

The Spiritual War

6. THE ARMOR OF GOD



In the book of Ephesians, Paul writes his letter to the church at Ephesus, giving them specific instructions in his absence. Within this letter, Paul commands the church to put on the full armor of God. Just what did Paul mean by such a command?

To understand the meaning of the Paul's command, we need to see the background of the command. Paul who was writing from Rome, as a prisoner, wrote the letter. Paul was probably writing this letter in the company of Roman legions who stood guard over him. He would have seen these soldiers with their armor, swords and shields, as they were present in the city of Rome. Paul is writing this letter about A.D. 60, as a prisoner in Rome awaiting trial before Caesar.

Paul addresses the letter to the saints at Ephesus and the faithful in Jesus Christ. If you recall, from the book of Acts, Paul spent 3-years in the city of Ephesus (Acts 20:31). His ministry there was so successful, that the silversmiths who were losing money, because people stopped buying idols. The silversmiths threatened Paul's life, because so many turned to Christ. Turning to Christ, they no longer needed the idols of

Artemis (Diana) produced by their guild. At this point Paul left the city, eventually returning to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, he was arrested; from there he was sent to Rome.

In Rome, Paul was imprisoned 2-years, before his execution. In Rome, while in prison, Paul wrote to the church of Ephesus. Giving them instructions on being successful in their calling, in his concluding remarks, Paul commands the church to put on *the full armor of God*. Ephesus later became a stronghold of Christianity; the Apostle John is buried in the city. Jesus in Revelation commends the city for their adherence to doctrine, and their willingness to test those who claim to be disciples in (A.D. 96) (Rev. 2:1-7).

Ephesus in many ways was a model city of Spiritual war, which we will examine as we go through the various aspects of the Armor of God.

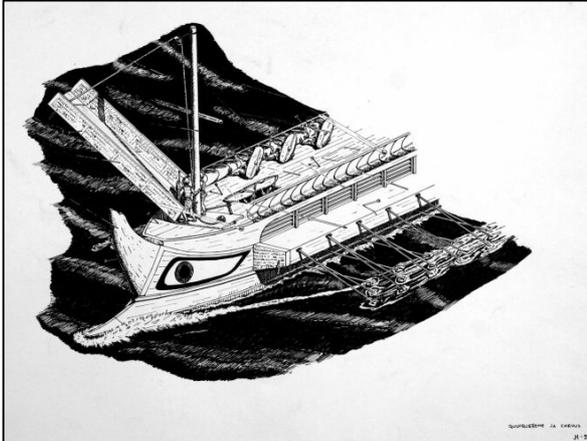
The Roman Empire

Paul uses the description of a Roman soldier, to illustrate to the Church at Ephesus, the need to put on the armor of God. Paul who was a Roman citizen (Acts 22:28) by birth, would have been familiar with the Roman legions, their weapons, and authority. He uses this to illustrate a spiritual parallel for the saints (Born-again believers). We are literally the army of the Lord, occupying the physical world. Paul uses the picture of a Roman soldier to cast the vision, of who we are in Christ. We are in every sense, a soldier for the kingdom of God.

The success of the Roman Empire was the



reflection of the Roman military and the discipline of its army. Paul lived during a time known as the *Pax Romana* or Roman Peace. The peace was the result of Roman military might, which established the boundaries of the Empire.



Rome started out as a city-state, in what is known as Italy today, in the year of 753 B.C. By the year 509 B.C., Rome had become a republic, as its farmer-soldiers had conquered cities and territories outside of Rome. The Roman military learned to adapt their methods of warfare, improving on what their rivals used, looking for ways defeat the obstacles.

