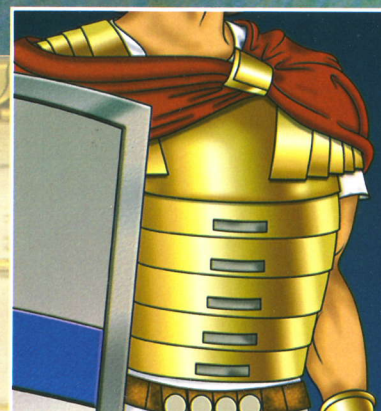


## The Belt of Truth

*With the belt of truth buckled around your waist —Ephesians 6:14*



## The Breastplate of Righteousness

*With the breastplate of righteousness in place —Ephesians 6:14*

### Description of Armor

The "belt of truth" was named after the leather belt with an apron that hung in front of the Roman soldier's groin and lower abdomen. Small brass plates were attached to the apron to provide the greatest possible protection.

### Historical Background

When preparing for battle, the belt would have been the first piece of protective equipment put on by a soldier. It clung closely to the soldier and shielded some of the most vulnerable areas of his body.

The belt prepares one to be ready for action. Belts were used to tie up the garments so they would not get in the way while fighting. The call to have "your loins girt about with truth" is a call to *be prepared*. Christians always need to be ready to defend themselves against the powers of darkness and not be caught unaware.

### Application

You can be prepared in every circumstance, by making certain that you are a person of truth. This includes—

- Knowing the good news about Jesus and explaining why you believe in him.
- Living as a person of integrity—as someone who is honest and trustworthy.

*Live such good lives ... that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God ...*

—1 Peter 2:12

### Other Biblical Passages

*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect ...* —1 Peter 3:15, 16

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* —John 3:16

### Greek or Latin Term

*cinculum militaire*—a leather belt

The Roman soldier would have fastened the breastplate around his chest.<sup>1</sup> There were two types of breastplates. The first type of breastplate was fashioned by joining several broad, curved metal bands together using leather thongs. The other was a type of chain mail, constructed by linking small metal rings together until they formed a vest.

The purpose of both types of armor was the same—to protect the soldier's vital organs. If a soldier failed to wear his breastplate, an arrow could easily reach a soldier's chest, piercing his heart or lungs.

In Isaiah 59, the LORD puts on "righteousness as a breastplate," and goes to battle against injustice and corruption, restoring peace and order to the land.

God offers his own righteousness to every believer in Jesus Christ. Righteousness is not something that anyone can gain by doing good deeds. It comes from faith in Jesus Christ.

Titus 3:5; Philippians 3:9

Putting on the breastplate of righteousness means—

- Believing in Jesus and his righteousness, not our OWN. Galatians 2:20, 21
- Standing firm against injustice and corruption. Leviticus 19:15, Hebrews 1:9
- Knowing that God promises his protection against the forces of evil for those who have faith in Jesus. 2 Thessalonians 3:3



**Breastplate (chainmail)**

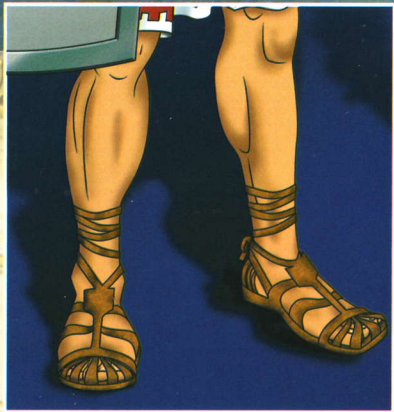
*[The LORD'S] own arm worked salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him. He put on righteousness as his breastplate.* —Isaiah 59:16, 17

*For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."* —Romans 1:17

*This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.* —Romans 3:22

*lorica segmentata*—breastplate with metal bands  
*lorica hamata*—chainmail breastplate





# Feet Prepared with the Gospel of Peace

*And your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace*  
 —Ephesians 6:15

Marching was an essential part of a soldier's life, and no soldier could march far without sturdy shoes. Even before the Roman era, the breaking of a soldier's shoe was a metaphor for weakness or defeat. Isaiah 5:27, 28 The Roman soldier's shoes were fashioned from thick leather and studded through the soles with hobnails.<sup>2</sup>

The studded soles enabled the soldier to stand firm. They kept the soldier's feet from slipping in battle. Without his shoes, a Roman soldier could not maintain his position against his enemies.

The Greek word rendered "preparation" or "readiness" in Ephesians 6:15 can also be translated "prepared foundation"—in other words, a firm basis for a soldier's feet.

The Gospel of Peace is the good news that we can have peace with God. Before we turned to Jesus we wanted to live for ourselves. We did not care about God plans. We were in conflict. But God loves us and made a way of being reconciled with him and living in peace.

