

REVIVE CHURCH- EPHESIANS 21

THE ARMY

So far we have looked at six specific pictures of God's people in Ephesians. *The assembly the body the workmanship the family the temple and the bride.* **The last and final picture is the army.** **In our human understanding there could not be a greater contrast than that of a bride and a soldier yet that is the beauty of the kingdom of God.** Jesus gives us greater understanding through all of these different pictures or paradigms of the completeness in the church.

Ephesian Chapter 6 Paul gives us a detailed message explaining what exactly our weapons are and what they are for.

Ephesians 6:10-20 NKJV ¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² 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*. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; ¹⁸ praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— ¹⁹ and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

I believe it's very intentional that Paul speaks of the bride prior to Speaking of the army. The army of Christ is not fueled by hate or vengeance rather by their love for Jesus. **Jesus alone is the primary purpose.** **Believers will most certainly face warfare, there will come what Paul called the evil day, the day of affliction, testing and satanic pressures.** **Therefore, Paul says put on the whole armor.** **Only one kind of person puts on armor, and it is a soldier.** **The entire picture is very closely based on the battle gear of a Roman legionary in the time of Paul. But I challenge you to look outside of the purpose of just your individual armor with the understanding we are part of an army that's working together.** **The church is compared to a Roman legion, the most effective military unit of the ancient world, one that actually conquered most of the known world for the Roman Empire.** There are two kingdoms opposed to one another the Kingdom of light and the Kingdom of darkness, satan's Kingdom is in total opposition to the Kingdom of God and God's kingdom is superior and victorious in every way.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (NKJV)

³For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. ⁴For **the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,** ⁵casting down arguments and every high thing that **exalts itself** against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

Paul said we are in a war in the spiritual realm therefore we must utilize spiritual weapons. These spiritual weapons are capable through God's power of destroying Satan's fortresses. **Notice the primary focus of the battle is the mind** (*casting down arguments, ideology that stands opposed to the knowledge of God, bringing thoughts into captivity.*). The mind of humanity is the battlefield of this spiritual war this is where Satan has deceived human beings and taking them captive by building fortresses of unbelief. **Our assignment as God's army is to make war with the spiritual weapons that God has given to us. We are set free by the finished work of Jesus and now have the ability to release people from Satan's bondage by breaking down his strongholds in their minds, enabling them to bring their thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ.** This is our military assignment as the army of God.

The essential purpose of God's army will be to manifest God's victory. We need to understand that the Lord is a military commander a man of war. **Exodus 15:13 the Lord is a man of war; the Lord is His name.** God is the Lord of the Angel armies; he is the Lord of hosts. **This is His title 261 times in the Old Testament**

We need to know that Christ has already won the victory. Paul said that God in Christ has fully disarmed principalities and powers Colossians 2:15. Satan has been completely stripped along with his entire Kingdom when Christ triumphed over them at the cross. The cross was the place where Christ once and for all sealed Satan's defeat. Since that time Satan realized what he had done he's been busy trying to keep Christians ignorant of what the cross accomplished because it accomplished his total defeat. **Christ does not want to defeat Satan alone, however, He wants us to share in his victory and its fruits.**

2 Corinthians 2:14 (NKJV) Now thanks [be] to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.

The word triumph is a very distinct official word in the context of the Roman Empire. **If a Roman general had been particularly successful in overseas wars and had added territories to the Roman Empire or defeated dangerous enemies, the Senate would vote him a triumph when he came back to Rome.**

- This was the highest honor that could be afforded to a Roman general. **The triumph consisted basically of this:** *the general was placed in a chariot drawn by two white horses and was led through the streets of Rome* while all the people of Rome stood on the sides of the street and applauded him.

- Behind the chariot they would parade all the generals emblems of his conquest for instance if he had been in a land where there were wild animals that were not familiar in Rome, they would bring some specimens of these animals maybe tigers or elephants and parade them behind the chariot.
- After the animals would come all the kings and generals with whom that general had defeated had taken captive. They'd be let in chains and humiliation.
- Finally there would follow rank after rank of prisoners who had been captured in the war and these would be the representation to the people of Rome what the general had achieved in his victory.

