

The Whole Armor of God

by J.C. Philpot

The sermon emphasizes the importance of taking the whole armor of God, which includes the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the preparation of the gospel of peace, the helmet of salvation, and the shield of faith, to protect us from Satan's attacks and to live a victorious Christian life.

Scripture: Exodus 32:25

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Christian Armor"

Description

J.C. Philpot preaches about the importance of putting on the whole armor of God to withstand the real and fierce spiritual battles every child of God faces. He describes each piece of the heavenly armor, emphasizing the necessity of Christian sincerity, Christ's imputed righteousness, the gospel of peace, salvation, faith, and the word of God. Philpot highlights the significance of faith and prayer in taking, wearing, and using the armor effectively, urging believers to be vigilant and persevering in prayer to maintain their spiritual defense. He warns against complacency after victory, stressing the continual need to stand firm in the armor of God to resist the devil's schemes.

Transcript

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"Therefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Eph. 6:13.

Every child of God is a soldier, and a real one. In the Christian army, there are no feather-bed, no fire-side soldiers. All to a man are actual combatants. Are not their enemies real? Flesh and blood real? The world real? And Satan real? - a real devil? And if their enemies are real, the conflict with their enemies must be real too. "Every battle of the warrior," we read, "is with garments rolled in blood." And such is "the good fight of faith." It is no sham fight - but a hand to hand battle, in which wounds are inflicted, blood shed, and life, according to our feelings, often at stake.

But how shall we be able to fight this great battle, and so to withstand the enemies of our soul's salvation, as to come off more than conquerors? Weak and defenceless as we are, without one weapon of sufficient temper and strength - through sin, like the children of Israel, "made naked unto their shame among their enemies" Ex 32:25, fall we shall, defeated we must be, unless we have some better weapons than our own armory can furnish. God, who knows the strength of our enemies - God, who knows the weakness of

our flesh, has therefore provided in the heavenly armory weapons whereby, and whereby alone, we can make an effectual stand.

Of this heavenly armor the apostle speaks in the text, where, addressing his Christian brethren, he says, "therefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." He here makes it imperative upon them to take not a part of, but "the whole armor of God," assuring them that it is indispensable to their safety - that only by being clad in it from top to toe, can they "withstand in the evil day," when all the powers of earth and hell are arrayed against them - and that even then, when they have in the strength of that heavenly armor "done," or "overcome all," they must not put it off - but will still need it "to stand."

In opening up the words of our text, I shall endeavor, with God's blessing, this morning-

I. First, to describe the heavenly armor; its various pieces and accoutrements, as indispensable to the Christian soldier.

II. Secondly, to show how this heavenly armor is taken, worn, and used.

I. A description of the heavenly armor; its various pieces and accoutrements, as indispensable to the Christian soldier. In order to do justice to our text, it will be necessary that I should take up, one by one, these several pieces of the heavenly armor; for it says, "therefore take unto you the whole armor of God." If, then, I, as a combatant, am without one piece, I run the risk of defeat; and if I, as a minister, in laying open this text, omit one, I am so far unfaithful in neglecting a part that may be for our spiritual defense. As a Christian, then, and as a minister, I must take the whole, each and all being alike indispensable.

1. The first piece of heavenly armor that the apostle speaks of is, the Belt - "Stand, therefore," he says, "having your LOINS girt about with truth." The LOINS, or lower part of the back, is the seat of strength, as well as of activity and motion. No heavy weights can a man lift, no hard work can he perform unless he be strong there. The prophet therefore says, "Make your loins strong, fortify your power mightily" Na 2:1. Of Behemoth, we read, "His strength is in his loins" Job 40:16. These loins, then, the seat of activity and strength, need to be guarded by a piece of heavenly armor, lest Satan make a deadly thrust there. If he can get a blow at our unprotected loins, it will paralyze every movement. A stroke here, so as to reach the spine, prostrates indeed. "Smite through the loins of those who rise against him, and of those who hate him, that they rise not again" De 33:11. We need, therefore, to have our loins girded about with a piece of heavenly armor which shall effectually protect them from these paralyzing blows.

This heavenly belt is "Truth," What truth? By "truth" here we may understand. I think, two things.

