

191 The Whole Armour

We have been seeing in recent Reflections how, in the first letter of Paul to his young colleague Timothy, the Holy Spirit tells us much about our need for purity and faithfulness in our Christian lives. Even in those early days of the Christian Gospel there was a strong need for "the Deposit" of true Christian doctrine and practice to be guarded against all attempts to alter it or "water it down". Those attempts sprang from a variety of sources and motives but one figure was never far away - Satan, the devil, the evil one, overseeing his "away-with-God" policy from behind the scenes.

Nearly two thousand years have passed and little has changed. Today, perhaps more intensely than ever before, the Christian Gospel is under sustained attack, with those "wiles of the devil" of Ephesians 6.11 taking many different forms. No wonder we need to put on "the whole armour of God", regularly, deliberately, and with understanding of what this armour is actually to mean in practice.

Besides the belt, breastplate and shoes we came across last time, we are to take up "the shield of faith" with which we will be able to "quench all the fiery darts of the evil one" (6.16). This faith is such a stout shield because it is founded on Facts, not on Feelings or Fingers-Crossed. The Christian Faith, and its older brother Judaism, are unique in being rooted and grounded in real, factual, actual, historical events. When Satan hangs around whispering that all this Christian stuff is just mumbo-jumbo for wimps, we know how to react: "In the victorious name of Jesus Christ the Lord, get thee hence Satan, for IT IS WRITTEN".

And what is the single, most crucial, most factual thing that "is written"? Answer: that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Those who seek to rubbish the Christian Deposit of Truth have to write off the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Praise God, that simply cannot be done, because the facts scream that this miraculous resurrection actually happened, "the best-attested fact of history" as it has been described. In I Corinthians 15 we have God's confirmation through Paul that Christ's resurrection is the ultimate bedrock of the Christian Deposit. So we can just ask any "Christian-rubbisher" (who, remember, is as much in the realm of belief as any Christian), "How do you get round the resurrection of Christ?". (For a pdf booklet about the evidences for the resurrection, please see www.fsmins.org, the Publications button, then the 08 Witnessing & Evangelism button. Knowing the various theories that people come up with to write off the resurrection, and knowing why none of these theories stands up to scrutiny works, is a very useful part of the whole armour of God).

For this reason also the "helmet of salvation" is a real helmet not a cardboard one (6.17): we KNOW that we are saved, from sin and separation from God, by

faith in Jesus Christ the Lord; we know we are forgiven, at peace with God, and following the One who is the Way, the Truth and the Life (and notice there the three-fold "the"! - not a trace here of this being one path among the many on offer). We take up with confidence "the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God" (6.17), knowing from so many of its attributes that the Bible simply cannot have been written by mere human beings, let alone any devil.

Arising from our need to guard the Deposit, to put on the whole armour of God and to fight on the battlefield of spiritual warfare, comes the crucial habit of prayer: "through all prayer and petition, praying at every time in the Spirit, and watching to this same thing with all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints" (6.18-19). We are in this together, we need each other, for single, isolated soldiers are more easily "picked off". "Pray for me", requests Paul, "as I constantly pray for all of you".

Yes, "the Christian life is not a playground but a battleground", as someone has described it. But the battle is worthy and necessary, on behalf of the Lord and His Truth. The outcome of the battle is assured, sealed already by the victory of Christ on that cross, and proclaimed already by His rising from the dead on that resurrection morning. We guard the Deposit, we stand and resist, we put the armour to effective use, with the old, well-founded cry in our hearts, "Alleluia, Christ is risen indeed!".

© 2016 Faithful Sheep Ministries - [www fsmins.org](http://www.fsmins.org)