as living stones" is a metaphor, but the rest of the scripture is posited as a point of fact. So we have a metaphor mixed with straightforward (but) spiritual language. Despite some of these things being written as straightforward statements, I believe this is where we often get tripped up and take things more figuratively. Otherwise, why would Christians conscript themselves to organizations who tell them they are not priests, or promote a building as being sacred rather than the body of Christ who worships there? Why do we often assume things are not to be taken literally? This is the very heart of my study on the Full Armor of God. Should it be taken literally? And if so, what is it, how do we get it, and why do we need it?

## The Full Armor of God

### Part I

“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. 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 armor 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—”  
Ephesians 6:10-18 NKJV

I have thought a great deal about this passage often over the years. It is a very common sermon topic, possibly one of the most popular to preach, and for good reason. This scripture encapsulates the essence of daily preparedness in a very visual way, and could easily serve as a metaphor for one who is going into battle.

Are we not going into battle every day? In these verses we are challenged mightily: “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.”  
Ephesians 6:12 NKJV

I don't think any Christian would argue that this section of scripture is a metaphor, because at the time of its writing Christians were being killed daily, suffering immense persecution. Demons were being cast out of people, which had superhuman abilities. The threat of evil is very real, every bit as real as Love, just as much today as back then. But why do we then assume that the Armor of God is a metaphor, when the enemy and threat are manifestly real?

Recently, I was thinking again about these verses and had a very odd thought. I asked myself, “if the Armor of God is real, which piece of armor would I have received first”? Or is it even possible to receive one item before another? Would I have received them all at once? Is it even a metaphor being described here?

Needless to say, this led me down a very different path than the traditional sermon outline.

Before diving deeper into this study, I found it helpful to take the traditional approach in looking at these verses, out of concern that I could overlook something or take the lesson out of context. By doing this I found two direct implications that I had overlooked all this time. So I broke it down verse by verse and took notes.

These are literally the first notes I wrote down:

- 1) Ephesians 6 is directed to brethren (those who are saved)
- 2) There seems to be a problem with Christians not wearing their armor

These implications jumped out at me, having never recognized how obvious they were, and I found them deeply unsettling. Why in the world would there be a problem with things like faith, and salvation? Telling brethren to literally take the helmet of salvation seems to imply that even in the first century church there were problems with members putting on the helmet of salvation (think deeper about this).

Now, on to the pieces of armor...

Lets first dissect the different pieces of armor mentioned in the Scriptures from Ephesians chapter 6, in order and as mentioned:

- The belt of Truth
- The breastplate of righteousness
- Shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace
- The shield of faith
- The helmet of salvation
- The sword of the Spirit

### **What is the belt of Truth, and what does this symbology mean?**

If we look at the example of Roman armor, which would have been the imagery first century Christians had to look at, the belt was what held a suit of armor together. So a direct inference we can make here is that the belt of Truth is required first, in order to bind the other parts of the armor to the wearer. But what is Truth? In Jn 14:6 Jesus said, "I am the way, THE TRUTH, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Based on this scripture, I feel it is safe to say that putting on the belt of Truth is symbolic of Jesus holding all of our armor together, being wrapped around our waist. Jesus, therefore, is the binding agent for all of our defensive and offensive garments.

### **What is the breastplate of righteousness, and how does it work?**

If we do a little biblical digging on the word "righteous" (the root of righteousness) we will come up with many scriptures, but they all give us the same message. In Romans 3:10 we are told that there is none righteous, and in Psalm 119:137 we are told that The Lord is righteous. So basically, none of us are righteous, only God is righteous (Therefore Jesus is righteous in that He is the express image of The Father- Heb 1:3). But what is the definition of righteous? The best definition I can come up with is this: it is one who lives and acts "rightly" (morally right, virtuous, uncorrupted). So here we have the breastplate of righteousness, which is literally putting The Lord over our own body; His righteousness covers our own unrighteousness. And this breastplate is then tied to the belt of Truth.

