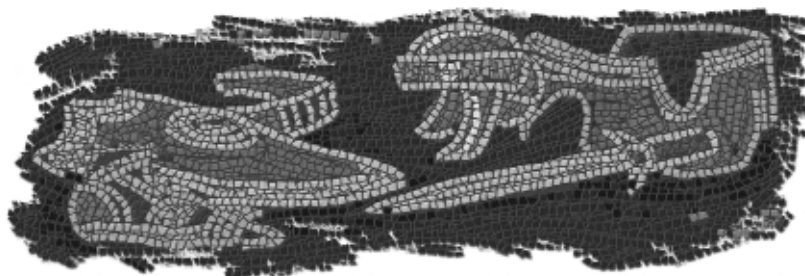


## The Christian Armor



### SABBATH—DECEMBER 17

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** John 14:6; John 18:38; Romans 1:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 6:13-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:7, 8.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “So put on all of God’s armor. Evil days will come. But you will be able to stand up to anything. And after you have done everything you can, you will still be standing” (Ephesians 6:13, NIV).

**THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD.** “The Christian life is a battle and a march. In this war, there is no stopping. Our effort must be continuous and persevering.<sup>1</sup> We need to fight without stopping to rest. This is the only way we can have victory over Satan’s temptations.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Ministry [Work] of Healing*, p. 453.

We cannot escape war with Satan. But the Bible gives us two promises. First, Christ already has defeated Satan on the cross. Christ’s victory is ours (Galatians 2:20). Second, Christ has given us the “whole armor of God” (Ephesians 6:11, NKJV). Do not miss Paul’s point about the whole armor. Paul lists six things that make up this armor. We need all six because God made and gave them all to us as one piece. We cannot afford to neglect one part of the armor without weakening the entire armor. This week we will study five of the six pieces of armor. We will study the sixth piece next week.

**A LOOK AT THIS WEEK’S LESSON:** What does the Bible say is truth? What is the “breastplate of righteousness [holiness]” (Ephesians 6:14)? How important is the “gospel of peace” (Ephesians 6:15) to the Christian faith? How does faith protect us from Satan’s attacks? What is the “helmet of salvation” (Ephesians 6:17)?

\*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 24.

<sup>1</sup>persevering—to keep on going even though there are many problems.

**SUNDAY—DECEMBER 18**

John 14:6 \_\_\_\_\_

**“GIRD<sup>2</sup> YOUR WAIST WITH TRUTH” (Ephesians 6:14, NKJV).**

“What is truth?” (John 18:38), Pilate asked Jesus. This is perhaps one of the most important and often asked questions. Humans have studied this question throughout history. Consider some of the possible answers: Truth is what makes sense. Truth is what works. Truth depends on many things. Truth can be tested. Truth is what my pastor tells me.

**How do the following verses help us understand the Bible view of truth?**

Isaiah 65:16 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 43:1, 3 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

John 17:17 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 86:11 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

John 14:17 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

<sup>2</sup>gird—to wrap around.<sup>3</sup>arm—to give weapons to. Christian truth is our weapon God gives to fight against sin.

The Christian view of truth is not just an idea or a philosophical question. To a Christian, truth is Jesus Christ. In Jesus, “the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19, NKJV) and His truth are shown. Jesus is a redeeming (saving) truth. It is a truth that calls for a death to sin and a life of righteousness (holiness), moral honesty, spiritual connection, and a faithfulness to God’s will in all relationships. Truth involves what we believe and what we do. Only total faithfulness to Christ can arm<sup>3</sup> each one of us with truth in a world of sin. So here is Paul’s warning: “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ as your clothing. Don’t [do not] think about how to satisfy what your sinful nature wants” (Romans 13:14, NIV).

In New Testament times, a Roman soldier tied a belt around his waist to hold up his clothing. In this way, he could march without tripping. The Christian’s belt is truth. Jesus is the truth. He must be so involved in every part of our lives that what we are will not “trip” us in our spiritual warfare. What we say, how we live, how we worship, and how we work, will show that Jesus is the truth and that He never changes.

**How would you answer these questions? (1) What is truth?**

(2) What does knowing truth do for you?

## MONDAY—DECEMBER 19

### THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (HOLINESS) (Ephesians 6:14).

The second part of the Christian armor is the breastplate of righteousness. God's truth as shown in Christ is the basis of the Christian life. So, the Christian life needs to be guarded by the breastplate of righteousness. A Roman soldier wore a large metal plate ("chest armor") from his neck to his thighs. This plate protected his important organs from the enemy's weapons. The breastplate is almost the same as bulletproof vests. The Christian life is protected by a breastplate of the righteousness that comes from God.



