

## **The armour of God**

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Sunday 24th August 2003, Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

- 1 Kings 8: 22-30, 41-43
- Psalm 84
- Ephesians 6: 10-20
- John 6: 56-69

How often have you heard about an inheritance being wasted? Large sums of money or property mismanaged?

The story of Solomon is really about the wasting of a spiritual inheritance!

Solomon had overseen the building of the Temple in Jerusalem and as he stood before the altar of the Lord, he prays that God will keep the promise to keep his family on the throne of Israel. He is aware that it is dependent upon his family continuing to walk (..true?...) the ways of God.

This did NOT happen! It took only one generation before poor decisions and lack of wisdom saw the kingdom split. Solomon's son Rehoboam dealt harshly with Jeroboam, (a political enemy of his father Solomon)

It serves to show how easy it is to be led off the track and lose sight of the ways of God. The political and military strength of David and the faith and wisdom of Solomon disappear very rapidly.—in one generation.

In today's gospel there were many disciples who turned back when they heard Jesus' message about eating the bread of his flesh and drinking the blood. and when he spoke about the spirit giving life. So let's think about the things which keep our faith going.

In a special way baptism signifies the cleansing washing of the Spirit, the refreshing, the thirst quenching, the new life when we are aware of God in our lives (—we pray that this will be real for little Tyler as he grows.)

in The letter to the Ephesians (Paul) recognizes that our lives are a spiritual battleground.

Remember—it was only one generation before faith disappeared and squabbling and division overcame the family of David and Solomon; and many stopped following Jesus when his message became difficult.

So Paul says: Put on the whole armour of God. This is not original to Paul. It appears in Isaiah 59:17 and in the Wisdom of Solomon 5:17-20 where the writers talk about the heavenly warrior.

Armour covers the whole body, or at least the vulnerable parts.  
- it has protective as well as active attacking elements. -helmet. -sword.

### **Belt of Truth**

around your waist.

Prerequisite.

Needs to be put on **before** the armour because the belt of girdle held all the loose garments and bound them together. Truth is the first and essential element—it is the integrity or honesty of the person. Lack of sincerity is like loose clothes which tangle us up!

### **Breastplate of Righteousness**

protects the heart and vital organs! This same picture comes from the story of the heavenly warrior. Not talking about God's righteousness, but about **upright character**. To neglect this leaves us vulnerable.

### **Shoes to proclaim the gospel of peace**

Preparedness is the word used here. So much of the armour is about defence. It is envisaged that a Christian must be prepared to go forward into action with the Good News of God.

It is about readiness to take the Good News of God's peace to others. True preparedness of course is to know the good news of God for ourselves.

### **Shield of Faith**

The Shield pretty well covered the whole body, head to toe, and was made of wood covered with leather to protect from the arrows and spears dipped in pitch and set aflame. The shield of **faith** protects us from the sharp tongues of others, the arrows of selfishness and of doubt and fear and disappointment.

### **Helmet of Salvation—head**

Mortal wounds were often blows or injuries to the head. The Helmet of Salvation reflects that it is a gift of God. Without hope, without the assurance of God's love and the confidence of liberation, we may be mortally wounded.

### **Sword of the Spirit—word of God**

The spirit's sword is the word of God. The Spirit gives understanding of God's word and enables us to speak it and live it. Jesus' words are "spirit and life".

These are all to help us live and express our allegiance to Jesus. They are the elements of our Christian life when we recognise like Peter, that there is nowhere else to go.

"Lord to whom can we go  
You have the words of eternal life  
we have come to believe and know  
that you are the Holy One of God."

After many centuries, the followers of Jesus saw in him the sort of leadership needed for the People of God. Hence he is called in Greek 'ho christos'—'the Christ' which translates the Hebrew "Messiah"—meaning the anointed one—the one anointed by God to be King.

---Peter's response ---

### The Gospel of John

Chapter 6 speaks of Jesus feeding people.

- Bread
- Bread of Life
- Body and blood
- Now with Spirit

Those who followed him were drawn because he fed them with real bread, but then he fed them with his teaching and his healing love...