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Abstract Review of *Armor: Divine Protection in a Darkening World* (2007), by Kim B. Clark.

THE ARMOR OF GOD: UNDERSTANDING THE METAPHOR

Sandra A. Thorne

Review of Kim B. Clark. *Armor: Divine Protection in a Darkening World*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2007. 282 pp., with index. \$21.95.

To see the armor of God whole, and to put all of it on, we must comprehend that Christ is at the center. (p. 266)

To the saints living in Ephesus, the apostle Paul wrote an important letter about living the gospel in a difficult world. In the paragraph we now know as Ephesians 6:10–17, he crafted a profound metaphor, comparing the spiritual strengths of the faithful to the various elements of armor worn by a soldier for protection on the battlefield.

Armor: Divine Protection in a Darkening World is a thorough discussion of Paul's metaphor that moves these inspired symbols out of the realm of the simplistic caricatures that have sometimes been used to describe them. Kim Clark explores the various elements of the metaphor by discussing concrete approaches to living the gospel and receiving its blessings. Clark has given us a mature, insightful perspective on Paul's teachings. He does not discuss Paul, his calling, his mission, or the Saints who received this epistle; instead he focuses on the meaning this sermon has for us—the recipients of the restored gospel in the last dispensation.

Believers know that the word of the Lord is their protection in this world, but just how does it protect? Clark offers perceptive discussion

of gospel principles that have the potential to create the spiritual strengths needed to arm oneself for “perilous times” (2 Timothy 3:1). Specific references in the book to the symbols of Paul’s metaphor are not as frequent as I expected—until I understood the depth of the discussion. The principles addressed are not poorly connected concepts but crucial elements of the process of attaining the mighty change of heart described in Mosiah 5:2 and Alma 5:12–14.

In the introduction, Clark describes his experience of searching for answers to his own concerns about the conflict between the world’s ways and the ways of the gospel. He contemplated the passage in Ephesians and began to gather insights about what it means to create and wear the armor of God. His desire to share those insights with his family led him to write this book.¹

As I read, I underlined passages that were meaningful to me, and there were many. I appreciated the opportunity to read what he learned in his quest for understanding.

In addition to chapters on the specific symbols of armor, Clark includes three chapters discussing the importance of the covenants Latter-day Saints enter into. Covenants allow one to “‘put on’ or ‘take on’ something heavenly to help us in our earthly journey” (p. 17). He draws from the teachings of King Benjamin in the Book of Mormon to emphasize the need for baptism and repentance. We receive blessings when we embrace the process of repentance: “Without the Spirit, the pain of guilt is just plain old pain and suffering. When the Spirit is involved, however, those feelings are tinged with hope. . . . In this way, what is painful and full of sorrow becomes godly” (p. 25).

My desire to improve my spiritual connection to the temple covenants made one of Clark’s insights especially meaningful to me: “I believe there are three kinds of knowledge in the temple, and three ways in which we learn. The first includes specific facts about the plan of salvation, and specific information we need to know in order to progress eternally. . . . The second kind of knowledge—symbolic knowledge—is different. . . . What we learn depends very much on

1. Likely because of that focus, Clark includes many examples of family experiences; some of them work well, but others seem strained.

us—what we need, our preparation, our sensitivity to the Spirit, our attention and focus. . . . The third kind of knowledge we receive in the temple is an eternal perspective. This knowledge builds on and comes from the first two, but adds a broader vision, a divine framework, and a heavenly vantage point” (pp. 65–68).

That Paul’s metaphor is perfectly applicable these many centuries after it was written is evidence of the eternal nature of who we really are and the eternal nature of the war that people of faith wage—a war “not against flesh and blood, but . . . against the rulers of the darkness of this world” (Ephesians 6:12). Here we find guidance and protection at that crucial point where all things spiritual meet all things earthly. “The armor of God really is like armor. It is the armor of light, the sure protection against the ‘wiles of the devil’ and the ‘fiery darts of the wicked.’ But the whole armor of God is more than protection. It also confers on us the capacity to be on the Lord’s errand in building the kingdom of God in the great battle against evil in the world. When we put on the whole armor of God, we are prepared to serve him on the front lines of that battle” (p. 272).