### **What does it mean to have our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace?**

Shod is simply a past participle of the word shoe. So it basically means to put on shoes, but in this case the shoes are represented by the "preparation of the Gospel of Peace". So what does this second part mean? After looking up some other individuals take on this section, it appears that many dispense with the predicate "preparation of the", and just focus on the "Gospel of Peace". I don't disagree with the importance of this kind of focus, but I believe it is out of context with what Paul may have meant. In Galatians 3:24-25 we find that it was "the law" that was given to us as a "tutor". I point this out because the common understanding of the word "tutor" is one who prepares a child through education. I believe this

scripture is reminding us to be well educated from the Old Testament, and how it directly translates to the New Testament through Jesus, our Lord and Christ. The Old Testament is the history and prophecies of the coming messiah, and the New Testament is the record of what He did when He arrived. Moreover, we have the example of Philip speaking with the Ethiopian eunuch and teaching Jesus from Isaiah (Acts 8:27). Being shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace, in my opinion, is to always walk on the foundation of Old Testament history (His Story), and being able to teach of Jesus from the Old Testament, just as Philip did with the Ethiopian eunuch. The shoes, here, imply the whole history of God and His love for us, and His Son who is our Lord and King.

### **What is the shield of faith, and where does it apply?**

In Roman armor, the shield was a very advanced defensive weapon. It was meant to deflect strikes and arrows from an enemy. This shield, according to historians, could have been round, oval, or a curved rectangular shape. They were made of wood and covered in either linen or leather, and a metal dome covered the hand holds. Groups of soldiers in the Roman army were trained in shield formations that could even withstand a chariot traveling above them, and would repel arrow volleys from any direction. The shield was intended for both singular and group formation use.

But what is faith? In Hebrews 11:1 we are told by the writer that Faith is the SUBSTANCE of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. What does this mean by the use of the words “substance, and evidence”? Well, if we go on in Hebrews chapter 11 through verse 7, we read that it was by faith that Noah believed God and prepared the ark, by which he and his household were saved. We can see here, by Noah’s example that faith is not merely believing in God. Faith is active and productive, causing one to behave in accordance with instructions given us by God. So how does this shield us? I will go back to the imagery of the shield. In battle, if the soldier puts down his shield and refuses to move, he will likely die, despite the fact that he still owns the shield and has it close by. A shield is intended to be held and flung about in a defensive manner, while advancing forward in battle or backward in retreat. Through training and discipline, a soldier would learn how to use the shield in order to safely move about. Incidentally the soldier’s movement was necessary for the shield to do its job (even if the soldier lost his footing or had to take steps backwards). So there is this synergy in the use of a shield, where action and movement is required for defense. A practical observation in my own life is when I am feeling spiritually weak. A long time ago a friend of mine gave me the best advice. He said that whenever everything seems to be going wrong, all we need to remember is to get busy helping others and that everything else would work itself out. And he was right. Time has proven to me, that obeying God as a servant to others seems to extinguish all other problems that were otherwise out of my control. I can’t say that I understand why this works, but it does. I attribute this to bearing the shield of faith.

### **What is the helmet of salvation, and why are we told to “take it”?**

In battle, the helmet is often considered the most important piece of armor, and for good reason; it protects the most crucial part of the body. Without the head, the body is completely useless. Roman helmets were often built over leather. This provided the softer interior of the helmet, while metal was affixed to the outside giving it robust protection from the threats of battle. But helmets were more than just protection, they also signified rank and file. Different ornamentations and styles were used to identify segments of the military, and also officer ranks. Helmets could be further modified with scarves and ties, providing various other kinds of protection. We Christians face a different kind of battle, one that is spiritual rather than one of flesh and blood. Moreover, in Eph 3:16 we are told that Jews and Gentiles alike are to be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel. In 1 Pet 2:9 we are called a Royal Priesthood, a holy nation, and a special people. What does this

mean as far as rank and file? I take this to mean that we have the highest calling, and a Royal lineage. How would this be represented in battle, other than by our helmet? The helmet of salvation identifies our rank, file, who our commander is, and serves as protection to our most vital body part.

### **What is the Sword of the Spirit, and how are we supposed to use it?**

Did you know that in ancient Rome, if a soldier was found without their sword they were executed? This would have been well known during the time of the first century church. What kind of soldier is it that does not carry their weapon, or loses it on their journey? The Sword of the Spirit, as described in the text is The Word of God. If we reference chapter one in the Book of John, we read that the Word of God is God, through whom all things were made. Further down in Jn 1:14 we read that the Word put on flesh and dwelt among us (Jesus of Nazareth). Of all the items mentioned, to me the Sword of the Spirit stands out more than any other. Because, doctrinally, Christians inherit a truly mighty sword, unlike anything else on earth. God has bequeathed to us His Sword which is His Word, in order to wield it that we might accomplish His will.

But why this additional commentary to “take” the helmet of salvation, which is actually mentioned for 3 items: the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit; we are told to “take up” or pick them up.

