

Reflections for 22nd August 2021

12th Sunday after Trinity

The armour of God

In New Testament times, at the very beginning of the life of the church, Israel was under military occupation, as part of the Roman empire – so everyone would have been familiar with the sight of Roman soldiers. So, when Paul wrote to encourage the Ephesian church, and explain to them about the way that God equips and protects his people, he used the image of a Roman soldier's equipment.

Paul wrote about truth, and justice, and the good news of peace, and faith, and salvation, and the Holy Spirit and the word of God. And, to help people remember those things, and take them to heart, he called them 'the full armour of God', and pictured them as like the equipment of a Roman soldier.

I don't know very much about being a soldier, but, from some people I've talked to, and some things I've read, I do know that soldiers can be almost obsessive in looking after, cleaning and maintaining their kit and their weapons – because (quite literally) their lives may depend on it. So that raises the question for us – are we making full use of the ways that God equips us, through the Holy Spirit? Do we understand, and value, and put to use, these gifts that God has equipped us with?

This week's reading from Ephesians chapter 6 ends with possibly the most important of all God's gifts – we are called to pray, at all times, in every way that we can, for all God's people, and for one another.

And, before Paul's list of our 'armour', he reminds us that we are equipped so that we may *stand* – stand firm, in the strength of the love of God that is freely shared with us. So the letter to the Ephesians encourages us to:

... put on the full armour of God, so that ... you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. (Ephesians 6. 13)

Revd John Waller

Lord of heaven and earth,
as Jesus taught his disciples to be persistent in prayer,
give us patience and courage never to lose hope,
but always to stand firm in faith;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Bible readings: Joshua 24. 1-2a, 14-18; Ephesians 6. 10-20; John 6. 56-69

Story: 'David the Giant-Killer' (based on I Samuel chapter 17)