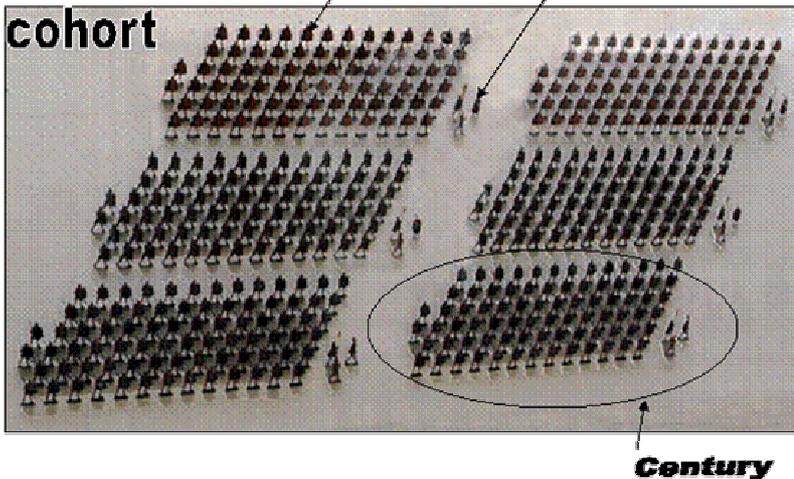
For example in the *Punic Wars*¹, the wars between Carthage and Rome, Carthage controlled the Mediterranean Sea with its naval ships. Rome captured one of their ships and copied it, building their own navy to counter Carthage. When they realized they could not out sail them, the then developed away of ramming their ships, and locking them together with a grappling device, called a *Corvus (Raven)*, creating a bridge between the ships, this allowed superior Roman forces to board the enemy ship. Soon the advantage

of Carthage was lost. This allowed Rome to control the Mediterranean, eventually leading to the conquest of Judea in 64 B.C.

Rome expected a great deal out of their army, and they organized and trained their army composed of Legions for war.

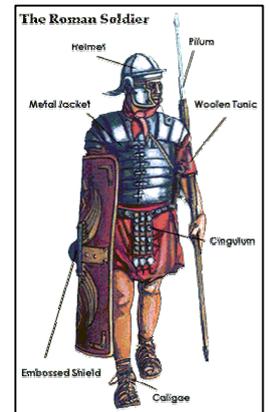
A Soldier Centurian

The Roman Legions



By the time Paul, Rome in A.D. 60, the Roman army was composed of about 30 Legions, which numbered about 5000-6000 men per Legion. Each Legion was divided into 10 *Cohorts*, composed of 480 men and each *Cohort* had 6 *centuries* of 80 men, headed by a *centurion*.

The training and discipline required of the Roman legions is remarkable by event today's standards.



The main pre-requisite for a member of the Roman Army was fitness, given the long distances they were expected to march. They commonly trained by running, chopping down trees and doing obstacle courses. 3 times a month a legionary had to do an 18 mile route march with 60 pounds of equipment, armour and weapons to carry. It was common practice for a legion being readied for deployment to spend the previous weeks in long field training drills, some of which required that they build three field camps a day. Requirements for non-legionary troops were not as severe. Roman Legions in Imperial Rome were known to march with 66-100 lbs of equipment per legionary at an average pace of at least 4.5 miles/hour for 5 hours and then building a fort for the night, next morning they would take it down and start all over again and even possibly fighting in the same day.²

A new enlistee was known as a *Tirones*, the first six-month of their military life was used to get them into the condition needed to be a part of the Roman army. The 4th Century A.D., Roman historian, *Vegetius* recorded what was required of new recruits to the legions.

¹ Punic Wars were a series of wars between Rome and Carthage between 264-146 B.C. Punic is the Latin word for Phoenicians.

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_army#Training

"The first thing the soldiers are to be taught is the military step, which can only be acquired by constant practice of marching quick and together..." Tirones were also exercised in running, jumping and swimming, carrying heavy packs and entrenching camps.....We are informed by the writings of the ancients that, among their other exercises, they had that of the post. They gave their recruits round bucklers woven with willows, twice as heavy as those used on real service, and wooden swords double the weight of the common ones. They exercised them with these at the post both morning and afternoon." Other weapons training at this time also included the javelin, bow, throwing stone, sling and 'martiobarbuli' - usually reconstructed as weighted darts or small javelins. Tirones were also taught to vault into the saddle.

