

**Chapter 17 of the 1689 Confession of Faith: “Of The Perseverance of the Saints”,
Session # 9, “Perseverance and Spiritual Armor”, Presented by Pastor
Paul Rendall in the Adult Sunday School, on October 15th, 2017.**

Paragraph 3 - And though they may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of means of their preservation, fall into grievous i)sins, and for a time continue therein j), whereby they incur k)God’s displeasure and grieve his Holy Spirit, come to have their graces and l)comforts impaired, have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded, m)hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments n)upon themselves, yet shall they renew their repentance and be preserved through faith in Christ Jesus to the end.

i) Matthew 26: 70, 72, 74; k) Isaiah 64: 5, 9; Ephesians 4: 30; l) Psalm 51: 10,12;

m) Psalm 32: 3-4; n) 2nd Samuel 12:14; o) Luke 22: 32, 61-62

Ephesians 6: 10-18 – “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.”

1. Putting on the whole armor of God is what Paul tells us to do; not just some of the pieces of it, but all of the pieces of it. It is not enough that you have this armor, you must put it on. Take it up. How do you do this? Matthew Poole says, and I think that he is right – “Get yourselves furnished with every grace, that none be wanting in you, no part naked and exposed to your enemies.” That is the beginning. The graces of the Spirit are all related to how you go about to do your duty with a clear conscience. The devil will accuse you in relation to a flawed obedience and bad conscience. With love, with joy, with peace, with patience, with kindness, with goodness, with faithfulness with gentleness, with self-control, you are able to do battle against his accusations, always looking to Jesus Christ as your Righteousness, and your Advocate with the Father.

a. Then you gird yourself with truth. You think about what God the Father, and Christ, and the Spirit have done to give you all of these pieces of armor that you put on. God the Father has purposed that you ultimately will be victorious in these fights with the devil. He sent Christ into the world to destroy the works of the devil. He has obeyed God and kept all of His commandments perfectly on your behalf. He suffered, bled, and died to pay the penalty for your sins at the cross. You gird yourself with the truth that the Spirit has been given to you, and He will help you to pursue righteousness and keep a clear conscience.

1st John 3: 7 and 8 – “Little children, let no one deceive you.” “He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.” “He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning.” “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

Now, we should be able to see from the way that these verses are written that the devil wants to deceive us and oppose us and accuse us in relation to the truth of the reality of whether we know the Lord, and whether we are really walking in the commandments of God or not. The armor that we are given is

meant to cover us and protect us and help us in every way to overcome the devil. In terms of our knowing the Lord, we gird ourselves with the truth of the gospel. Am I trusting in Christ alone for my salvation; all my righteousness, whether imputed or imparted?

The reason for putting this armor on, spiritually, is so that the Christian may be able to stand against all the wiles of the Devil. (Προς τὰς μετηδειας του διαβολον) All the methods of the Devil; all of his schemes. Now the methods of the Devil must necessarily relate to these pieces of armor. We **gird the waist with truth**, which means that the Devil's schemes must be to get me to believe lies concerning doctrine, concerning what the Bible teaches, and especially the truth of the gospel which we must keep close to us and not put it off.

b. Having the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace – John Gill says – “The word *εποιμασια* signifies a “base”, or foundation; and so it is used by the Septuagint interpreters in Zechariah 5: 11; and here it designs a firm and solid knowledge of the Gospel, as it publishes peace by Jesus Christ, which yields a sure foundation for the Christian soldier to set his foot upon, and stand fast on; it being that to him, as the shoe is to the foot, its base or foundation: and for the feet to be “shod with” it, does not mean the outward conversation being agreeably to the Gospel, though such a walk and conversation is very beautiful and safe, and such may walk and war with intrepidity: but it designs the constant and firm standing of believers in the faith of the Gospel, and so striving and contending for it, without being moved from it, that it may continue with them. Shoes or boots, which were sometimes of iron, and sometimes of brass, are reckoned among the armour of soldiers.”

c. Above all, take the Shield of faith – This is the most highly commended piece of armor; this shield of faith. We must take it up and hold it up when the Devil comes against us shooting fiery darts at our thoughts and trying to destroy our persons and reputations with accusations and lies.

Thomas Haweis says – “Faith is our shield. Above all, as the most necessary piece of armour, and that which covers the whole body, taking the shield of faith, having lively and realizing views of the divine promises of pardon, grace, righteousness, and glory, confidently resting upon them, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, when with fury he hurls his envenomed temptations at the soul, to despair, blasphemy, lewdness, rage, even to self-murder, seeking to bring horror, guilt, anguish, and distress upon the conscience, though he may not be able to destroy; but divine faith repels them all, quenches them, and they fall harmless at our feet.”

d. The Helmet of Salvation – **Charles Hodge says** – “According to the analogy of the preceding expressions, “the breastplate of righteousness,” and “shield of faith,” salvation is itself the helmet. That which adorns and protects the Christian, which enables him to hold up his head with confidence and joy, is the fact that he is saved. He is one of the redeemed, translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. If still under condemnation, if still estranged from God, a foreigner and alien, without God and without Christ, he could have no courage to enter into this conflict. It is because he is a fellow citizen of the saints, a child of God, a partaker of the salvation of the Gospel, that he can face even the most potent enemies with confidence, knowing that he shall be brought off more than conqueror through him that loved him; Rom_8:37. When in 1Th_5:8, the apostle speaks of the hope of salvation as the Christian’s helmet, he presents the same idea in a different form. The latter passage does not authorize us to understand, in this place, helmet of salvation” as a figurative designation of hope. The two passages although alike are not identical. In the one salvation is said to be our helmet, in the other, hope; just as in one place “faith and love” are said to be our breastplate, and in another, righteousness.”

e. The Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God - The armor hitherto mentioned is defensive. The only offensive weapon of the Christian is “the sword of the Spirit.” Here του πνεύματος cannot be the genitive of apposition. The Spirit is not the sword; this would be incongruous, as the sword is something which the soldier wields, but the Christian cannot thus control the Spirit. Besides, the explanation immediately follows, which is the word of God. “The sword of the Spirit” means the sword which the Spirit gives. By the πίστις θεού is not to be understood the divine precepts, nor the threatenings of God against his enemies. There is nothing to limit the expression. It is that which God has spoken, his word,

the Bible. This is sharper than any two-edged sword. It is the wisdom of God and the power of God. It has a self-evidencing light. It commends itself to the reason and conscience. It has the power not only of truth, but of divine truth. Our Lord promised to give to his disciples a word and wisdom which all their adversaries should not be able to gainsay or resist. In opposition to all error, to all false philosophy, to all false principles of morals, to all the sophistries of vice, to all the suggestions of the devil, the sole, simple, and sufficient answer is the word of God. This puts to flight all the powers of darkness. The Christian finds this to be true in his individual experience. It dissipates his doubts; it drives away his fears; it delivers him from the power of Satan. It is also the experience of the church collective. All her triumphs over sin and error have been effected by the word of God. So long as she uses this and relies on it alone, she goes on conquering; but when anything else, be it reason, science, tradition, or the commandments of men, is allowed to take its place or to share its office, then the church, or the Christian, is at the mercy of the adversary. *Hoc signo vinces* — the apostle may be understood to say to every believer and to the whole church.”