

Sunday 22nd August 2021

Trinity 12



Today's first reading comes from St Paul's letter to the Christians in Ephesus. In his letter, Paul tells them how to be strong in their faith. He uses the example of pieces of armour that will protect them against the forces of evil with which they will come into contact.

Here is the reading:

Ephesians 6. 10-20:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

Perhaps most of us aren't very familiar with the various components of armour that Paul mentions, but can you think of another type of protective gear that we have become all too familiar with over the past eighteen months?

Personal protective equipment (or PPE) has been an essential part of the world's battle against Covid – masks, visors or other kinds of face covering, aprons or full protective suits, gloves, sanitiser and the act of thorough hand-washing have all played their part in our lives during the pandemic. The greatest aspect of protection now comes from vaccination. All these help to protect us from the virus that has affected everybody's life.

St Paul won't have known about viruses, but PPE provides another visual analogy for us in the 21st century. Just as we can protect ourselves from Covid with PPE and vaccine, we can spiritually protect ourselves with faith in Christ. Paul speaks of spiritual forces of evil and these are very real in our world today, but God provides us with all we need to protect our souls and spirits, just as we protect our bodies.

🤔 What are the various components of the armour that Paul tells us to wear?
What do you think these things might do?

The belt of truth:

A belt holds up the rest of the armour and/or under garments. Truth is essential to hold up anything we say or do.

The breastplate of righteousness

A breastplate protects the heart and other vital organs. Righteousness, or being in a right relationship with God – a relationship of love and trust – is vital to protect our hearts and souls against evil.

Shoes

Shoes protect our feet and help us move safely and quickly. The same is true of the Gospel – God's good news for us. When we share God's word with others, peacefully, God's word spreads with amazing speed!

Shield of faith

A shield blocks potential attack, and faith always helps us by protecting us. We simply cannot over-estimate the importance of faith! The Holy Spirit helps us to have faith, which means believing in things, whether or not we see them or have certainty.

Helmet of salvation

A helmet protects our most valuable and essential asset: our brains! Without protected heads, we wouldn't be able to do anything. Without salvation, we are spiritually lost and unable to do anything. Salvation is critical.

Sword of the spirit

Lastly, the sword is the only piece of God's armour that does not have a defensive purpose. A sword is made to strike against the enemy. God's Word, the Bible, is our best weapon against any kind of evil. It is powerful!

Paul finishes by reminding us to pray at all times through God's Holy Spirit.

The best weapon and protection we have in life is prayer. When we pray and read God's word, we have direct access to understanding who God is and what he wants us to do.

Prayer allows us to fully embrace and cover ourselves with God's armour. It's a "package deal", similar to the fruit of the spirit. We don't just pick one or two components to grab. We put on the FULL armour of God, assured that God goes with us always and will never leave us!

🙏 Our prayer for this week is one of thanksgiving to God for his armour and spiritual protection. We ask the Lord to continue guarding and guiding us in his love and patience.

(With acknowledgment to sundayschool.works)

the Armour of God

E	E	D	B	S	E	E	H	P	D	T	E	A	P
E	R	E	L	A	D	S	R	B	L	B	S	O	T
P	T	D	R	O	W	S	R	T	E	A	E	R	T
B	H	E	S	E	E	E	P	E	I	T	L	E	B
T	E	P	E	R	E	P	S	M	H	I	C	T	H
H	E	S	O	L	I	H	F	L	S	H	A	E	E
A	E	L	H	H	L	A	E	T	S	L	F	L	
P	T	L	S	A	E	P	I	H	T	O	L	L	B
R	E	Y	A	R	P	L	T	S	I	R	R	T	I
P	E	S	U	I	E	T	H	S	R	S	U	A	B
Y	T	E	C	A	E	P	A	P	S	O	I	T	L
E	T	A	L	P	T	S	A	E	R	B	E	H	H
I	O	S	P	I	R	I	T	T	B	P	R	I	A
D	P	E	O	Y	Y	S	B	E	R	H	A	B	T

PRAYER
SPIRIT
SHIELD
BELT
BIBLE
SHOES
SWORD
HELMET
PEACE
TRUTH
BREASTPLATE
FAITH

