

GD43 - "Take upon you my whole armor"
Goose Creek Ward, Ashburn, VA Stake
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Context of the quote

The title and subject of this lesson is taken from D&C 27:15. The overarching theme of D&C 27 is the Sacrament. In D&C 27:1-4 the Lord tells Joseph, through an angel, the physical aspects of the Sacrament are not as important as the spiritual aspect. The purpose is to remember Jesus' sacrifice.

Then in D&C 27:5-14 the Lord explains further that the Sacrament has an eschatological theme. It is a symbol of the day when He will once again drink the fruit of the vine on the earth in triumph with all the patriarchs as well as all the faithful.

In order to be among those faithful the Lord then admonishes us to be faithful and He paraphrases Paul in doing so:

D&C 27:15-18

15 Wherefore, lift up your hearts and rejoice, and gird up your loins, and **take upon you my whole armor**, that ye may be able to withstand the evil day, having done all, that ye may be able to stand. 16 Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, which I have sent mine angels to commit unto you; 17 Taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked; 18 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of my Spirit, which I will pour out upon you, and my word which I reveal unto you, and be agreed as touching all things whatsoever ye ask of me, and be faithful until I come, and ye shall be caught up, that where I am ye shall be also. Amen.

If we are faithful and take upon ourselves the whole armor of the Lord, then we will be among the faithful who participate in the great feast of the Day of the Lord.

Isaiah -> Paul -> Joseph

It is common for Christians to make various "common sense" interpretations up for the various pieces of armor described, such as:

helmet	thoughts in the mind
breastplate	desires of heart
shoes	godly walk
girdle	chastity

And Mormons in general have followed the Christian approach, even though the analogies don't really work out all that well. Following these equations the hands would be the works of the person, but according to the passage the hands are occupied with

a sword and shield. The shield represents faith and the sword is the word of God, which really should be in the mouth, not the hand. So, this analogy doesn't really fit.

Aside from the analogy not really being a good fit, this approach fails to recognize that Paul was not making up a novel series of symbols. Paul distilled his set of spiritual defenses from various passages in Isaiah:

Isaiah

Ephesians 6

D&C 27

	10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [places]. 13 Wherefore	
	take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and	15 Wherefore, lift up your hearts and rejoice, and gird up your loins, and take upon you my whole armor, that ye may be able to withstand the evil day, having done all, that ye may be able to stand. 16 Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth,
11:5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.		
59:17 For he put on righteousness as a breastplate...	having on the breastplate of righteousness;	having on the breastplate of righteousness, and
52:7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!	15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;	your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, which I have sent mine angels to commit unto you;
49:2 ...in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me.	16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.	17 Taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked;
59:17 ...and an helmet of salvation upon his head;	17 And take the helmet of salvation, and	18 And take the helmet of salvation, and
49:2 And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword...	the sword of the Spirit, which	the sword of my Spirit, which I will pour out

is the word of God:

upon you, and
my word which
I reveal unto you, and
be agreed as
touching all things
whatsoever ye ask of me, and
be faithful
until I come, and
ye shall be caught up,
that where I am
ye shall be also. Amen.

In order to understand what Paul wrote in Ephesians 6, and therefore what Joseph wrote in D&C 27, we have to go back to the original source of the text.

Isaiah's Original Context

"loins girt about with truth"

Isa. 11:5

And **righteousness shall be the girdle** of his loins, and **faithfulness the girdle** of his reins.

Isaiah 11:1-5 is a blatantly messianic passage talking about the stem of Jesse. It describes the messiah as anointed by the Spirit, filled with knowledge of the Lord, and one who judges righteously.

By inference, the passage indicates those anointed by the Spirit fear the Lord and not man, and are just according to God's justice, not man's justice.

"the breastplate of righteousness"

Isa. 59:17

For he put on **righteousness as a breastplate**, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance [for] clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke.

As sin has separated men from the Lord (cf. Isa. 59:2) the Lord must bring about salvation Himself. Works of iniquity and unrighteousness cover the earth (cf. Isa. 59:3-15) so the Lord comes down from heaven, bringing righteousness with Him (cf. Isa. 59:16-19), to redeem Zion and Israel (cf. Isa. 59:20-21).

The armor is a symbol of vengeance and punishment upon the wicked which the Lord metes out on the wicked, so as to redeem Israel. It represents people actively fighting against wickedness in favor of the Lord's righteousness.

"feet shod with...the gospel of peace"

Isa. 52:7

How beautiful upon the mountains are the **feet** of him that bringeth **good tidings, that publisheth peace**; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

The ultimate fulfilment of this passage is when Zion is redeemed in a millennial setting (cf. Isa. 52:1-2). Then, the inhabitants of Zion will be exalted, as upon the mountains of all the earth, and will herald the redemption of Zion to all nations (cf. Isa. 52:8-12).

While the ultimate fulfilment is in a millennial setting, those who had heralded the kingdom of God on earth will likewise rejoice and be exalted when they see Zion finally established. Those who presently herald the kingdom of God are those whose feet are shod with the gospel of peace.