The soldier's breastplate is a symbol of Christ's righteousness. Christ's righteousness protects us from Satan.

How does Paul describe God's righteousness? How is God's righteousness shown? How do we receive it? What does it do for the one who has it? Romans 1:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Righteousness is a special part of God (Isaiah 59:17; Romans 3:26; 2 Timothy 4:8). God's righteousness has been shown through Christ, who has saved us from sin (Romans 1:16, 17). Through this righteousness shown in Christ, God has justified<sup>4</sup> us (Romans 3:25, 26). Christ's righteousness makes it possible for us to have a right relationship with God. Surely, this right relationship with God gives us the best protection against Satan's attacks.

Christ our Righteousness is our breastplate. We stand with God. We are clothed with the righteousness of Christ. We are forever faithful to God's saving grace. When Christ is our Righteousness, we can say to Satan, "Since God is on our side, who can be against us? . . . Who can bring any charge against God's chosen ones? God makes us right with himself. Who can sentence us to death?" (Romans 8:31-34, NIV).

How will a right relationship with God be seen in the Christian's daily life? Romans 6:10-14.

<sup>4</sup>justified—made us righteous (holy) as if we had never sinned. God justifies us when we accept Christ as our Savior. Then Christ's perfect life becomes ours. Forgiveness of sins is part of being justified.

Righteousness means a right relationship with God. Righteousness must lead to right living. Righteousness is a call to discipleship. As a disciple, each of us needs to lead a life that follows the character of Jesus Christ. To be righteous is to be like Jesus in obeying God's law, in leading a pure Christian life, and in sharing Christ's love to all people.

**How do we put on the breastplate of righteousness? How does this putting on relate to the "Christ in me" experience described in Galatians 2:20? What does putting on righteousness require us to take off?**

## TUESDAY—DECEMBER 20

**FOR FEET, THE GOSPEL OF PEACE  
(Ephesians 6:15, Isaiah 52:7).**

**What do you think Paul meant in Ephesians 6:15?**

Paul was using military symbols in Ephesians 6:10-14. So in Ephesians 6:15, he is talking about the boots worn by Roman soldiers. These boots had a strong grip (hold) on the ground during battle. A soldier could not afford to slide and fall when fighting the enemy. In the same way, Christians need to stand strong in the truth. Only then can they have victory in

spiritual war. The New English Bible (NEB) translation of Ephesians 6:15 makes a good point: "Let the shoes on your feet be the gospel of peace, to give you firm footing." Our feet need to be on strong footing for the whole body to remain strong. So, we must believe strongly in the gospel of peace to stand strong in spiritual war. Believing in the Sabbath is important. Believing in the Second Coming is important. But the most important truth to believe in is the gospel message of salvation by faith<sup>5</sup> in Jesus Christ alone. If we do not believe this, everything else will fall apart.



**Stand firm in the gospel of peace.**

**Read the three angels' messages in Revelation 14:6-12. What about these verses shows us how basic the gospel is to our message?**

"Peace" in the Bible is a positive word. This peace is a calm that comes as a result of victory over sin

<sup>5</sup>salvation by faith—God saves us when we have faith in Jesus. Salvation by faith is also known as righteousness by faith.

and self. This peace is a result of our returning to God (Romans 5:1). It is also a result of being united with other Christians in the truth. So Christians are told to search for peace at all times (2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Peter 3:11). A broken relationship with God or with other Christians leaves us open to Satan's traps.

**How have you known the peace of the gospel? What changes might you need to make in order to have more of this peace?**

### WEDNESDAY—DECEMBER 21

#### THE SHIELD OF FAITH (Ephesians 6:16).

Ephesians 6:16 tells us three things about faith as an important part of the Christian armor:

1. "Above all" does not mean the shield of faith is the most important part of the armor. "Above all" means we cannot dare to be without the shield of faith. So what Paul says is that besides all the other parts of armor, we also must have the shield of faith.

2. Faith is basic to Christian life and victory.

**What does Hebrews 11:6 tell us about the important work of faith? How does Hebrews 11:6 relate to Ephesians 6:16? How does James**

**2:18-20 help us understand what faith is?**

Faith is more than saying you believe certain doctrines. Faith is also saying you believe in God. Believing in God is always trusting Him and His promises. This trust is necessary for faith to work as a shield.

"Faith is trusting God. Faith is believing He loves us and knows what is best for us. Faith leads us to choose His way instead of our own way. In place of our lack of knowledge, faith accepts His wisdom. In place of our weakness, faith is His strength. In place of our sinfulness, faith is His righteousness (holiness). Our lives are already His. Faith accepts God's ownership and its blessing."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 253.