Along with fitness, the Roman soldiers trained to use his weapons and armor in combat. Repeatedly they trained from 6:00 AM until Midnight. Before battles they would spend weeks training, getting ready for the war. This is the disciplined fighter of the physical realms, Paul uses for the church to understand how we are to be engaged in the Spiritual realms. We need to take the spiritual life as serious as the Roman soldier took the physical military life.

The Military Imagery

Military imagery is not new in the New Testament; the Old Testament is filled with military imagery also. The Lord is called the *Lord of Hosts*, in the Old Testament; the Hebrew word for hosts is **צבא** *Tsaba*, meaning an army or host for military combat. Israel in the Old Testament was literally, God's army on earth. In the battle of Jericho, we see the Lord appear to Joshua as commander of Israel's forces, which are about to take the city of Jericho.

13 And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?"

14 So He said, "No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, "What does my Lord say to His servant?"

15 Then the Commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, "Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy." And Joshua did so. Joshua 5:13-15

The war we are in is very real, its not a metaphorical exercise, the war we are in is taking place in the spiritual realms, all around us. Throughout the scripture, this point is emphasized repeatedly, we see Elisha surrounded and protected by the *army of the Lord*, as the Syrian army tries to take him captive. David typifies this relationship between God's people, and their position as God's army. God used David a shepherd boy, who went in the power of the Lord as an example for all us.

David went to visit his brothers, who were part of Israel's army; they were facing the "Pagan" Philistines and their champion Goliath. Day after day, for 40 days, Goliath would taunt the armies of Israel, daring someone to challenge him. No one in the army of Israel had the courage to fight such an awesome specimen of humanity. Goliath described as being a warrior from his youth, stood 9 feet 9 inches tall.

4 And a champion went out from the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, from Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span.

5 He had a bronze helmet on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze.

6 And he had bronze armor on his legs and a bronze javelin between his shoulders.

7 Now the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his iron spearhead weighed six hundred shekels; and a shield-bearer went before him.

8 Then he stood and cried out to the armies of Israel, and said to them, "Why have you come out to line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and you the servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. I Samuel 17:4-8

David does not understand how this can happen, how can someone just challenge the people of God for 40-days and nothing be done. You can hear the astonishment in his voice.

For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" I Samuel 17:26b

David's words get to Saul's ear; David is called before Saul, David a shepherd boy wants to reassure the King and the armies of Israel, not to fear. Because, he David will answer the challenge of the giant

armored man, he will fight him. (I Samuel 17:32) David says to Saul, with confidence, confidence not in himself, but confidence in the Lord's ability.

"Let no man's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine."

David saw Israel as the Lord's army, he saw himself as a warrior in the Lord's army. David trusted in the Lord's ability to deliver the Philistine into his hand. David then convinces Saul, how he a shepherd boy, will fight the Philistine. David is upset, how someone can just challenge the armies of God. Saul is convinced and tells David to go.



36 "Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God."

37 Moreover David said, "The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the Lord be with you!" I Samuel 17:36-37

Saul then fits his armor on David, after trying it on, David rejects Saul's armor, and instead he relies on the Lord's ability. David is wearing the "armor of God", he does not need the armor of Saul. After David collects five stones from the river, he confronts Goliath who is indignant, with David's appearance. How dare Israel match him with a boy? Don't they know he is Goliath! Goliath understood the battle; he invoked the names of his Philistine gods against David. David then replied for all believers who wear the armor of God, versus the armor of this world. God does not need the weapons and armor of this world, for his battle.

45 Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.

46 "This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

47 "Then all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands." I Samuel 17:45-47

One point among many here is to rely on the power of God, not the power of man. David was someone who trusted in the Lord's power and strength. He understood the battle was not his but the Lord. He, David was only a faithful warrior. Let's ask ourselves the questions,

- Do we rely on man?
- Do we rely on the powers of this world?
- Do we wait for the things of this world?