From the Scriptures, the symbolism regarding feet is twofold. First, to have your feet firmly planted means you are established on a strong foundation, akin to the parable of the sandy foundation and the foundation of rock (cf. Matt. 7:24-27). What foundation could be stronger than a mountain? The second is that the feet are the dirtiest and lowest part of the body. If your feet of those who herald Zion is beautiful, then how beautiful is the rest of them? Very beautiful, because they are sanctified. It is a symbol of contrasting physical dirtiness with spiritual cleanliness.

"the shield of faith"

This symbol requires more explanation because Paul's reference is a bit obscure.

Isa. 49:2

And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in **the shadow of his hand hath he hid me**, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me;

Isa. 51:16

16 And I have put my words in thy mouth, and **I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand**, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou [art] my people.

In the two passages above the Lord is presented as overshadowing, and therefore protecting, His servants with His hand. In other words, the Lord is the shield of the servants. This is made more plain in a couple of passages from Psalms:

Ps. 119:114

114 Thou [art] **my hiding place and my shield**: I hope in thy word.

Ps. 91:1-5

1 HE that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide **under the shadow of the Almighty**. 2 I will say of the LORD, [He is] **my refuge and my fortress**: my God; in him will I trust. 3 Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, [and] from the noisome pestilence. 4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth [shall be thy] **shield and buckler**. 5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; [nor] for the arrow [that] flieth by day;

The Lord is "my hiding place and my shield", here the equation becomes explicit. Note also in Ps. 91:5 the Lord acts as a shield against the arrows of the enemy, just as Paul says the shield of faith will protect us from the fiery darts of the adversary.

Faith in the Lord is a shield because it motivates our actions to be righteous and just. As long as we are acting righteously, then the adversary cannot overpower us with temptation. When your faith wanes then you fall into inaction and then the adversary can more easily lead you astray.

"the helmet of salvation"

Isa. 59:17

For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an **helmet of salvation** upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance [for] clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke.

See the paragraph above on "righteousness as a breastplate".

"the sword of the Spirit"

Isa. 49:2

And he hath made **my mouth like a sharp sword**; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me;

In this passage Isaiah writes as though Israel is speaking. Israel is saying it is chosen because of the covenant with Abraham et al. Because of this status the Lord has worked with Israel and put His words in their mouth (cf. Isa. 59:21).

Isa. 11:4

4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall **smite the earth with the rod of his mouth**, and with the **breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked**.

In this blatantly messianic passage the one who is anointed with the Spirit is presented as one who carries eternal

judgement with him. By wielding the word of the Lord the anointed one strikes his enemies with God's judgement, rather than man's judgement. An earthly leader uses swords and physical weapons where a heavenly leader uses principals of eternity.

Why are the Lord's words like a sharp sword? Because they cut through wickedness and hypocrisy, cf. Hebr. 4:10-13, 1 Ne. 16:1-2, Alma 1:7-9.

The sword of the Spirit is the word of God given to us through the Scriptures and by inspiration. The revealed word of God is the truth, and that is what the wicked hate.

Conclusions

In Eph. 6:10 Paul says:

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

This is the core message of all of the armor and weapons symbolism. He wants us to be strong in the Lord, to rely on the Lord for our strength. Not our own learning, not the arm of flesh, but the Lord.

We need to be Christlike. In 3 Ne. 27:27 the resurrected Lord told the Nephite disciples:

27 And know ye that ye shall be judges of this people, according to the judgment which I shall give unto you, which shall be just. Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.

He tells them to be even as He is. This is Paul's message. We should put on this "armor", the spiritual strength of the Lord, to fight the adversary.

Think about Jesus' confrontation with the adversary being tempted after fasting 40 days (cf. Matt. 4:1-11). There was a head to head confrontation between Jesus and Satan. How did Jesus beat Satan? He beat him with the word of God, the strength of the Lord, his faith.

But how do we, who are weak and who are sinners, obtain such strength? We are told in Ether 12:27 as follows:

And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.

We have to humble ourselves and submit to the Lord. Only then will we have His strength. Only then will we wear this armor Paul was speaking of. Just as Jesus submitted himself to the will of the Father, and therefore had all of the Father's strength, so must we submit and humble ourselves. If we do not humble ourselves, we cannot wear the armor of God.

Isaiah

Ephesians 6

D&C 27

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59:17 For he put on righteousness as a breastplate...

52:7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

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11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [places].

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take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all,

to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and

having on the breastplate of righteousness;

15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and

the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

15 Wherefore, lift up your hearts and rejoice, and gird up your loins, and take upon you my whole armor, that ye may be able to withstand the evil day, having done all, that ye may be able to stand.

16 Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth,

having on the breastplate of righteousness, and

your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, which I have sent mine angels to commit unto you;

17 Taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked;

18 And take the helmet of salvation, and

the sword of my Spirit, which I will pour out upon you, and my word which I reveal unto you, and be agreed as touching all things whatsoever ye ask of me, and be faithful until I come, and ye shall be caught up, that where I am ye shall be also. Amen.