



## GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

### PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, “EVANGELISMOS”

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### SUNDAY 10 DECEMBER 2017

#### A WOMAN HEALED ON THE SABBATH

**EPISTLE** The Reading is from St Paul’s Letters to the Ephesians [6:10-17]

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour 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 armour 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.

**EXPLANATION:** Realizing the intensity of the spiritual conflict in which all Christians are engaged, St Paul concludes with an exhortation that all who stand for good must wage a constant battle against the forces of evil. For the demons still have power in the world until Christ comes again in glory. He writes that we must be strong in the **power** that the Holy Spirit provides, and not to rely on our own strength. For Christ promised us spiritual power through the Pentecostal gift of the Holy Spirit in Chrismation. He said, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.” (Acts 1:8) If we trust in our might, wisdom and will power, we are doomed to defeat. It

is only if we are empowered by the Lord that we can stand against the devil. **(Ephesians 6: 10-11)** For we are not **wrestling** against mere human beings of **flesh and blood**. The cunning and might that opposes us is greater and more deadly. It is the power of the demonic **rulers** and **authorities** that we face, the world-rulers, the **spiritual hosts of the wickedness** in the aerial space. No wonder that we need the spiritual might of the Lord to withstand this devilish scheming. **(Ephesians 6:12)** To stand up and survive the schemes and wiles of the devil **in the evil day** (that is, the day of battle), we need to put on all the **armour of God** which He provides at our baptism. Through our baptism in Christ we are empowered to remain standing at the end of the battle, having withstood all things and done all the exploits required of us if we use all the armour God provides. **(Ephesians 6:13)** We must **gird our loins with truth**. In those days, when a soldier went into battle he had to protect his loins by gathering his robes around them and tying them with a belt. St Paul says that the belt which enables us to fight is the truth of the Gospel, our faith in Christ, the Son of God. The truth is our military insignia, which makes us part of the Army of Christ. We must put on the **breastplate of righteousness**. This righteousness is the holiness of our life as dedicated soldiers of Christ. Without righteous and holy living, we have no defence to keep our hearts safe. Even as a breastplate protects the soldier's heart, so our walking as the children of light protects us from the power of the enemy. If we partake of the unfruitful works of darkness, we leave ourselves open to the enemy. **(Ephesians 6:14)** We must also **shoe our feet with the equipment of the Gospel of peace**. The Roman soldier had to be shod with good sandals if he was to be mobile enough to march into battle. In the same way, we too must be shod with the willingness to go out and preach the **Gospel of peace**. **(Ephesians 6:15)** **With all these things**, we must take up the **shield of faith to stop all the flaming arrows of the evil one**. The lethal attacks of the devil are constantly fired at us – assaults from both within and without, both temptations to sin and persecution from the world. Our only defence is the **“shield of faith”**, which is our trust in God and reliance on His divine help. God is our help and our shield. **(Ephesians 6: 16)** We must take the **helmet of salvation**. This helmet is the hope of salvation. Just as the Roman soldier's head was protected by a helmet to allow him to lift his head in battle, so too we may

lift up our heads with hope and be protected from all the depression and anxiety that exists in the world, for we know that the Lord will come and save us on the Last Day. Jesus said, that in the final days, “Lift up your heads, for your redemption is drawing near.” Finally, we must take up the **sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. This Word** is the spoken proclamation of the Gospel. We wield the sword or Word of God with love, to bring people to God. The Romans overcome their foes by killing them with the sword. We overcome our foes by converting them with the Word of God – the Gospel. **(Ephesians 6:17)**

**GOSPEL The Reading is from St Luke [13:10-17]**

**Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, “*Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.*” And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, “There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day.” The Lord answered him and said, “*Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound – think of it – for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?*” And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.**

**EXPLANATION:** The woman in this Gospel suffered from demonic affliction and was **“bent over” for 18 years**. Jesus spotted her whilst He was teaching in the synagogue and immediately went to her aid. As soon as He healed her, she became upright and was **loosed from her infirmity. (13:10-13)** But the **ruler of the synagogue was filled with indignation because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath**. Satan who desired her continued affliction bound the ruler of the synagogue with spite, and through the mouth of this man reviled the miracle. Acts of help towards others on the Sabbath were considered work and were forbidden, except in life-threatening situations. However, the Lord rebukes him and puts him to

shame by using the apt example that if animals needing water are cared for on the Sabbath, then is it not more important and humane to deliver this poor woman from Satan's bondage on the Sabbath. **(13:15)** The ruler, rather than joining in the jubilation that followed Christ's healing, instead burned with rage that Jesus had healed at all. Why? Because of jealousy that Jesus had assumed authority and power over the ruler and all His adversaries in the synagogue, and not that the ruler cared much about the Sabbath. Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." (Mark 2:27) That is, only God can say He is Lord of the Sabbath ("The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.") (Mark 2:28) Jesus is motivated by compassion. He does not deny Sabbath traditions to keep the Sabbath day holy, but teaches that it is more important to do good on the Sabbath than to maintain the strict observance of Sabbath rest. The religious leaders are motivated by zeal for the rigid performance of rabbinic tradition; for them outward performance is more important than doing good. The two perspectives are incompatible. The Lord, Who straightened out the back of this woman continues to make straight today the lives of those who are bent over by sin. There is not one of us who is not "bent over" and hurting in so many different ways. Each one of us is bent over with our own individual sorrow, our personal grief, our unique affliction and disappointment of which the world knows nothing. It may be a terminal illness upon us or one of our loved ones; or the loss of a close family member; or loss of occupation that causes economic hardship, and so on. Jesus cared for the woman and healed her with a very special care and power – just as He does for all of us who come to Him bent over by all the burdens and cares of life. All we need is faith and prayer and we will leave His presence lighter and straighter than ever before. We come to Him bent over with discouragement; we leave looking up with hope. We come to Him bent over with sin and guilt; we leave Him with sweet forgiveness. We come bent over by weakness; we leave reinforced with God's presence with us. We come bent over by fear of death; we leave walking upright in the light and joy of Christ's glorious Resurrection. **(13:16-18)**