I think this demand that we “take up” these items is in reference to when the Roman soldier was at rest, it was common practice for them to lay their shield down and set their helmet on top of it. I think the lesson here, for us, is to remember that we are not at rest.

I hope Part I of this study has been helpful to the reader. It was very helpful to me, and greatly assisted my thought processes as I dove deeper into what it all means. More than anything, I discovered myself taking the scriptures more seriously than ever before. For reasons I will explain in Part II, I no longer cling to the idea that this is just a metaphor or figurative language to help us Christians visualize our values and responsibilities. I believe the Armor of God is very real, every bit as real as the clothing we put on every day before going out into the world. I have also come to the belief that this teaching about the Armor of God was used since the beginning of the church in the first century, to teach the Gospel, Baptism, and our relationship with Jesus, The Father, and The Spirit; because our ability to wear the armor is dependent on those things.

## The Full Armor of God

### Part II

Now that we have gone through and elaborated on the different items of armor mentioned in Ephesians 6:10-18, I would like to make some observations.

1. The Belt of Truth is Jesus
2. The Breastplate of Righteousness is Jesus's Righteousness (Jesus)
3. Being shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace is the Old Testament account of God who would come in the flesh to save us (and is the Word of God/Jesus)
4. The Shield of Faith is an active belief in the Word of God, and belief in Salvation through the blood of Jesus (the) Christ
5. The Helmet of Salvation identifies who we belong to (Jesus), the one who saves us (Jesus) and the one we serve (Jesus)
6. The Sword of The Spirit is The Word of God, which is Jesus

To be clear, the Full Armor of God is literally Jesus, manifest in a way that we can put Him on as our voice, preparation, protection, salvation, and weaponry. Many people have taught from Ephesians 6 that this armor is figurative imagery for us to learn from. Through this study I have come to believe, rather, that this armor is very real, yet it is obviously spiritual in nature. So now we have come full circle to the topic brought up in the introduction. Throughout these verses being studied, there has been no language indicating a metaphor or figurative language. Everything has been presented as a matter of fact, seasoned with indications that these are spiritual items. Keep in mind 2 Kings 6:17 when Elisha had to pray that his servant's eyes would be opened so that he could see the chariots of fire. I would like to remind the reader that just because we cannot see the spiritual realm does not mean it is not literal, it just means we don't have the capacity to see it. In fact, I believe that the spiritual realm is more real than what we see in this worldly place.

Another look at the Armor of God...

Lets look at Romans 13:12-14

"Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on **the armor 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 fulfill its lusts."

From this scripture in Romans 13 it becomes clear, as another reference to the Armor of God, this time called The Armor of Light, that when we put it on we are in fact putting the Lord Jesus Christ on, harmonizing with the Scriptures in Ephesians 6. It again implies that Christians can walk around without their armor, and doing so is the same as making provisions for the flesh.

Now, lets look at Galatians 3:26-27

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

This is perhaps a very sharp turn for us to consider. When we are baptized, do we literally put on Jesus Christ? That's what the scriptures say. These verses in Galatians 3 have

now given us the circumstances by which we can be clothed with Christ Jesus, you can only “put on Christ” through baptism. But at the same time, we cannot ignore the book of Romans or the book of Ephesians, and the teachings there. They too speak of being clothed in Jesus, and they call it the Armor of God and the Armor of Light. If we put it all together, we can now see that it is when we are baptized that we receive our armor, directly implying that without baptism we are not clothed in Jesus, nor do we have any hope of receiving the Armor of God.

Let’s pause and back up. Let’s see if we can find any references to this armor in the Old Testament...

As far as the first and foremost record I would like to bring to the reader’s attention, please reference Ex 15:3 “The Lord is a man of war; The Lord is His name.”

Now, if we go all the way back to Joshua chapter 5:13-15 we see a couple of familiar references. The Commander of the Army of the Lord, standing with His sword drawn. He tells Joshua to take his sandals off his feet because the place where he was standing was Holy . This reference is important because not only does He accept worship from Joshua, but He is telling Joshua that He is the same one who spoke to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-5) by referencing the same command in the of removal of his sandals. But specifically I would like to call your attention to Exodus 3:14 where the Angel of The Lord declares to Moses “I AM WHO I AM”. Why would I want to call your attention to this?

Please look at Luke 22:70-71

“Then they all said, “Are you the Son of God,”? So He said to them, “You rightly say that I AM.” And they said, “What further testimony do we need? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.”