First, generally Christian sincerity; "Truth," as the Psalmist speaks, "in the inward parts" Psalm 51:6. Uprightness of heart lies at the base of all true Christian profession. If a man has no sincerity Godwards, he has nothing. Our loins, therefore, or the seat of strength and activity, need in this sense to be girt about with what the apostle calls "simplicity and godly sincerity" 2Co 1:12. If there be insincerity in our profession, O what advantage is given to Satan! A blow from his hand against our profession, when there is no consciousness of sincerity Godwards, must be fatal. Here he smote Judas, Saul, and Ahithophel; and they fell to rise no more. Against, then, these fatal blows, we need a belt of truth - to be sincere Godwards; to have truth in our inward parts; and, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to be made upright in our Christian profession. "I was upright before Him, and kept myself from my iniquity."

But we may observe further, that the ancients wore loose dresses; and as these were often in their way impeding their movements, they kept them tight round their body by a belt. So we are continually impeded by the loose dress of unbelief, "the sin that does so easily beset us," as the apostle calls it, alluding to it as an encumbering garment, which clings round the limbs, and impedes all free movements. But when the loins are girt about with sincerity and truth, it braces them with flesh activity and strength.

But secondly, the word "truth" is also used in a more particular and restricted sense to signify Christian truth, "the truth as it is in Jesus." A man may be sincerely wrong. Do you think that there is no sincerity but what God implants? Are not many Papists sincere? many Muhammadans sincere? many utterly devoid of grace, and bitterly opposed to the work of the Spirit, sincere? Yes, surely. Not spiritually, but naturally sincere. View the crowds of people this day going to church and chapel where the truth is not preached--must we make a broad sweep with them all, and say, They are all of them wretched hypocrites, dishonest and designing, doing it to be seen of men.' I dare not say so. Christian sincerity is one thing; natural sincerity another. Was not Saul of Tarsus sincere? And the mariners that threw Jonah overboard?

But spiritual sincerity itself, in deadly conflicts with sin and Satan, is not sufficient without a knowledge of "the truth as it is in Jesus." Young converts are spiritually sincere, but how unable to fight in this great battle!

The truth, then, as revealed in the gospel of the grace of God must be the foundation of our spiritual strength. We cannot fight against Satan with lies. If we fight against him, it must be with truth. The truth of the gospel made known to the soul, revealed and applied to the heart and conscience by the Holy Spirit, must be the belt to strengthen and guard the loins in the day of battle.

2. We pass on to consider the second piece of Christian armor, "the BREASTPLATE of righteousness." Now as the loins are the seat of activity and strength, so the breast is the seat of the heart, the fountain of the blood, which it propels through every artery--and of the lungs, which alternately inspire and expire the air, the vital breath of heaven. These are two vital parts. We need, therefore, to have this double seat of life specially secured.

Spiritually viewed, the HEART may represent two things- firstly the conscience; and secondly the affections.

Now all these vital parts - the peculiar seat of life and feeling, the special domain of heart religion - need to be covered with a heavenly breastplate; for if Satan could pierce any of these, that thrust would be fatal.

But how often does he aim his thrust against the heart, as the seat of CONSCIENCE! and would, if he could, by deadly thrusts at that tender point, plunge the soul into despair! He would, were it wholly unguarded, hurl dart after dart, and shoot arrow after arrow into the conscience, until he made it bleed to death. We need conscience, then, to be guarded by a piece of heavenly armor. This is provided from the heavenly armory - "the Breastplate of righteousness" - not our own, no, not our own, but Christ's imputed righteousness.

Let Satan strike that, if he will. He could not pierce it when worn by the captain of our salvation, though, in the wilderness and in the garden, he thrust severely at it; as the Lord speaks, "You have thrust severely at me that I might fall, but the Lord helped me" Psalm 118:13. Let him strike at it now as worn by the soldier. It is to strike against a wall of flint, against a breastplate of steel. If that breastplate be on, let him accuse - let him tempt to despair - let him say, Your sins are too great to be forgiven - you have backslidden beyond

all hope of recovery - you have no real religion; your beginning was wrong, the middle is wrong, and the end will be wrong; you are only a hypocrite, who will die in despair; there is no fear of God in your heart. These are some of the "fiery darts" of Satan aimed against conscience. If, then, we put on our own righteousness to shield us from these thrusts, it is but a wicker breastplate which the first fiery dart will set in flame, or the slightest thrust pierce through. We need a breastplate of steel, not of wicker-work such as our own fingers may intertwine, but Christ's righteousness imputed; as Deer justly says-

Righteousness within you rooted,

May appear to take your part;

But let righteousness imputed,

Be the breastplate of your heart.