Paul in Ephesus

Paul in many ways was like David. The people of the world because of his physical stature and appearance underestimated him (2 Cor. 10:10). Paul saw himself as the Lord's warrior, who was fighting giants; he was advancing the kingdom of God on enemy territory. Paul staked out territory in the Ephesus, to war against the enemies of God. When Paul is rejected by the synagogue at Ephesus, he turns to the gentiles and pours himself into 12 men at first (Acts 19:7). He spends the next two to three years teaching and disciplining the people of Ephesus. Paul like David understood the battle was the Lord's. He also understood God did not need a military to win the battle. Paul writes.

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.
 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,
 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,
 6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.
 II Corinthians 10:3-6

Goliath defeated the minds of Israel, they looked on his outward appearance, while David looked to the Lord. David knew the battle was the Lord's, it had nothing to do with appearance. Paul looked the same way at the city of Ephesus; the battle was not of physical weapons, but spiritual. Paul was at war in the heavenly realms, Paul, in the power of the Lord, was pulling down spiritual strongholds.



Did it work? Was Paul able to battle the demonic realms, which controlled the city? How did the people respond? The people stopped buying the idols and they burned their occult books. People's lives were being affected as the Gospel spread through the city. (Acts 19:23-38)

19 Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver.

20 So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. Acts 19:19-20

Ephesus was not just an ordinary city, it was the Roman capital of Asia. Paul established a strategic base of operations for the Gospel. Paul was occupying enemy territory. Paul looked weak, but he was a warrior, fighting a giant. Encyclopedia Britannica writes regarding Ephesus at this time.

Ephesus became under Augustus the first city of the Roman province of Asia. The geographer Strabo wrote of its importance as a commercial centre in the 1st century BC. The triumphal arch of 3 BC and the aqueduct of AD 4–14 initiated that long series of public buildings, ornamental and useful, that make Ephesus the most impressive example in Greek lands of a city of imperial times.³



The remains of the library of Ephesus

Paul was strategic in his warfare. He understood his battle was against spiritual powers, the physical was merely the result of the spiritual. The same was with Goliath, the battle was not physical but spiritual. Goliath was not challenging men, but God. Goliath's force was spiritual, demonic as he called out to his gods, cursing David and the people of Israel. Israel was the army of the Lord; David did not understand how no one could see what he saw. Why were they so fearful? David had something the others did not have. He had the Spirit of God, dwelling in him, just like Paul, and like us who know the Lord.

13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah.
 I Samuel 16:13

Paul when he is writing to the Ephesians was awaiting trial in Rome. He writes the church, this group of people who came to know the Lord, about their spiritual battle. Using the example of the legions, and military of Rome, Paul wants to cast a vision of the battle they, the church of Ephesus, are

³ Encyclopedia Britannica 2004, Ephesus article

engaged in. The Holy Spirit, through Paul's letter instructs all believers to put on the armor of God, to prepare for battle.

Putting on the Armor of God

Paul, who fights against the demonic realms, commands the church what they need to do. He writes in his concluding remarks to the saints at Ephesus. His final instructions for them, "put on the whole or full armor of God".

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.
11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
12 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.
13 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.
14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,
15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;
16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.
17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;
18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.
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12 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. **Ephesians 6:10-12**

Vs. 10

Finally: Paul is concluding his message to the Church at Ephesus. The epistle (letter) to Ephesus is divided into two parts.

In the first part (Chapters 1-3), Paul instructs the church where they stand in Christ. The Holy Spirit, is God's down payment (earnest) of their salvation, guaranteeing their redemption in Christ (Eph 1:13-14). Paul declares who we are in Christ; His blood saves us, having received the gift of salvation (Eph. 2:8-9).

The second part (Chapters 4-6), Paul instructs the saints, how to apply their position in Christ. They are not to be passive believers, they are to walk in the spirit (Eph. 4:1). When we walk, we move forward, we are not static. So it is in the Christian faith, we are to move forward, advance in our walk. Our walk is based on the presence of God's Spirit, who dwells in us, because of our conversion (Part 1). Therefore, we are to imitators of God (Eph. 5:1).

All that said, Paul concludes with a command to this Church, which he birthed in Ephesus. He tells them, if they are to be successful, they need to be "In the Lord". Being in the Lord, means we need to wear the

armor of God. David was in the Lord, he was wearing the armor of God, against Goliath.