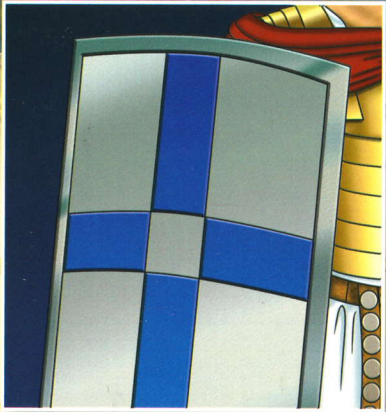
The word *peace* has several other uses—

- Absence of conflict among Christians. The Lord wants believers to live in peace and unity with one another. 1 Thessalonians 5:13; John 13:35
- Absence of worry. This peace is the confidence that God has everything under control.

*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. —2 Cor. 5:18, 19*

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. —Philippians 4:6, 7*

*caligae*—boot, shoe, sandal  
*caligati*—"boot men"<sup>3</sup>



# The Shield of Faith

*In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. —Ephesians 6:16*

Made from goat-skin or calf skin stretched over sturdy pieces of wood, the Roman shield stood four feet long and was three-feet wide. Iron rims were fitted along the top and bottom edges, and an iron circle was attached to the center of the shield. The boards curved inward and a leather strap was fastened to the shield's back.

Before going into battle, Roman soldiers drenched their leather-covered shields with water. When the fiery arrows of their enemies struck these soaked shields, the flames were immediately extinguished.<sup>4</sup> Soldiers could put their shields together and have more protection.

The shield of faith is the Christian's protection against temptation. Whenever we trust that God will provide everything we need, "the spiritual forces of evil" cannot tempt us with the lie that sin can provide a better life than God will. Ephesians 6:12

In this way, "all the flaming arrows of the evil one"—every temptation and distraction that Satan may hurl at God's people—can be stopped. Ephesians 6:16

When faced with authentic faith in God, the powers of darkness are overcome. That is why the apostle John could say, "This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith." 1 John 5:4



*As for God, his way is perfect, He is a shield for all who take refuge in him —2 Samuel 22:31*

*My shield is God Most High, who saves the upright in heart. —Psalm 7:10*

*He has prepared his deadly weapons; he makes ready his flaming arrows. —Psalm 7:13*

*You give me your shield of victory, and your right hand sustains me. —Psalm 18:35*

Also Genesis 15:1; Psalm 3:3; 18:2; 28:7; 33:20; 46:9; 76:3

*thyreos*—shield or door  
*scutum*—shield





## The Helmet of Salvation

*Take the helmet of salvation*  
—Ephesians 6:17

The Roman soldier's helmet was fashioned from bronze or iron. Two hinged cheek-pieces protected the sides of the soldier's face. For the sake of comfort, soldiers frequently lined their helmets with sponge or felt. At the time of Christ, a crest with a plume of horse's hair was placed on top of Roman helmets.

The Roman soldier's helmet protected his skull and neck from his enemy's weapons and falling debris. By AD 60, the centurions' plumes were dyed various colors to allow soldiers to distinguish quickly between the rank of different officers.<sup>5</sup>

The helmet of salvation points to God's ultimate victory over the forces of evil. Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead provides all believers with freedom from the bondage of sin, and with eternal life with God in heaven.

To put on "the helmet of salvation" is to—

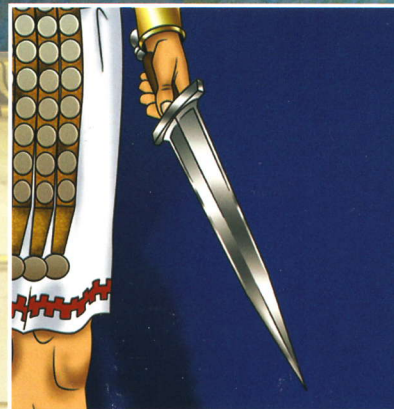
- Have assurance that Jesus has saved you, not because of good deeds, but because of his mercy. <sup>2 Timothy 1:9</sup>
- Know that every believer is a "new creation," no longer living for selfish purposes but living for the Lord. <sup>2 Corinthians 5:17</sup>
- Accept that you are in a battle and will be persecuted for believing in Christ. Keep the faith and you will be blessed. <sup>Matthew 5:11, 12</sup>
- Look forward to being delivered into eternal life. <sup>John 3:16</sup>
- Know that God will forgive his followers when they fall and ask for forgiveness. <sup>1 John 1:9</sup>

*[The LORD] put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head*  
—Isaiah 59:17

*You also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit. —Eph. 1:13*  
*But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet — 1 Thessalonians 5:8*

*gallic*—helmet

*centurion*—Roman military officer who commanded approximately 100 soldiers.



