

PAUL:

Put on God's Whole Armor

By Jan Lilleby

(All quotes are from Ampl. Bible)

□□ □□□□ Paul was in jail for the second time when he wrote these words. The first time□□ he was under the Emperor Nero's justice system, was when he had been taken into custody because he reported his case to his Appeal Court□ due to the false accusations from the leaders in Jerusalem. Nero let Paul free from the custody and case was settled with Paul as innocent.

The custody-period we can learn from reading Acts' three last chapters, starting in Acts 25:10. But we are not told of any specific ways (juridically) how it happened that the Emperor let Paul go. We only know that Paul lived in a rented lodging for about two full years.

Acts 28: 16 and 30 says:

"When we arrived at Rome,□□ the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard, but Paul was permitted to live by himself□□ with the soldier that guarded him. □□ - - - ...Paul lived there for two entire years in his own rented lodging, and he welcomed all who came to him."

It is especially in the epistle to the Colossians that we find clues that let us know that he at that time had been cast in a Roman jail, for some reason. In his salutes to them he wrote – Col. 4:10 –□□ **"Aristarchus□□ my fellow prisoner□□ wishes to be remembered to you..."**.

Paul had no fellow prisoner as he was in custody in his hired rooms. In Roman prisons there often were at least two-three prisoners up to 5-6 at times, really making it a crowded uncomfortable experience.

So there can be no doubt that both the epistles□□ to the Ephesians and to the Colossians□□ was written in the time he was in a real Roman jail as a detainee. Check Eph. 3:1 –□

"...I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus the Christ...".□□ Some historians have suggested that it could have been because of the disastrous fire in Rome 64 A.D. – for which Nero put the blame upon Jews and Christians and other minorities in town. Shortly thereafter the Emperor had many tied to poles□ around his huge garden, and□□ burnt□□ them alive as living torches. Films have been made of this, I have seen some of them years back. But we find no Biblical word of that action, so we cannot□□ hold this as true. Nero was assassinated□□ by one of his own security guards. This young Emperor was looked upon as a psychopath and maniac□□ by many; only rivaled by the mad Gaius Caligula.

However, Paul, as he wrote from his prison cell in Rome – probably 63-64 A.D. – gave his exhortations in writing, without allowing the gloomy perspective of that dark threatening jail cell to hold him back.

Paul allowed himself to use a *metaphor of armament* like that of a Roman soldier, clad in heavy strong materials of metal and leather, and a razor sharp Roman battle sword and a huge shield and a strong helmet with side-protection as well as that typical metal breastplate. But he put forth his teaching on this in the spirit of *defensive measures*, and not as attacking ‘Christian Warriors’.



We are *not* supposed to go forth like that crazy and unscriptural movement known as “Word-Faith Movement” – which also kept on with so-called “Spiritual Warfare” – trying to command Satan around. There is no way that the Christian churches have ever been granted such authority, as to go commanding Satan and his fallen angel armies. But the apostles had real authority given them by Christ in The Holy Ghost, and they cast out demons and healed the sick. I thought I should mention this, since such words as those found in Eph. 6 have been greatly misunderstood over the years.

A Roman soldier was one who experienced both to be an *attacker*, as well as one who would line up in *defense*. The image here shows how a soldier looked like at that time. The red feather comb on top of his helmet, was a token of *superior commander* over his soldiers, he was a Centurion.

I believe that Paul (who actually had contact with Roman soldiers most of his later years), must have had this kind of armament/armor in mind when he wrote to the Ephesians.

Eph. 6:11:

“Put on God’s whole armor, that you may be able successfully to stand up against all the strategies and the deceits of the devil.”

Verse 12:

“For we are not wrestling with flesh and blood, but against the despotisms, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenly sphere.”

Verse 13:

“Therefore put on God’s complete armor, that you may be able to resist and stand your ground on the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.”

Paul tells us why we have to be ‘armed’ – that is, protected against attacks from the spiritual world. The occult satanic world with its fallen angel powers.

Verse 12 has been, and still is, debated in Christendom...thus

it is interpreted in several ways.

It has been often taken very wrongly, like the example I mentioned above with the 'Word-Faith' movement and other Charismatic groups. The expression used by Paul, *wrestling*, has made many think that this means to attack the evil forces of Satan. Going into battle with the devil.

But I am utterly convinced that the armament in verse 13 is of *protective nature*, and we are not meant to go chasing Satan as wild-goose-chase fanatics.

This is why Paul repeats himself from verse 11, that we should *therefore* (pointing to the evil forces in verse 12) put on God's complete armor (Verse 13).

If we do that, we shall be able to be standing upright and in 'one piece' unharmed...after having over won it all.

Any attacks from the evil spiritual world under the leadership of Satan, should not result in any of us going down and out. We shall be standing tall, by faith in Christ, after any such battle.

Our full armor is described by Paul in verses 14-18, as follows:

"Stand therefore, having tightened the belt of truth around your loins and having put on the breastplate of integrity and of moral rectitude and right standing with God.

15: And having shod your feet in preparation of the Gospel of peace.

16: Lift up over all the shield of saving faith, upon which you can quench all the flaming missiles (arrows) of the wicked one.

17: And take the helmet of salvation and the sword that the Spirit wields, which is the Word of God.