Be Strong in the Lord: Our strength does not come from the world. We are to be strong in the Lord. How is one strong in the Lord? Our strength in the Lord comes through spiritual training, learning to trust the Lord. David was strong in the Lord, because he had God's Spirit; David fought a lion and a bear before he fought Goliath. He knew God's power.

Like David, unless we move forward with our faith, we cannot be strong. The Christian faith requires action for growth and training. Paul in Ephesians tells the saints to "walk in love", "walk as children of light" and to "walk circumspectly". To be strong, means to walk, move forward in our faith. Joshua instructs the Lord's army, Israel to be strong by knowing the Law (The Bible).

8 "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

9 "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."
Joshua 1:8-9

To be Strong in the Lord means to walk in His word, know his Word and to trust His Word. Committing the Lord's word to memory, doing what scripture says, not just reading the words is how we become strong in the Lord. Notice the progression in verse 8, **meditate...night and day** causes one to observe what is written "**For then**", what follows? A prosperous way and good success, which is to be strong (vs. 9). Scripture training is the way to spiritual strength.

In the power of his might: Paul on the outward appearance was seen as weak; David on the outward appearance was a shepherd boy without armor. All throughout scripture, we see weak people do extraordinary things. *Abraham* an old childless man became the forefather of nations. *Gideon*, a farm boy, defeats the armies of Midian (Judges 8:4). *Joseph* the slave becomes head over all Egypt. *Daniel* the Babylonian hostage becomes a ruler in Babylon and Persia. *Peter* a fisherman becomes a leader in the church. *Paul* a murderer, an enemy of Christ, becomes the apostle to the Gentiles. What did all these people have in common?

They operated in the power of his might. Through their weakness, they learned to trust in the Lord's might. Many times God is prevented from working in our lives, because we rely on our might, our wisdom and our strength. God on the other hand, loves to use what is despised in the world, because He is glorified, through it. We need to learn to move in the power of his might, not our own.



25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.

27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,

29 that no flesh should glory in His presence. 1 Corinthians 1:25-29

When we are in the Lord, and in his power, we then allow God to operate. We need to learn to get out of God's way.

Vs. 11

Put on the whole armor of God: Paul who was in Rome, surrounded by Roman soldiers commands, the church to put on the God's armor. The Greek word here is *ejduw Enduo*, which means to sink into, to clothe oneself. We are to be complete in God's armor, as opposed to being strong in one aspect and weak in others. We are not to just learn the shield, and not the sword. The armor is complete; we are to sink into God's armor. Why?

that you may be able to stand: If we fail to put on the armor, we will not be able to stand in battle. Satan, the devil wants to exploit our weakness, he looks for areas to take us down, and so we cannot stand. A legionnaire might have a sword, and be very good at it, but with out his shield, and helmet, he is open to the darts and arrows, which will stop him from standing. Therefore, we as warriors have to learn, need to put on the full armor of God, and become proficient in our ability to use the weapon.