And our AFFECTIONS also; for the heart is not only the seat of conscience, but the seat of the affections. What fiery darts can Satan throw into our affections! What lusts he can kindle through the eye! What love of the world; what greedy desire of gain; what sensual imaginations can he kindle into a flame! Even the tender affections which sweeten the bitter cup of life, the social relationships of husband and wife, parent and child, how he can distort even them, and pervert into idolatry the most hallowed ties! David's overweening love to Absalom nearly cost him his throne and his life. Eli loved his sons until he ruined them, and brought a curse upon his house.

No more, the heavenly affections themselves; the pure desires, the celestial love of God's own implanting, need to be guarded. These affections the breastplate of Christ's righteousness only can guard, and preserve pure, holy, and tender, that the sacred flame may be ever kept burning upon the altar of a broken heart.

But the breast is also the seat of the LUNGS, that important organ of life, by which we alternately inspire and expire the breath of heaven. This may represent, in a spiritual sense-

1. The inspiration, or breathing in of God's Spirit, whereby we draw in the breath of heaven, "Come from the four winds, O breath" Eze 37:9.
2. The expiration, or breathing out of these heavenly desires whereby the soul pours itself out before God, after his favor and presence.

This inspiration and expiration, these inflowings and outflowings of life divine, need to be covered by the breastplate of righteousness; for soon, soon, Satan would strike a dart through the lungs to stop all inspiration of God's favor, and all expiration of desire, thankfulness, or praise. But our own righteousness - what a poor defense! Can it guard or protect the vital seat of these heavenly operations? But when the impregnable breastplate of Christ's imputed righteousness is received at the hands of God, fitted on to the bosom, and firmly clasped all around, the conscience, the affections, and the life of God are all shielded as with unpenetrable armor.

3. But we pass on to the feet. "Your FEET shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." There is armor for the legs and feet; for these too may be assailed by the Prince of darkness. The feet have often to tread in miry ways; to walk amid thorns, and snares, and pricking bushes; and, in ancient warfare, the uncovered feet were liable to be wounded by a weapon called "caltrops," or balls with three spikes of iron

issuing from them, strewed on the ground.

By "the feet," we may spiritually understand our walk and conversation. Against this Satan may aim a fearful thrust. He aims at every unguarded spot; sometimes at the loins - the seat of strength and of activity; sometimes at the heart and lungs - the conscience, the affections, and the life of God; sometimes at the feet - the walk, the conduct, and conversation.

Here is one of our greatest temptations - lest Satan should entangle us in anything disgraceful, inconsistent, or unbecoming! O how we seem to walk amid snares and temptations! and how Satan is aiming deadly blows at our legs and feet, to wound them, and lay us low. We need, then, shoes reaching half way up the legs, in order to protect them from these deadly thrusts of Satan. And what has God provided? "The preparation of the gospel of peace." There is something very sweet and expressive, though perhaps at first sight obscure, in the word "preparation." It seems to my mind to convey the idea that the "gospel of peace" is prepared for and fitted to the feet and legs. It is not a loose leather shoe that may be kicked off and on - not an old, easy slipper - but a tight, firm, strong, clasped, and buckled boot of polished steel - "Your shoes shall be iron and brass." This fits closely and tightly round the leg; and is "the preparation of the gospel" - the leg and foot prepared for the gospel, and the gospel prepared for the leg and foot.

Thus, the apostle does not send us to Sinai to get a shoe from that fiery mount, nor to the blacksmith of Moses and Aaron, that they may forge a piece of armor to protect and guard our life, walk, and conversation. But he sends us to the gospel, "the preparation of the gospel of peace;" not the law of war, but the gospel of peace. Here is firm standing. To be at peace with God through this gospel gives firm foothold. To be shod aright, the foot must be neither in the tight pinching boot of the law, nor in the loose slipper of 'our own obedience'; but in the firm yet pliant, strong yet soft, easy yet impenetrable shoe of the gospel.

And observe, it is "the gospel of peace," not wrangling and quarreling. Get only a sweet sense of peace into your heart; let the gospel of peace reach your soul, and you will find a piece of armor that will guard life and conduct and conversation, and be your best preservation in this wilderness from the thrusts of Satan at your daily walk.

