

Worship@Home 25th August 2024 With Revd David Speirs

translated by Mary Elizabeth Byrne (1880-1931)
versified by Eleanor Henrietta Hull (1860-1935) (alt.)

Opening Prayer:

Holy One of mystery and power,
there is no God like you
in heaven above or on earth below,
keeping covenant and steadfast love
with all who walk before you
with pure and upright hearts.
Fill our lives with your glory,
as you filled the temple with cloud
when Solomon first brought the ark
into your holy dwelling place.
Give us the strength and the power
to withstand the forces of evil
at work in our lives and in our world. **Amen.**

Adapted from The Abingdon Worship Annual 2009, © 2008
Abingdon Press. Posted on the Ministry Matters website:
<http://www.ministrymatters.com/>
Accessed at RE:Worship:
<https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2012/08/opening-prayer-proper-16-b.html>

STF 545 – Be thou my vision
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3jtklzbApA>

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
Be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;
be thou my best thought in the day and the night
both waking and sleeping thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord;
be thou my great Father, thy child let me be;
be thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.

Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true
might; be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my
strong tower: O raise thou me heavenward,
great Power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise:
be thou mine inheritance now and always;
be thou and thou only the first in my heart:
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright Sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won;
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Irish, 8th century

Please read:
Ephesians 6: 10-20

<https://bible.oremus.org/?q=208934155>

Time to Reflect

Earlier this year the British Museum in London held an exhibition named “Legion, life in the Roman Army” which displayed much of the equipment and armour that would have been used by the Roman Empire in the ancient world. Paul would have been very familiar with these various pieces of armour, having interacted with Roman soldiers on a number of occasions. At the time that Paul wrote his letter to his Ephesians it is believed that he was in captivity in Rome; being carefully guarded by Roman soldiers. As well as being familiar with their protective equipment, Paul is also likely to be familiar with Roman military culture and practices, particularly a type of speech called ‘peroration’ which would be used by Roman General’s to encourage troops prior to a significant military engagement or battle.

In this section of his letter Paul borrows the imagery of armour and the practice of ‘peroration’ in order to encourage his Christian readers. He also seeks inspiration from the Hebrew Scriptures and in particular the prophet Isaiah when he speaks of God’s own armour (Isaiah 59:17).

Paul recognises that those who chose to follow the way of Jesus as Christian disciples would be subject to spiritual assault. The ultimate source of these assaults would not be “enemies of blood and flesh” but rather “cosmic powers” and “spiritual sources of evil.” (Ephesians 6:12). In order to withstand these hostile forces, it is necessary for the believer to put on the “armour of God” and work co-operatively with other fellow Christians in prayer. It is only by depending on the spiritual protection offered by God that Christian’s can hope to resist the evil that is present and manifest within the world.

Paul refers to elements of military clothing and equipment as metaphors for the defences that God offers that need to be taken up by the

Christian believer. Truth is the belt on which everything else depends and holds it all together. Righteousness, and not self-righteousness, enable us to live justly and in right relationship with one another and is a life-saving breastplate. Shoes enable the believer to be on the move, proclaiming the "Gospel of Peace." (Ephesians 6:15) The shield of faith quenches the flaming arrows of adversaries. (Roman shields were covered in water-soaked leather for this purpose.) Salvation, obtained through Christ's death and resurrection defends the head, the centre of all thought, as a helmet,

The only offensive weapon that Paul refers to is the "Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17) a reminder that the Gospel is the best means by which the evil of the world can be defeated through the Spirit of life, truth, and reconciliation.

In the 21st Century it is frequently the case that we feel buffeted by forces that are beyond our control and we see examples of cruelty and suffering in the world that we are powerless to effect. Paul's message in this passage reminds us that not only do we have God's protection from evil but that we have a responsibility to work for God's Kingdom by proclaiming the Gospel of God's love in Christ. Through prayer and action, we can have a positive effect on the world around us, as God encourages us to agents of change and transformation empowered by his Spirit and equipped with his message of love.

Prayer of Intercession

You are invited to pray silently for:
The needs of the world...
The Church and its calling...
Loved ones going through difficult times...
For peace, justice, and reconciliation...
In Jesus name. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven...

StF 637 – Soldiers of Christ Arise

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z06GUswG5TA>

Soldiers of Christ, arise

and put your armour on,
strong in the strength which God supplies
through his eternal Son.
Strong in the Lord of hosts
and in his mighty power,
who in the strength of Jesus trusts
is more than conqueror.

Stand then in his great might
with all his strength endued;
and take, to arm you for the fight,
the panoply of our God.
that, having all things done,
and all your conflicts passed,
you may o'ercome through Christ alone,
and stand complete at last.

Leave no unguarded place,
no weakness of the soul;
take every virtue, every grace,
and fortify the whole:
indissolubly joined
to battle all proceed;
but arm yourselves with all the mind
that was in Christ, your head.

From strength to strength go on:
wrestle and fight and pray;
tread all the powers of darkness down
and win the well-fought day;
still let the Spirit cry
in all his soldiers: come!
Till Christ the Lord descend from high,
and take the conquerors home.

Charles Wesley (1707 – 1788)

Final Prayer

Go out and make known the mystery of the gospel. Keep alert and pray at all times. Draw strength from God's power and so stand firm against all that would corrupt you. And may God arm you with truth and righteousness; May Christ Jesus give you words of Spirit and life; and may the Holy Spirit draw you near to God's presence and bless you with honour and grace. We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
In the name of Christ. Amen.

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