## The Sword of the Spirit

*"Take ... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"*  
—Ephesians 6:17

The sword of the Roman soldier was a little more than two feet long, and was crafted from iron. Blacksmiths hardened the blade of the sword by covering the red-hot iron with coal dust; the coal dust formed a hard carbon coating on the blade. Sword handles could be made from iron, ivory, bone, or wood.

In battle, rows of Roman soldiers pressed back their enemies one step at a time by forcing their shields forward, using their swords to advance against the enemy. The blade was held flat and parallel to the ground.<sup>6</sup>

The only offensive weapon mentioned in Ephesians 6 is the sword. The belt, breastplate, shoes, shield, and helmet were not offensive; their purpose was defensive, to protect against the enemy. The sword was designed to defeat the enemy's plan and rescue lives.

The "word of God" has several meanings—

- **The Gospel**, the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. The Gospel is the good news that Jesus came to save us and give us an abundant life, and life forever with the Lord who loves us. "... if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" <sup>Romans 10:8-9</sup>.
- **The Bible**. When Jesus was tempted by the devil, he used Bible verses to answer and the devil left him. <sup>Matthew 4:1-11</sup> Some key verses to memorize when temptations come:
  - ✓ God will help you: See Isaiah 41:10
  - ✓ God will always be with you: See Joshua 1:9
  - ✓ Serve God only: See Matthew 4:10
  - ✓ God helps us when we are tempted: See 1 Cor. 10:13

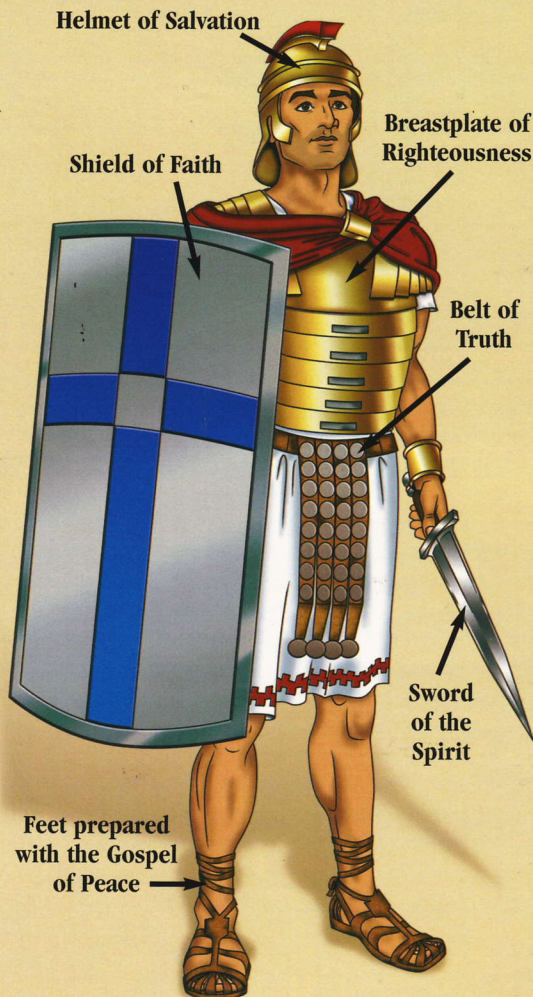
*And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."*  
—Mark 16:15

*For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. —Hebrews 4:12*

*gladius or galdius*—sword



# Ephesians 6:10-18



10-12: Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

13: Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

14-15: Stand firm then, with the **belt of truth** buckled around your waist, with the **breastplate of righteousness** in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

16: In addition to all this, take up the **shield of faith**, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

17: Take the **helmet of salvation** and the **sword of the Spirit**, which is the word of God.

18: And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

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## Background Information

*The description of the Armor of God is found in the New Testament book of Ephesians. Ephesians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the followers of Jesus in the city of Ephesus (in Turkey today). The letter was written around AD 60, while Paul was under house arrest in Rome for preaching about Jesus. He was in contact with the Roman palace guards and knew the kind of armor they wore.*

### Who was Paul?

Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ. As a young man he used to persecute followers of Jesus by having them arrested and jailed. One day, on his way to Damascus, a bright light appeared and blinded him. Jesus spoke to him from heaven and told him to take his message to the Gentiles and the Jews. Paul was converted and baptized. He went on many missionary journeys, and wrote letters to believers in the churches in various cities.

### Life in Ephesus

Ephesus was the center of worship for the goddess Diana (Artemis), and there was a large, famous temple dedicated to her. The area was a major port city of the Roman Empire, and businesses made money by selling silver idols and souvenirs to visitors.

When Paul went there to preach about Jesus, people listened to his message and many became Christians. Some sorcerers who turned to Jesus came together and burned their magic books (worth 50,000 pieces of silver). Local silversmiths and other merchants began to worry that too many people would become Christians, and they started a riot against Paul and his coworkers (Acts 19:17-41).