4. To make the body armor complete, before I pass on to the shield, I shall next take in order "the HELMET of salvation," which is to cover the head. The head, we may consider, as the seat of two special things-

1. Of energy, activity, authority, movement.
2. Of comprehension and understanding.

Now Satan aims his deadly blows at our head, sometimes to destroy and paralyze all energy and movement, all life and feeling in the things of God--and sometimes to confuse our understanding, to thrust us into some error, or draw us aside into some heresy. How stunning is a blow on the head when unprotected by any defense! All energy and movement cease. So in grace. Were our head not guarded, how would we be stunned and paralyzed by Satan's blows! And we may observe, that there is an intimate relationship between consciousness and energy. The same organ, the brain, which apprehends, communicates influence to every muscle. If Satan, then, can confuse our mind, how he paralyzes all the springs of motion!

Has not your mind sometimes been sadly tempted with erroneous doctrines? When you have heard of some deadly error that has been going abroad, has there not been something in it that seemed to lay hold of your mind and carnal understanding so that it seemed almost true? Now here is Satan confusing the mind, stunning and bewildering it with his plausible errors. What need, then a piece of armor to guard the head. And we have it provided - "the Helmet of salvation."

But why is "the Helmet of salvation" so suitable to the head? Because all truth contains in it salvation, and all error involves in it damnation. There are no trifling errors. All errors, examined to the root, are fatal. Satan never troubles himself to introduce an unimportant error. His blows are at the head. If you examine every error that comes abroad, you will find that it always is aimed at Christ, to deny his Godhead, his actual Sonship, the efficacy of his blood, the imputation of his righteousness, the truth of his grace, the power of his resurrection; or in some way or other to destroy and put away salvation, complete salvation, through the Person, work, and blood of Jesus. As Satan, then, aims these deadly blows at our head to confuse our judgment, we need a piece of armor to guard and shield it all around, which is called here "the Helmet of salvation."

A child of God is made very tender about the truth. To part with truth is to part with life; to embrace error is to embrace death; and the more that he lives in communion with Christ, the more he will value "the truth as it is in Jesus." Never give up truth. If you give up truth, what is there then to save your soul? But "the Helmet of salvation" must be put on and worn; and it is put on and worn when salvation is laid hold of as it stands in the Person of the Son of God. Salvation by grace--what but this can shield the head in the day of battle? Keep it firmly braced round your temples. Legality and self-righteousness, heresy and error will strike, but will glance harmlessly off the helmet of salvation.

5. The next piece of armor that I shall take, is, "the SHIELD of faith." We have seen the body guarded on every side, except, as Bunyan, I believe, says, 'there is no armor for the back.' At any rate, we have seen the body guarded in front - for it is a front to front battle; a face to face, hand to hand, foot to foot, shoulder to shoulder engagement. We have seen the loins, the legs, the feet, the breast, and the head all protected; but there may be perhaps some unguarded part. We have to fight with a very skillful enemy, who watches every movement and every unguarded place to make a deadly thrust. We need then one piece of defensive armor more, which in ancient times was a very useful one - the Shield; so that by looking on every side where the darts fly, we may oppose it in an instant.

This shield is "the shield of faith." How needful is this! What are we, where are we, how can we fight for a single moment, when unbelief seems to gain power and prevalence? We faint, we sink, we have no strength to lift up a finger, when unbelief and infidelity work so powerfully in our carnal mind. O how we need the shield of faith, faith in lively exercise, that it may be opposed against Satan, come from whatever quarter he may, thrust on whatever side he will! This shield of faith is "above all," or "over all," so as to protect whatever part may be unprotected, and to guard every portion unguarded. But one reason is especially mentioned, "thereby we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one."

The ancients were accustomed to employ "fiery darts,"--that is, arrows tipped at the end with pitch, which they kindled, and then threw against their enemies. How beautifully this represents the fiery darts of Satan! his blasphemous and obscene injections; for how they set on fire the carnal mind! Like the burning arrows used by the ancients, wherever they stick they set on fire. But these fiery darts of the devil, these infidel, blasphemous suggestions, these dreadful injections which this Prince of darkness shoots into the carnal mind, we cannot, with all our own strength, resist. We need heavenly armor, and the shield of faith, so as

not to give credit to Satan's lies; but when the fiery darts come, to hold up the shield, that they may spend all their strength on that. That they cannot set on fire. Our carnal mind is very inflammable; the least fiery dart can set it all on flame. But not so with the shield of faith - that is made of materials which can quench every fiery dart.

