

## **“God’s Sovereign Protection”**

Last week I shared about protecting your “spiritual” heart; in fact (**Ecclesiastes 3:11**) God “has set eternity in the hearts of men,” therefore (**Proverbs 4:23**) “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”

We guard our heart by training ourselves (**Romans 12:9**), to “hate what is evil, [and] cling to what is good.”

Read **Ephesians 6:5-18**. Slaves serve their masters obediently, employees are to serve their employers respectfully; for this is good and pleases the Lord (**v. 5**).

As Christians, we are to serve others (**v. 6**) as if we are a slave to Christ, (**v. 7**) wholeheartedly, as if serving the Lord; we may find ourselves serving under, over, and alongside other believers; but (**v. 8**) the Lord is watching and He will reward our good behavior; for we all (**v. 9**) serve God in heaven, to whom we will give an account.

**vv. 10-12...** God provides spiritual armor to be used against the devil, the flesh, and the world system.

Satan is the ultimate enemy of God and of God’s people; he attempts to confuse and disable us, to destroy our witness for Christ; but our struggle is against the spiritual forces of the devil. **James 4:7** says, “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (**1John 4:4**), “You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”

Christians have victory over sin, death, judgment, the enemies of God and all those who oppose God.

**1John 5:1**, “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.”

**1John 5:4-5**, “And everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”

As men, women, husbands, wives, parents, children, brothers and sisters, employees and employers, we are able to live victoriously, bringing honor and glory to God.

**vv. 13-15...** Our battle is not against flesh and blood, political parties, religious organizations or academic institutions; we fight spiritual forces, requiring that we have spiritual armor and weapons for spiritual attacks.

Paul uses the analogy of a Roman soldier preparing for battle by putting on his armor, giving us a vivid picture of the armor God has provided for each one of us.

The **belt** (**v. 14**), was made of heavy leather, secured around a soldier’s one piece outer garment, it held the scabbard for the sword (God’s Word), cinched up tight and secure for battle, only to be loosened when off duty.

God’s Word of **truth** should always be at hand, ready and available to be drawn.

The **breastplate**, made of bronze, protected the stomach & intestines (Gr., the place of our feelings, emotions, appetites); but primarily it protected the spiritual heart, where we have been made **righteous** through faith in Jesus Christ (**Romans 3:21-24**). Through Him we are justified, sanctified, and protected by the God of Eternity (**Romans 10:9-11**)!

The **footwear** (**v. 15**) is an essential part of our armor; these were very special boots, fitted with sharp nails embedded in the soles, providing good firm traction in any terrain. Foot protection is important if a soldier is to securely and efficiently stand his ground and fight.

Every Christian has the **readiness** that comes from the gospel of peace (**Romans 10:12-15; 2Corinthians 5:17-21**). Christ's victory over sin, death, and hell, has leveled the battlefield; no matter how slippery, rocky, or treacherous it might become because of the devil's snares and deceptions, we have peace with God and He will secure the ground under our feet (**Proverbs 3:5-6**).

The **shield (v. 16)** was made of several layers of wood, covered with animal hide, and bound with iron and bronze; it was large and oblong, being used on the front lines of battle to provide protection from spears and arrows [wrapped in cloth, soaked in pitch and set on fire before being shot]. The "flaming arrows of the evil one" target our **faith**, creating doubt, discouragement, distrust, leading to disobedience and desertion, giving up.

The shield of faith protects us, encouraging us to stand firm under God's shield (**Psalm 18:30**), "God, is a shield for all who trust in Him, by faith."

The **helmet (v. 17)** made of leather and metal, protects the head (brain, eyes, ears). Paul characterizes it as **salvation**, for Satan's lies and deception seek to confuse us about salvation and eternal life, this should never be the case (**Ro 8:29-31, 38-39; 1Jn 5:11-12**).

God has supplied us with supernatural assurance now and forever, for God sovereignly watches over and protects all those who belong to Him.

**V. 17...** The last piece of armor is the **sword** of the Spirit [the Word of God]; this small sword (12-18 inches) must be handled with skill to block an opponent's thrust during close-in fighting, or suffer the consequences.

Christ illustrates (**Matthew 4:3-11**): the Devil repeatedly attacks, only to be defeated by God's Word.

**V. 18...** In Pilgrim's Progress, Christian finds victory in the valley of the shadow of doubt through his powerful weapon, prayer.

Prayer is as essential as breathing, in every situation, we are able to know God's presence, provision, protection, and pleasure (**Luke 21:34-36**); and then to put on the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit [the sovereign Word of God].

God's greatest desire and our greatest need is to be in constant fellowship with Him, and prayer is the means by which we come into and remain in His presence, safe in the arms of Jesus that were stretched out on the cross for all our sins, and then again to doubting Thomas, after defeating death, to prove our God is a living God.

Praying in the Spirit is to pray in a manner that is consistent with the nature and the will of God, lining up our thoughts and desires with the Word of God. We must remain alert for we are in a spiritual battle against the Devil, the world, and the flesh; this battle must be spiritually fought using prayer and the Word of God.

Our confidence cannot be in our own ability or resources, but must be placed solely in the inerrant, infallible, eternal, and sovereign Word of God, Jesus Christ: crucified, resurrected, and coming again to take us to be with Him forever!

He has provided all we need!