The riot was put down and a church started in Ephesus. Paul wrote to the new believers about God's love and power. He wanted them to stand firm against the old influences and be devoted to God in love and unity.

**Paul wrote the book of Ephesians from Rome in Italy to the church of Ephesus in Asia**



## Stand Firm in Spiritual Warfare

Paul warned the believers in Ephesus that they were in a spiritual battle against unseen forces of darkness. They were struggling against evil powers that were scheming to destroy them. They had to stand firm against the devil and the powers that attack Christians, their families, and their churches. The enemy (the Devil) is clever and tries to attack in many ways—sometimes directly and sometimes in ways that are more subtle (2 Cor. 11:14, 15).

Devil's Schemes	God's Plan	Bible
"Me first"	God first	Matthew 6:33
Lies	Truth	Proverbs 14:25
Fear	Love	1 John 4:18
Discouragement	Confidence, Strength	Deuteronomy 31:8
Anger	Patience	2 Timothy 2:24
Condemning others	Putting up with others	Colossians 3:12, 13
Powered by alcohol	Powered by the Holy Spirit	Ephesians 5:18
Complaining	Contentment	Philippians 2:14
"My way"	God's way	Proverbs 16:25
Death	Life	John 5:24
Gossip	Confidentiality	Proverbs 20:19
Regret and shame	God's forgiveness	Acts 3:19
Greed	Giving	Luke 12:15-21
Cursing	Blessing your enemies	Luke 6:28
Revenge	Forgiveness	Matthew 6:14, 15
Hateful talk	Encouragement	Ephesians 4:29
Self-pity	Songs of praise	Ephesians 5:19, 20
Laziness	Productivity, watchfulness	Proverbs 12:24
Unfaithfulness	Loyalty	Philippians 2:4
Irresponsibility	Dependability	Proverbs 14:14
Being rude	Being considerate	Titus 3:2
Worry	Rest	Matthew 11:28, 29
Anxiety	Peace	John 16:33
Jealousy, envy	Abundant heart	James 3:16, 17
Using others	Sacrificing for others	I Corinthians 13:4-7
Rage	Self-control	Colossians 3:8-12
Sexual immorality	Sexual fidelity	1 Thessalonians 4:3
"My power"	God's power	Ephesians 3:16



## Going into Battle

*Though one person may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*

—Ecclesiastes 4:12

The Roman military worked together using a formation known as “the tortoise.” In the tortoise, the rows of soldiers closed all gaps between one another and held their shields at the edges. The first row of men placed their shields in front of them to protect the formation's front; soldiers on the flanks held their shields to the side. The troops in the middle balanced their shields on their helmets and overlapped them, protecting the formation from above. The formation protected the soldiers like a shell protects a tortoise. As long as the soldiers remained together in this formation, they were nearly undefeatable.<sup>7</sup>



“Tortoise Formation”

*Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*

—Galatians 6:2

It's important to notice that the shield described by Paul was intended to be used in company with others. The rectangular Roman shield was built for use in the tortoise formation. In the same way, our faith is intended to function with other Christians, drawing us together and strengthening us to care for one another. Like Roman soldiers in the tortoise formation, when Christians remain close to each other, they can be strong.

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3. See, for example, Suetonius, “The Deified Augustus,” in *Lives of the Caesars*, trans. C. Edwards (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) section 25.
4. See Josephus, *The Jewish War*; Books III-IV in Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997) 3:173, where damp ox-hides are placed on palisades for the same purpose.
5. James Yates, *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, ed. William Smith (London: A. Murray, 1875) 565-66.
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## Personal Prayer

**I am ready to take my stand against the powers of darkness.**

*Please help me to stand against the spiritual forces of evil that want to destroy me, my family, and the church.*

**I buckle the belt of truth around my waist.**

*Help me be a person of truth and reliability. Please give me the words to say when people ask why I follow Jesus. Help me tell about Jesus's death and resurrection and his promise of eternal life to those who believe in him.*

**I take the breastplate of righteousness.**

*Thank you for giving me God's righteousness. Because I am not perfect, God graciously protects me with His own righteousness because I believe in Jesus Christ.*

**I stand firmly on feet prepared with the gospel of peace.**

*Help me to resist temptation and stay away from people, places, and situations that tempt me. Help me live in peace with my family and other believers as much as it depends on me.*

**I lift up the shield of faith.**

*Help me to hold up the shield and stop the arrows of doubt, despair, and hopelessness that the enemy shoots at me.*

**I place upon my head the helmet of salvation.**

*Help me to know that no matter how tough life is, Jesus has conquered sin, and I live with the assurance that I will one day be with God in heaven.*

**I use the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.**

*Thank you for giving me your Word, the Good News of Jesus Christ. Help me to tell others about him.*

**I will stand guard against the powers of darkness. I will resist temptations and guard myself from vulnerable positions. I will pray persistently for my fellow believers.**