When we believe our saving interest in the Son of God - that our name is in the book of life - that God is our Father, Christ our Brother, the Holy Spirit our Friend and Teacher - when we can believe that all Satan says is lies, and lies only - that all these imaginations are but his contrivances, all these base workings of his raising, all these vile thoughts of his suggesting, and not take them as our own - when we can thus hold up "the shield of faith;" they drop off, they do not reach the soul; they meet with no materials which they inflame. They fall down quenched by "the shield of faith." But begin to doubt and fear and sink; to believe all that Satan suggests - to fall in with his carnal reasonings; to listen to his infidel suggestions, and give way to his vile thoughts, and the whole carnal mind is immediately set on flame. O how we need, deeply need the shield of faith to "quench the fiery darts of the wicked one!"

6. Now the pieces that I have thus far considered are pieces of defensive armor. But I pass on to one piece, and only one, of offensive armor, the Sword; for in this battle we have not merely to receive blow upon blow, and thrust after thrust; but we have to maintain the offensive as well as the defensive; we have to thrust at Satan as well as to be thrust at by him; to fight with him as well as he to fight with us. And what is our weapon? One only. But O, what an effectual one, called here "The Sword of the Spirit!"

This is the only piece of offensive armor provided, and yet about the last that we are enabled to take hold of. How apt we are to meet Satan upon Satan's own ground! He reasons for, and we reason against; he brings his arguments, we bring perhaps our counter arguments; he tempts, and we are seduced by his temptations; he speaks, and we listen; he finds words, and we find ears; he lays the snare, and we lay a foot to be caught in it. If we attempt to fight, it is often by some sword of our own forging, not the 'true Jerusalem blade', not the sword from the heavenly armory. Resolutions, promises, tears, acknowledgments, confessions - all these are but weapons of earthly origination and temper.

How slow, how unable are we to take the only true weapon, "the sword of the Spirit; which is the word of God!" What an example the blessed Lord left us when he was tempted. Thrice did Satan bring his temptations to cast Jesus down - and thrice did Jesus meet him with the sword of the Spirit, "It is written, it is written, it is written." He used no other weapon - and that weapon made Satan quail.

Now "the sword of the Spirit" is "the word of God." But we can only use this sword so far as it is opened up to our understanding, applied to our heart, sealed upon our conscience, and faith is given to lay hold of it. A promise, a precept, an invitation, a warning, an admonition, a truth - it matters not what part it be of God's word suitable to our state and case--it only becomes "the sword of the Spirit" when laid hold of by faith, and is the only effectual weapon whereby to beat back Satan. Through the temptations of Satan, the soul sometimes seems ready to sink into despair. It is almost as though he had gotten the victory, so fast and thick does he hurl his fiery darts, arrow upon arrow, suggestion after suggestion.

Well, how can you stand? You have no strength in yourself; you never had any; and the little you had in Christ, or thought you had, seems gone. Just at this critical moment, some promise seems to drop into your soul just suitable to your case; it is caught up as "the sword of the Spirit;" and by that the enemy is beaten back. Or Satan is tempting you to some sin, and painting before your carnal mind some pleasure or profit to be gained by committing it. Here you are, wavering and wavering, and standing upon the very

brink of a fall. In this critical moment the Lord drops some precept, admonition, or warning; the word comes with power to your soul. Here is "the sword of the Spirit, the word of God;" and by that the temptation is defeated, and Satan driven back. O! without "the sword of the Spirit" we are, as it were, only a target for Satan's arrows. But when, in addition to the defensive armor which repels, there is the offensive weapon, "the sword of the Spirit," which thrusts, he not only gains no ground, but is for a time beaten back.

II. And then comes the heavenly recipe - how to take, wear, and use this armor aright.

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." It is by faith, as we shall presently see, that the heavenly armor is received, worn, and used - but it is chiefly by the "prayer of faith," for by believing prayer is the armor taken - by continual prayer "praying always" kept on - and by spiritual prayer "supplication in the Spirit" used and wielded. If we do not continually "pray in the Spirit," the limbs will, so to speak, shrink - and the armor drop off.

The knights of old exercised themselves every day in their full armor, or they could not have borne it, nor used their weapons with dexterity and strength. So must the Christian warrior, by prayer and supplication, "exercise himself unto godliness." Without "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance" - standing sentry in the armor, keeping ward and watch - its very weight will crush us.

