

THE ARMOR OF GOD

Introduction

Paul, the great apostle who wrote the well known segment about the armor of God to the believers at Ephesus, was a curious combination of backgrounds. On one hand he was a “Torah-true-Jew” whom the High Priest trusted enough to give letters of authorization to capture Christians in Damascus (Acts 9:1, 2); and a zealot for his faith to the point of participating in the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:59-8:1); and one who was trained under the legendary Rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:1-3). On the other hand, he was also a Roman citizen (Acts 21:39, 22:25, 16:37).

Just how is it that one could be a respected and well trained member of the inner power circle of Judaism and at the same time be a Roman citizen? On the face of things it would seem as logical as trying to mix oil and water and expecting the mixture to homogenize. The New Testament and other literature of the first century show clearly that the Jewish leaders and the Roman occupying forces were constantly at each other's throats. There were intrigues, plots, rebellions, and outright warfare between the two groups. So, how in the world (especially the first century world) did Paul stand with feet so firmly planted in both cultures?



A key to the mystery can be found in Acts 18:3 in the account of Paul's meeting Aquila and Priscilla who were tentmakers. Paul is also called a tentmaker.

In the first century Jewish world, sons most often took up the same trade as their father (hence Jesus “the carpenter” took up the trade of “Joseph the carpenter”). The common plan was that even those who were raised in privilege and reared to serve in high positions also had training in a manual trade to teach them practicality.

It was also common Roman practice to grant citizenship through awarding a *diploma* to non-Roman members of the military or those who worked closely with the military. Who used the most tents in Palestine? The Roman military, of course. They would have had needs for many tent-makers and tent repair personnel. The likelihood that Paul grew up in, or near, the Roman military camps working with his tent-maker father is highly likely. And, when Paul's father got his *diploma*, it awarded citizenship to all members of the family - including Paul.

The fact is that Paul is just way too familiar with Roman military terms, customs, and equipment to be a mere onlooker. He had to have had up-close and personal experience with Roman soldiers to have the kind of knowledge his writings and stories about him exhibit.

In addition to the Ephesians 6 materials unpacked in this DVD series, Paul's Roman military expressions and allusions include:

- I Timothy 1:18...fight the good fight of faith
- 2 Timothy 2:3...Endure hardship like a good soldier... Please your Commander....
- 2 Corinthians 2:14...triumphal procession of a victor with accompanying fragrances... (A Roman military custom for a conquering commander).

- Romans 13:1-5...Be submissive to authorities.
- Romans 13: 6, 7...Pay your taxes.
- Acts 21:27-23:35...Paul shows he clearly understands the military “chain of command” and how to use it by the way he interacts with Claudius Lysias the Commander of the Roman garrison in the Antonia tower of Jerusalem.
- Acts 27...Paul convinces the Centurion Julius to not kill the prisoners, to cut the life boat away.
- Acts 16:22-40...Paul’s interaction with the Philippian jailer (likely a retired Roman military man given the fact that Philippi was a center for Roman retirees) shows an understanding of Roman law which required that the escaped prisoners’ sentences should be meted out to the jailer.

While these, and other allusions to Roman military customs and practices, are not absolutely conclusive, they do form an interesting hypothesis about Paul’s probable background which seems to have included lengthy interaction with the Roman military.

At any rate, Paul has left us with ample illustrations linking the Roman military armor of his day with our current need for spiritual armor to fight the fight of faith. For that we are grateful.

Take special note that Paul is not calling Christians to slaughter those who do not believe as he/we. He clearly identifies the enemy as the devil and his schemes (6:11). Paul says, “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms “(6:12).

The purpose of this DVD set is to help you better understand, experience, see, and relate to the materials mentioned and or assumed in what Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:10-18, and that you may be able to “wear” the Christian armor as a successful and victorious soldier of Christ.

Backgrounds will be given for each piece of armor as well as discussions for individual and or group use.

Armor up! Stand up! Stay firm in the fight of faith!



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