18: Pray at all times (on every occasion, in every season) in the Spirit, with all manner of prayer and entreaty. To that end keep alert and watch with strong purpose and perseverance, interceding in behalf of all the saints."

If it could be some problems with the interpretation of verse 12, I have to admit that the stakes have been raised a few notches as we read Paul's detailed explanation on that armor described. But don't forget now that Paul wrote of a defense tactics of *spiritual nature, not physical*. The armor of the soldier is but a metaphor, but one that we must take seriously.

I will allow myself to give the following 'interpretation' – leaving it up to the reader to eventually accept this or not.

Verse 14: The belt around our waist is very important. It keeps the armor for upper body steadily in place so that it shall not become an obstacle in battle. It needs to be held tightly in place, fit for battle of defense. The *truth* here points to the Gospel which we shall hold forth, Paul also calls it *The Word of Truth*. But it has to go with the breastplate which protects against sword-strokes aimed at our hearts and lungs. We have to be honest in our faith,

and shy away from doubtful enterprises, like for instance the *love of money and of living double-lives* (Eph. 5:5). I am not talking of *Sinless Perfection* in any way, but to *sustain a true life in the faith* in Christ as Paul so often held forth in his writings.

Verse 15: The image of *having shoes on our feet* is a spiritual hint towards us going out with the Gospel of grace salvation. It must be *preached* to the world. Paul called his Gospel here for *The Gospel of Peace*.

Verse 16: Here Paul exhorts us to *put our faith in Christ before all things*. As opposed to works or science/knowledge. It is clearly by *faith* that we are saved, and it is the gift of God, lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:8, 9). This kind of faith is like a strong spiritual shield with which we can quench all the fiery darts of the devil. And believe me: The devil is really busy shooting his darts (or missiles) at us! But we stand fast and firm in the faith in Christ. As victors not losers.

I love that slogan which once was used by Rev. A.A. Allen, you know, that infamous Pentecostal Charismatic *healer evangelist* known for doing a lot of hoax operating from Miracle Valley, Arizona - - for he was absolutely correct in his slogan: *Born to Lose, Bound to Win!* In spite of all his peculiar hoaxes and trickery ways of 'healings' - he was right about this. We are all actually losers by nature, a nature we have from Adam. But by *faith in Christ* we are found being totally victorious, because of the grace of God! We are bound to win.

Verse 17: Here we are told to put on the helmet of salvation and to swing the sword of the Spirit. We all understand what this points to: Keep sound minds and be diligent, use the sword (God's Word) as the situation will demand of us. Teach it and preach it! But be *protected* and keep a sound clear mind and conscience.

Verse 18: Paul added his well-known exhortation of the believers to *pray at all times*, and to stay in strict *perseverance* doing so. This indicates that we cannot always see an immediate result of our prayers - but *we keep on* even if we don't see any results. Knowing that the importance is in *the prayer as far as we are concerned*, but God decides the result, the prayer answer. Prayer can solve a manifold of problems - that is for sure.

Colossians 2:15 is often seen as controversial to
Eph. 6:12

Some believers are caught up in uncertainty when reading Col. 2:15 up against Eph. 6:12. - Col. 2:15 says,
"God disarmed the principalities and powers that were ranged against us and made a bold display and public example of them, in triumphing over them in Him and in it (the cross)".

Many read this as if these powers and principalities have been paralyzed and disabled, and thus cannot do neither good nor evil to anyone. That makes some uncertain as to how we shall understand Eph. 6:12, and the evil powers and rulers we are supposed to defend ourselves against. Why bother, - Col. 2:15 say they have been put down and ridiculed for all to see. (??)

But the solution in this dilemma of interpretation can be found if we *first* find the correct context. We have to read the verse before and a few verses after Col. 2:15.

Verse 14: *"Having cancelled and blotted out and wiped away the handwriting of the note with its legal decrees and demands which was in force and stood against us. This He set aside and cleared completely out of our way by nailing it to His cross"*.

Verse 16: *"Therefore let no one sit in judgement on you in matters of food and drink, or with regard to a feast day or a New Moon or a Sabbath"*.

Verse 17: *Such are only the shadow of things that are to come, and they have only a symbolic value, but the reality belongs to Christ"*.

Paul's emphasis here, seem to be upon the Jewish members of the assembly - those who had previously lived under the Law and ordinances. Verse 14 has a strong bias towards law keeping, which now finally had been cancelled by Jesus on the cross, taking the Law with Him.

This was true only of the Jews, not the Gentile believer. (Rom. 2:14) - We Gentiles *"...had not the Law..."*.

The powers and principalities (verse 15) which was burdening down these Jewish law-keepers, had been shut down and made total ridicule of by Jesus on the cross, triumphing over them. They could no longer torment and smite the Jewish believers...acting as accusers (like Satan), for Christ took away all their sin and 'killed' the Law entirely.

Col. 2:15 is about what the evil and accusing spiritual powers did against them previously, and not something which should concern us Gentile believers. We have never been under the Law - we never was charged to keep Sabbath, New Moon celebrations, Holidays and the ordinances regarding food and drink. Only the Jews had to abide by that in the times before Paul had revealed to him the free Grace Gospel - the Mystery. Reading Eph. 2:14, 15 we learn of the Law of Moses *having been abolished*, including all the commandments and ordinances.

Thank God for the free unmerited Grace salvation given by faith in Christ!