But it is "praying in the Spirit." Not loud, long, formal prayers, nor vain repetitions; but, as Jude speaks, "praying in the Holy Spirit,"--by the help and intercession of the Spirit; and that "always;" at all seasons, all times, all places, everywhere, and whenever the Spirit of grace and supplication may fall.

Again; it must be "all prayer;" that is, all kinds of prayer- public prayer, private prayer, mental prayer, crying prayer, groaning prayer, weeping prayer, meditating prayer; prayer feeble, prayer strong; prayer of necessity, prayer of importunity; prayer of distance, and prayer of nearness; the prayer of the tax-collector, the leper, and the outcast, as well as the prayer of the believing, the hoping, and the loving.

With prayer, must be joined "supplication," that is, beseeching the Lord, weeping at his feet, begging of him to appear, clasping his knees, and pouring out the soul into his bosom.

To this must be added, "watching thereunto." To watch for the answer; to wait for the appearing of the Lord "more than those who watch for the morning."

And this, "with all perseverance," never giving it up, taking no denial, begging of the Lord again and again, and wrestling with him until he appears to bless, visit, and shine upon the soul.

O how this heavenly recipe keeps every part of the armor bright, and the soldier active and expert in its use! The armor indeed of itself, as being from heaven, gets neither dull nor rusty. It is we who get sluggish in its use. But, to our apprehension, faith and prayer make it glitter more brightly. How, for instance, "the prayer of faith" brightens up the belt of truth, and makes it glitter and shine! How it burnishes the breastplate, and makes it fit tightly round the bosom! How it makes the helmet glitter in the sun, and its noble plumes to wave in all their native luster! How it beats out every dent the shield may have received from the fiery darts, and fits it for fresh encounters! And how it sharpens "the sword of the Spirit," gives it a brighter polish, and nerves the arm to wield it with renewed activity and vigor!

O this is the secret of all true victory! All is, all must be well, when we are in a prayerful, meditative, watching state - and all is ill, when this heavenly recipe is neglected - when the hands droop, and the knees faint, and prayer seems dead and motionless in the breast. Let there be in the soul an abiding spirit of prayer, and victory is sure. Satan has little power against the soul that has an abiding spirit of prayer, and is "watching thereunto with all perseverance." But, without this spirit of prayer, we are a prey to all his temptations, and can neither take, wear, nor use the only armor against them.

Such, then, is the armor that God has provided - and such is the way in which it is to be taken, worn, and used - taken by faith, worn by prayer, and wielded with perseverance - for it is never to be laid by until death unclasps it. And, you may depend upon it, that God would not have provided such an armor as this, so complete a panoply, unless there were a real battle to fight. Christian warriors are not Chinese soldiers, who wear armor of cardboard, painted to resemble iron; but their armor is of real steel. As, therefore, God has provided such an armor as this, it is plain they have no puny enemy to fight.

Now Satan's grand stratagem is to conceal and hide his strength. He is like a skillful general, who does not show all his army, but conceals them behind hedges, walls, and trees, and keeps them close in the trenches, so that the enemy may not see all his force. Satan is never so powerful as when we think least of his power, and he is never so successful as when he shoots at us from behind the trench. The apostle, therefore, says, "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." It is his devilish craft and subtlety that we have so much to dread. Lay aside one piece of the armor, and you are at once shot down.

The text speaks of "an evil day;" that is, a day of danger, of alarm - a day on which the Prince of Evil is plotting - and an evil, dark and gloomy day for us, unless we have on the heavenly armor, and know how to wear and use it.

"Put on," says the apostle - "take unto you the whole armor of God." There is a putting of it on. It is not like our 'Tower Armory', where guns, and pistols, and other military weapons are hung up in ornamental circles to be looked at as a spectacle - but it is to be taken, to be put on, to be received from the hands of God, and clasped round by his own fingers.

I have already shown how needful prayer and watchfulness are to the putting on of heavenly armor. But I may further add, that it is by faith we PUT ON every piece. If we have no faith, we have no Christian sincerity, nor spiritual knowledge of the truth; therefore, "the loins are not girt about with truth." If we have no faith, we have on no breastplate of Christ's righteousness; for that is only put on by faith. If we have no faith, we have no defense for our feet; for by faith we stand and walk; and therefore the feet are not "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." If we have no faith, we have no helmet, because "salvation" is laid hold of by faith. If we have no faith, we cannot have "the shield of faith;" that is evident. If we have no faith, we cannot use "the sword of the Spirit," which is only wielded by faith. If we have no faith, we have no true prayer; for it is "the prayer of faith" that is effectual with God. By faith, therefore, is every piece of the heavenly armor put on; and by faith, living faith, is every piece of it used.

