

Christian Warfare

Take Up The Full Armor Of God

Ephesians 6:13-17

13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, 15 and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:13-17 (NASB))

For several weeks now, we have been studying about the dangers and the evils that live within the place that is here in verse 12 called the “Heavenly Places”, spiritual realms where spiritual forces of wickedness dwell, described here as, principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, and spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12 (NKJV))

And we have echoed the warning over and over again that here in these words God is calling each of us to open the spiritual eyes of our hearts and minds and to realize that more, much more is taking place across the realms of reality than we are able to see with our natural eyes, that these demonic beings described here in these words are present among us, that they, moment by moment reach across the boundaries of their spiritual realms over into our realm and they attack and they hurt and they influence and they corrupt us and the things we do, the warning being that even though as those corrupt influences and misdeeds take place we are seeing the faces of real people, their evil behaviors are most always being provoked from out of those demonic spiritual realms.

And we have said over and over again that we, in our natural awareness and strength do not have the wherewithal to respond and to do battle with those spiritual forces. As the words of Martin Luther’s hymn, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” reminds us concerning the devil and his demons, “his power and craft are great, and armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal”.

And yes, some very earnest Christians think that they can mount a battle against the devil and against his spiritual hosts of wickedness. I’m reminded of a Charlie Daniels song about “out-fiddling” satan. It makes for a good song, but not for reality. The words

of the hymn are far more accurate. Satan's "power and craft are great, and armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal". We dare not foolishly think that we can take on the devil using the meager provisions of our own wits.

And may I say that God does not want us too? We see in Book of Jude verse 9 . . .

9 But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." 10 But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. (Jude 1:9-10 (ESV))

Michael, the Archangel, the most powerful angel in God's kingdom, even more powerful than satan, knew the calling and purpose given to him from God and did not try to take on satan, but instead invoked the power within the name of Jesus in order to drive satan away. Why would that be so? It is because, for this season of time, God has granted satan to be "king" over all the earth. And if the archangel Michael doesn't take on satan, then you and I should not either. We must leave those things to God, and specifically to the Lord Jesus. He will deal with satan in due time.

But what then is our response to be to these sudden and continuous attacks that take place from across the spiritual realms, the demons reaching over into our world and making our lives miserable? The best and surest way of making satan and his demons leave us alone is found in the simple words of James chapter 4 . . .

7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. (James 4:7-8 (NKJV))

Within these simple words is the full and complete protection that we will need to preserve us through any and all of the battles that are brought against us from out of those spiritual realms. If we will "submit ourselves to God" and "resist" the devil, and "draw near to God", then the devils will flee from our presence. Demons cannot bear to be in the presence of God. His holiness is too painful for them to stand, and so they flee from Him.

But how are we to do as these words command?

7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. (James 4:7-8 (NKJV))

We do as we are told in Romans 13. We are to

14 . . . put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. (Romans 13:14 (ESV))

But “putting on the Lord Jesus Christ” is a very “mystical” concept. How are we to do that? How are we to “put on Christ”? Here again, we find that God is so very generous in the way that He does things for us and in the way that He explains His ways to us. Here, in Ephesians 6, He tells us in clear and plain words that just as we would put on a garment, we are to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ”. There in Romans 13, Jesus is called the “Armor of Light”. And here in our passage in Ephesians, He is called “the whole, the full Armor of God”.

And just as with any garment of armor, there are several pieces to it, each piece having its own purpose and provision.

And may I point out quickly that the “Armor of God” is never cumbersome or burdensome. I’m reminded of King Saul’s armor that he offered to David as David was about to go out to face Goliath. That armor was much too big for David’s smaller boyish body, and it weighted him down, more burdensome than beneficial.

And unfortunately, many even professed believers think the same about these commands, these statutes, these precepts and laws of God. They do not seek after the indwelling presence of the Spirit of Christ to encourage them on and so they grow “weary in well-doing”, weighted down by the demands of holiness.

But it should never be so! The “yoke” of Jesus Christ is always “easy” and “light”, never burdensome. But before we can have and enjoy the “help” that comes from Christ, we must be willing to “draw near” to Him. Jesus must always be so close as to be able to “shoulder” the other side of our “cross”. And with Him that close, our burden is easy and our yoke is light.

So then again, how do we “put on the Lord Jesus Christ”? We put Him on just as these words here in Ephesians tell us to do it, one piece at a time, each piece in its order, with each piece readied to do its purposeful work. Listen again to these words, first in verse 11,

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (Ephesians 6:11 (NKJV))

And then in verses 13,

13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. (Ephesians 6:13 (NASB))

In these words are most every instruction and explanation that we will need to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ”. First, we are commanded to “take up” the full armor of God.