When Paul spoke about Christ triumphing that was the picture he had in mind. Christ is in the chariot and behind him on display are all the forces of evil that he has defeated. The principalities and powers of Satan and all the things that oppose God and us are being led in captivity behind the chariot. *Paul said thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ.*

Where are we in the scene?. To the surprise of many we are in the chariot with Christ! Do you know how to get there? By one simple word, faith. We have to believe. Thanks be to God who always causes us to share in christ's triumph. So wherever we go we are part of the spectacle and the whole universe lines up and applauds what christ has done.

This is a spiritual battle not a human one. Our battle is not with each other (flesh and blood). We have wrongly focused on each other in this battle, sacrificing brothers and sisters who are an essential part of the bride and army.

Take up the whole armor (Eph. 6:11). It makes a lot of sense to know our weapons and to know how they are to be used. Practice with our weaponry builds strength, wisdom and expertise. You don't ever take this armor off and you live with an awareness of the resurrection power ready to be released through you.

The armor is twofold defensive and offensive. There are six pieces of armor listed and another one implied.

1. **Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth.** The soldier's belt was essential because all of the armor could be attached to the belt. The belt made it possible to access all other weapons. **The truth we have is God's written word. His Word holds all things together and causes everything to function with order and purpose.** If we lay aside the word we will not remain in a position of victory very long. The word holds all things together.

1. **Breastplate of righteousness.** Right standing before God is based solely upon the finished work of Jesus Christ. Righteousness safeguards our heart. When we have pure hearts the enemy will have a difficult time enticing us to sin. **2Corinthians 5:21**- For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Sin is always 2fold it includes the action (Performance of our hands) and the attitude (the propensity with our hearts). **Unless the internal nature of sin is purified we will always be compelled back into sinful behavior.**

1. **Shoes of Peace.** The shoes are tightly fastened to the feet, and make ready the soldier to stand in peace. On the bottom of the shoes were spikes that enable the soldier to dig in and hold his position but the spikes also allowed the shoes to be used as a weapon. Believers can stand in peace in the promises of God regardless of what the enemy throws at us we can remain in peace. Peace and rest are weapons we must learn how to use.

Isaiah 26:3 You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.

1. **Shield of faith.** Faith is persuasion, conviction or certainty that you are possessed with; complete trust and reliance upon God and His truth. **The Shield was actually attached to the belt, meaning faith is attached to the Word of God!** Knowing God's word will increase your faith and enable you to quench all of the fiery darts of the enemy.

The shield referred to in this verse was a large door sized shield that covered the entire body. Our faith covers our life. When the enemy launches a fiery dart (Lie) our active faith covers us and though hit by lies they are quickly snuffed out. These interlocking shields work best in connection with other believers and provide a mighty defense against darkness.

1. **The Helmet of salvation.** Root word SOZO (Saved, healed, delivered, preserved) Lose your head, you lose the battle! The salvation Jesus provided covers everything. What a gift and powerful weapon when our minds are completely surrendered to Jesus. When our minds completely belong to Him and we are fully connected to the "Mind of Christ" anything is possible, we see clearly, hear effectively and can take every thought captive.

1. **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.** Sword is the Rhema-spoken word. We have to know the word to combat the lies. There is power in the word when it's in our heart. **Matthew 4:4** tells us that **man does not live on bread alone but every word that proceeds from God's mouth.** Here is the picture in **Hebrews 4:12** (NKJV) ¹² For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged

sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The seventh is implied

1. **The spear/lance of prayer.** *18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.* Roman soldiers were only complete in all of their armor if they carried a lance/spear. Lances were long, one was used to verify Jesus death in **John 19:34** when it was thrust into His side. **More than likely when Paul was speaking of our spiritual weaponry he had this lance in mind when he wrote about prayer.** There are 6 types of prayers in the New Testament and the Spirit leads us into how to apply what type of prayer. Like the spear a soldier would always have this by his side ready to throw and kill the enemy from a distance. **Prayer is our greatest offensive weapon in warfare and we must diligently learn how to pray and declare in the power of the Holy Spirit. Prayer can go the distance like no other weapon can.**

If you look at this picture of the soldier **you'll find that you're completely protected from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet except for one place you're back.** There's nothing to protect the back except your fellow soldiers. We cannot afford to turn our backs and we better have someone behind us protecting and covering us.