What strange characters we are! Able to fight one day, fleeing the next; resisting Satan this moment, and giving way that moment. How is this to be accounted for? Because at this moment we have faith; at the next, we have, or seem to have none. Faith is to the soul what a main-spring is to the watch. If the main-spring is broken, or lacking, what is the watch worth? So faith is the main-spring of the soul. Let there be no faith, there is no inward movement. There may be hands, but like the hands of a child's watch,

they are made for show, not for use - a bauble and a toy, not a working instrument. There must be faith in the soul in order that the hands may move in accordance with the will of God, and keep right time with the dial of the Sun of Righteousness.

Faith too, we need not only to wear, but to use and wield this heavenly armor, so as to "withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." It is, in the margin, "having overcome all, to STAND." And what a flood of light does this cast upon a Christian's path--that the greatest danger lies in, and after victory! Bunyan has beautifully touched upon this, where he represents Christian as stumbling and falling immediately after he had got ahead of his brother. When you have, in the strength of Christ, overcome one temptation, you are standing upon the brink of another - and the very pride that may lift up your heart for having gained one battle, only opens a way to fall by the next encounter.

What a strange warfare! Paul's maxim would not do for the Duke of Wellington, "When I am weak, then am I strong." That would not do to go to battle with. We are never so weak as when in ourselves we are strong; we are never so strong as when in ourselves we are weak. Let me think myself secure, I fall; let me fear to fall, I am safe. O the mysteries of the Christian life! O the paradox of the heavenly warfare! And therefore, with the deepest wisdom, the apostle has said, "Take unto yourself the whole armor of God." Do not leave a single piece out; your life is at stake; do not forget one buckle; do not leave loose a single clasp; "that you may withstand in the evil day." There is an evil day coming; a day of temptation, an hour of trial; an evil day when the clouds gather blackness, the atmosphere is overspread with gloom, and the enemy comes forth in all his strength. In that "evil day," the hour of temptation, who can stand? None but he who has on "the whole armor of God."

Well; the evil day passes over; the sky clears, the clouds break, the sun comes forth, and its bright beams glance upon the warrior's armor. It is unharmed; it has effectually shielded him; the fiery darts have dropped quenched at his feet. Is he safe now? When one battle is gained, is peace to be proclaimed, and maintained for the remainder of one's life? Not so in the heavenly warfare. "Having done all," or, as it is in the margin, "overcome all," and gained the victory, then comes the difficulty - "to STAND."

Why, it is as though there were greater danger after the victory than before it - that when the battle has been fought, and the enemy fled, then the devil was stronger than ever; because then we are for laying aside the heavenly armor. We perhaps say, "we have fought and conquered - let us enjoy victory; get our furlough - hang up the armor - take a quiet nap to refresh ourselves." But Satan never sleeps; he never rests, nor tires; and therefore, when the Christian warrior has laid the armor aside, and said, "Now let me sleep, I have gained the victory!" that is the moment for his unsuspected adversary to take him at unawares, and aim at him a deadly thrust. Therefore, the apostle says, "Having done all, or overcome all, to stand."

O, we must never lay aside the heavenly armor! And this is a mercy, that if we have one piece, we have all. God does not send us to the battle half armed. He who has provided one, has provided all. Let this too be remembered, and laid to heart, by way of encouragement--that the Lord, in choosing recruits, does not, like our army sergeants, choose the strong, active, stout, robust, vigorous, and healthy. He admits strange characters into his regiment; those whom no army doctor would admit--the halt, and the lame, the blind, the crippled, and asthmatic, the wheezing, and the paralyzed; the consumptive in lung, the diseased in heart, and the withered in limb; he enlists them in his heavenly regiment, makes them all 'whole' by a touch of his finger, clothes them with his heavenly armor, sends them forth to battle, and fights for them as "the God of armies." Thus, weak in themselves, they are strong in Christ, and in the power of his might.

And every such soldier will eventually win the day, gain the prize, and come off more than conqueror through him who loved and gave himself for him.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jc-philpot/the-whole-armor-of-god/>

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