Now this may seem like a simple exchange of words, but remember in Luke 22 Jesus was speaking with the chief priests and scribes. They understood Jesus was not only identifying Himself as the Son of God, but also the one who spoke with both Moses and Joshua. This is why they were so consumed with the desire to execute Jesus for heresy.

Why am I bringing this all up? It’s because I want to draw your attention to The Lord, the man of war, and the Sword. We have now established that The Angel of The Lord, The Commander of the Army of The Lord, and Jesus are all three the same person. And we have the reference of the sword in the book of Joshua, being held in the hand of The Commander of the Army of The Lord. The sword here is very special, because it (in my opinion and based on study) represents and is in fact the direct influence of God on Earth. I want to draw your attention to the sword because the Sword in Joshua is the same Sword of the Spirit, it is the Word of God. Moreover, The Commander of the Army of The Lord references the one who issues commandments. If you would like to do a scripture study on all of the commandments issued in the Bible, I’ll wait. Is The Lord your Commander? What does that mean about His commandments?

Another reference that I think is important is in Genesis 3:24.

“So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.”

The reason I am drawing the reader to this verse is to point out that when man sinned, it was a sword that prevented man from gaining access again to the tree of life.

Now let's look at the famous sermon given by Peter in Acts chapter 2, but I want to look at verses 36-37 particularly.



“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Now when they heard this, **they were cut to the heart**, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

Hopefully it is clear now, it was the Sword of The Spirit at work in this situation. These men were cut to the heart by the Sword of the Spirit, which is The Word of God. They then learn in the following verses the need to repent and be baptized. So this closes the loop. Remember that it was sin which required a Sword to guard the way to the tree of life in Genesis, and it was the Sword of The Spirit that cuts us to the heart and leads us back to God and Salvation through Jesus Christ.

In Romans 6:3-4, we are told that when we are baptized we are baptized into Jesus' death and resurrection. This is amazing, because when you look at Jer 31:33, fulfilled in Heb 8:10, that God would put His law in their (our) minds and write it on their (our) hearts... we now have the Sword of The Spirit cutting us to our hearts, causing us to seek God and salvation, and when we are raised in the newness of life we still have the print of it on our hearts, and it is the Word of God that is printed there. This is incredibly beautiful in and of itself, but also because of the parallel it has in the account of Jesus, that He had the print of the nails in His hands and the wound in his side (Jn 20:26) after he was raised from the dead, in like manner we have the print of the Word of God on our hearts after baptism (being baptized into His death and resurrection).

## Conclusion

In conclusion I have come to believe that the Armor of God/ the Armor of Light is in fact and quite literally Jesus Christ. It is not a metaphor, and it is the most important apparel we can ever be found in, apparel we should never be found naked and without. The only way to gain this armor is through Baptism, which is the gift of the Spirit (Acts 2:38).

After reading through this study, 2 Thes 2:13-14 should have greater meaning;

“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation **through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth**, to which He called you by our gospel, for obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

How can we obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ? Obtain, meaning to take and possess. How? Hopefully this text has thoroughly explained how one can obtain and possess the Armor of God, which is the gift of the Spirit. Everything from knowledge, righteousness, salvation, preparation, protection, and the Sword of the Spirit. Through Baptism we can wear the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ as our armor, the Armor of Light, the Full Armor of God.

We are sanctified by the Spirit, and no wonder because it was the Sword of The Spirit that cut us to our hearts, and that same Sword imprinted the Word of God on our hearts.

In my quest to find out if we can receive one article of armor before another, I believe I found my answer, but not in the way I thought I would. For me, I received the Sword of The Spirit first, but it was not mine when I received it. I was cut to the heart and I was dead, prepared for burial. It is only after being raised in the newness of life through baptism that we can obtain the Full Armor of God and put on Christ Jesus and receive salvation from sins.

Most importantly I learned that this armor, which is Christ covering us, is conditional. It is possible to be found without our armor, and that is all the more worrisome. This study has profoundly changed me, and it is my hope that by writing all of this down it may help others too. My eternal hope is this: that no-one be found naked and without the Full Armor of God (see 2 Cor 5:3).

For the record, I myself am a broken person who is unworthy of even knowing the God of Creation. The subjects brought up in this text are things I struggle greatly with, but in study I have come to believe these things are true. As in all things, we each must seek out our salvation through God in fear and trembling. I encourage the reader to not take my word on anything, but study the Bible and learn for yourself what is true.

Shawn Price