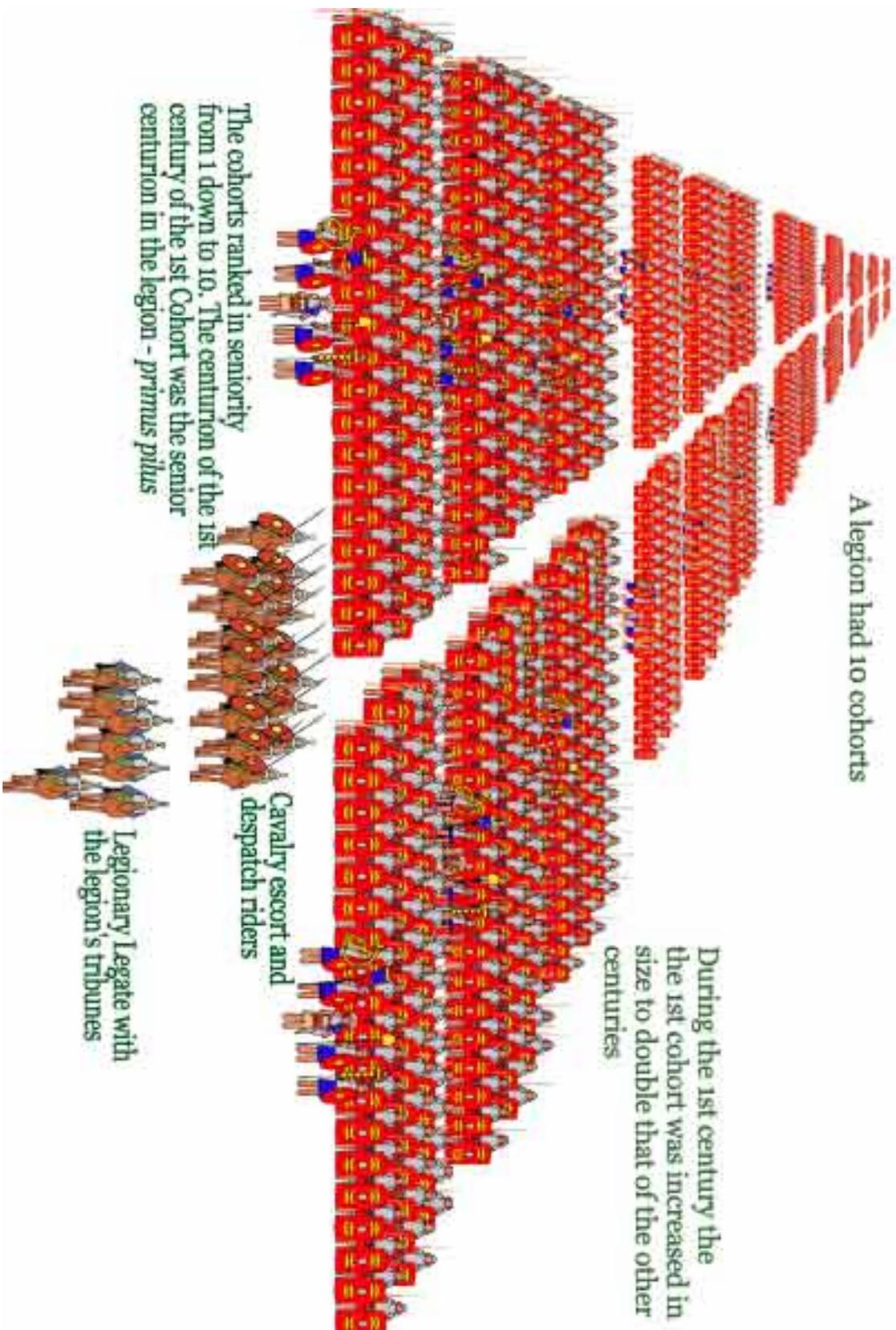
Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 1 Peter 5:8

Each piece of equipment had a purpose as we shall see.

The word for stand is *isthmi Histemi*, which means to make firm, fix establish. We are to hold our ground against Satan and his attacks. Satan does not want the Christian to stand, but to fall. Satan has strategies to do just that. He has devices, plans, stratagems for each person who knows the Lord,

against the wiles of the devil: Why do we need to wear the full armor of God? So we can stand against the wiles or schemes of Satan. The word for wiles is *meqodeia Methodei*, meaning cunning arts, deceit, craft, trickery. Satan has a method, he is not just idol, his goal is keep those who are lost, lost, secondly his goal is to take authority away from the saved, by making them fall.

A fallen disabled saint is one less person, he has to worry about, if we fail to put on the armor, Satan will exploit our weakness, looking for our holes, setting a trap. The image of Satan is not a person walking around in red leotards but a lion, looking for pray.



A legion had 10 cohorts

During the 1st century the 1st cohort was increased in size to double that of the other centuries

Cavalry escort and despatch riders

Legionary Legate with the legion's tribunes

The cohorts ranked in seniority from 1 down to 10. The centurion of the 1st century of the 1st Cohort was the senior centurion in the legion - *primus pilus*