Note, that the armor is not placed on us by Christ. Christ does a lot of things for us, initiated by Him and carried out by Him, often without our involvement. But not so this! This “putting on of the full armor of God” is a task that we must, using our “free will”, join with Him to do. Verse 13 uses the words “take up”, a willful act of reaching for and picking up of the armor of God.

I count this command similar to the command of God that we “be filled with the Holy Spirit”. Yes, at salvation God freely puts His Holy Spirit into us, filling us with His presence. Jesus breathed on His disciples and filled them with His Holy Spirit. But there is also a responsibility and a command that is given to you and me, that we be “filled with the Holy Spirit”, that we join with Christ and willfully reach for and pursue after a “fullness” of His Holy Spirit.

And so it is with this special “act of our will”, of “putting on the full armor of God”. We must, of our own “free will”, reach for and “take up” each piece of the “full armor of God”, not leaving even one of the pieces of the armor out, but “putting on the full and complete armor of God”.

And please know that these are not “works” so that we might obtain salvation. As we would be taking these steps, we are already saved. Our names are already written in the “Lamb’s Book of Life”. This is something that the “born again” children of God are exhorted to do, so that we will be protected from our enemies as we walk amongst the wiles and the schemes of the evil days.

And the “taking up” and the “putting on of the full armor of God” have the understanding of both a “present” and a “continuing ongoing” of doing both, the sense being that sometimes we tire and we lay down a portion of the armor, leaving some part of our body, and soul and spirit exposed and unprotected from the evil ones. So then, we must always be checking and rechecking that we have on the “whole”, the “full”, the “complete” armor of God. Verse 13 again . . .

13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. (Ephesians 6:13)

This is the way that we “resist” the devil “in the evil day”. And please know that God is not calling us to begin an “offensive” campaign against the devil, to plan and carry out clever “offensive” forays into the camps of the devil, and especially not using and depending upon our own personal wits and abilities. That kind of behavior most often only provides some amusement for the devil. Effective “resistance” is accomplished through the power and the presence of the Spirit of God. Listen, these words from 2 Corinthians 10,

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh.
4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds (demonic strongholds). 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (ESV))

And may we please understand and believe that the days that we live in truly are as described here. They are dark days of evil, verse 13 of Ephesians 6,

13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. (Ephesians 6:13)

A plea that I have given often from this pulpit is that we not misunderstand about the ways of sin and the powerful hold it can get on people. Sin is never just something that we need watch out for so that we don't stumble over it. Sin is instead a powerful predator that pursues after us to influence us and to ensnare us into its ways. Sin is part of the fabric that makes up the "evil days" spoken about here. And sin "desires to have" and to "control" you and me. And these evil days are filled with it.

15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil.
(Ephesians 5:15-16 (NASB))

And here in verse 13, we are instructed to not leave even one thing "undone".

13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. (Ephesians 6:13)

We are to "do everything", exactly as God commands us, leaving nothing undone or to chance.

My dear wife is a list maker. And may I praise her for it. Her lists have saved us from many a grief. Here, God is perhaps telling us to "make and keep lists". Some might say that that borders on "legalism". Perhaps it does, but I confess that I like the idea. If I need a list to make sure that I have "done everything" as verse 13 tells me, then I probably ought to do it.

And then, what is the provision and the reward that having resisted the devil in the evil day and having stood firm accomplished for us. It is first that we will be able to remain standing, that we will not be knocked to our knees, ineffective and unable to continue with our part of the battle. Yes, a quick-thinking evangelical would seize on that thought and say that "on our knees" is the perfect place for us warriors to be, and that is so. But not in the sense that being knocked there because we were unprepared for the battle

will bring to us. Here, God counts “standing” as being a good thing, a very good thing, and so should we.

One last thought before we close regarding the necessity for us “to stand”. The word that is being used here that instructs us to “resist” the devil, also means to “withstand”, to “stand firm”, to “stand our ground” against the devils assaults, giving us the vision of a faithful soldier under attack but fighting with all his heart with all the weapons available to him to defend his part of the battle line. A breach in the battle line might provide the devil with all that he will need to get inside our defenses and even behind us and behind our fellow warriors. And behind us is a dangerous place for the devil to be, noting that within the whole armor of God there seems to be no defensive piece of armor for our back.

While God does not address this matter here in this passage, we can assume that God simply does not intend for us to ever give in and allow satan access to our backsides. And the only way for us to do that is for us to “stand firm” and to make sure that satan never does gain that access.

The Lord willing, next week we will continue with our study of these provisions that God has made for us within the full armor of God, and the blessings we enjoy as we “stand firm” for His righteousness. Listen as we close,

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