Faith in God gives us power "to put out all the flaming arrows of the evil one [Satan]" (Ephesians 6:16, NIV). Satan's flaming darts come through temptation, doubt, lust, hopelessness, trouble, rebellion, guilt, et cetera.

The Roman soldier's shield was four feet high and two feet wide. It was made of strong wood and leather. It had an iron frame. With his shield in one hand and his sword in another, the soldier was armed for both defense<sup>6</sup> and offense.<sup>7</sup> Faith in an unfailing God gives us total confidence (trust) to stand against Satan with courage. God Himself "is a shield to those who put their trust in Him"

<sup>6</sup>defense—to fight back against an enemy after that enemy has attacked you first.

<sup>7</sup>offense—to attack an enemy before that enemy attacks you.

(Proverbs 30:5, NKJV).



**What flaming arrows has faith shielded you from? Describe how faith has worked for you. What have you learned that you could share with others who might be getting hit by those same arrows?**

## THURSDAY—DECEMBER 22

### THE HELMET OF SALVATION (Ephesians 6:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:8).

Albert was young, handsome, smart, and very promising. He was the delight of his parents and a blessing to the members of his small church. Albert shared with them his love of music, his computer skills, and

his knowledge of the Bible. Children followed him. The older church members knew for sure he would grow to be someone their church would be proud of. But on the day Albert turned 18, something terrible happened. Albert went to a nearby store on his motorcycle to get something an elderly neighbor needed. A few minutes later, a speeding truck hit Albert from behind. Albert landed on his head. “Severe head wounds,” the autopsy surgeon<sup>8</sup> said. “If only Albert had been wearing a helmet . . .”

A helmet protects the head. In many parts of the world, the law requires that people wear a helmet to protect them from danger. In Paul’s time, soldiers were required to wear a helmet in battle. Their helmets were made of tough metal. No sword could cut through their helmets.

In the Christian war, believers must put on their helmet of salvation to protect their will. The will is where we decide to be loyal to God. Paul recognizes this helmet as the salvation we have been given in Christ.

**What does Paul call the helmet in 1 Thessalonians 5:8? How does 1 Thessalonians 5:8 help us understand what the helmet of salvation is?**

As Christians, we must live with the “hope of salvation” (1 Thessalonians 5:8). We can have that hope because that hope is in us. That hope is not in

<sup>8</sup>autopsy surgeon—an autopsy is the name of the operation a doctor performs on a person’s body to learn why that person died. Surgeon is the word given to a doctor who operates on people.

what we can do. That hope is in what Christ has done for us. If we earned salvation by works or by how holy we could become, we would give up frustrated! But the good news is that Jesus' works and holiness are what give us the hope of salvation.

Satan often makes us doubt our salvation. But we do not need to fear. As long as we remain in Christ and wear the helmet of salvation, He is our safety and hope (John 6:37-39; Romans 8:31-39; 1 Peter 1:3-10)!



The soldier's helmet symbolizes Christ's salvation.

**If you were to die today, do you believe you would be saved? Explain your answer.**

### FRIDAY—DECEMBER 23

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** *The heavenly armor:* "If we wear the heavenly armor, we shall find that Satan's attacks will not have power over us. God's angels will protect us."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1119.

*The girdle (belt) of truth:* "Truth is the only safeguard against evil. We

cannot stand firm for right if we do not have truth in our hearts. . . ." —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places*, p. 179.

*The breastplate of righteousness (holiness):* "God will choose as faithful and true all people who have put on the robe of Christ's righteousness. Satan has no power to take them out of the hand of the Savior. Christ will not permit to pass under Satan's power any truly repentant<sup>9</sup> soul who has claimed His protection."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *God's Amazing Grace*, p. 31.

*The shield of faith:* "Saving faith helps those who receive Christ to join themselves with God. True faith is life. A living faith means a growing, strengthening trust. Through this trust, the soul becomes a conquering power." —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 347.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. As a class, discuss the question at the end of Thursday's lesson. What do the different answers tell us about ourselves and our understanding of salvation?
2. Many people recognize truth only as a set of doctrines. What is the relationship between truth and doctrine? How can a person believe in correct doctrine but not have truth? How can a person have truth but not believe in correct doctrine?

<sup>9</sup>repentant—being sorry for your sins and turning away from your sins.

3. How is the shield of faith made stronger? How is it made weaker?
4. As a class, discuss the difference

between the promise of salvation and the dangerous doctrine of "once saved, always saved."