

"The Armor of God, Part IV"

Ephesians 6:10-23

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"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 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. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts. Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." (Eph 6:10-23 AV)

This passage, as I have been emphasizing over the past weeks, illustrates an important biblical truth. Those who believe in God and trust in Christ have important things to do.

We are saved by grace and it is not by works of righteousness which have done that the Lord saves us, as Titus 3 affirms. But it is a faithful saying that those who believe in Christ must be careful to maintain good works, As our catechism puts it in questions 115:

Q115: Why then does God so strictly enjoin the Ten Commandments upon us, since in this life no one can keep them?

A115: First, that as long as we live we may learn more and more to know our sinful nature,[1] and so the more earnestly seek forgiveness of sins and righteousness in Christ;[2] second, that without ceasing we diligently ask God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we be renewed more and more after the image of God, until we attain the goal of perfection after this life.[3]

There are several things in this text that I would emphasize this Sunday and there are more that I will speak to next Sunday. I preached on this same text last week, but I want to give a different emphasis to it this week because there was not time to say everything that needs to be said.

We have seen that Paul assumes that the Ephesians knew they were in a spiritual conflict, and he exhorts them to put on the armor of God—not armor for the body but armor for the soul. If they did not do this they would not be able to stand in the evil day against the fiery darts of the devil.

A dead man cannot make himself alive by doing good works; but if a man is alive, he is expected to do works that show that he is alive.

As the Titus 3 passage shows us, there were signs of being dead in trespasses and sins “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.” (Tit 3:3) But the grace of God had been abundantly shed upon them: “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ;” (Tit 2:11-13)

There is nothing we can do to save ourselves, but if we are saved there is plenty for us to do. The life that we find in a new baby is delightful and a great joy to us; so it is certain that the love, the joy, the hunger and thirst for righteousness are very precious in the sight of God.

So we are called to spiritual warfare. “put on the whole armor of God, so that we can withstand all the fiery darts of the wicked We are to put on the whole armor of God so that we can stand in the evil day. The figure is one of warfare and conflict and victory, but the meaning is exactly the same as Jesus’ parable about the wise man who built his house upon the rock and the foolish man who built upon the sand. In both figures, the wise man prepared for the evil day: the soldier put on armor because he knew that the battle was coming; the wise builder put his house upon the rock, because he knew the storm would come. The foolish soldier neglected armor, because he did not prepare for conflict; the foolish builder did not take the warnings of bad weather seriously and his house came tumbling down. The foolish soldier lies dead on the battlefield; the foolish builder lies in the ruins of his house.

Therefore, because the warfare is coming, Paul warns the Ephesian Christians Those who are not prepared for spiritual warfare will not survive the day of testing and trial. Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

I. What is this spiritual armor: It is described in verses 14-18. These are not for the body, but armor for the soul.

A. These we have spoken of before so I will only touch on them briefly this morning.

1. The girdle of truth. Although not properly a piece of armor, the girdle or sash must be used to draw up the flowing garments that the Romans wore so that they could be active. WE are to be in touch with reality and bear faithful witness to the

truth wherever it appears: in creation, in the Bible, in the inner man.

2. Breastplate of righteousness. This means integrity. We are to do good to all men, especially those of the household of faith. "Provide things honest in the sight of men."

3. Being prepared: in the gospel of peace. Do you know how to keep the peace? The first recorded work of the devil after the fall was the murder of Abel by Cain: Cain was of that evil one and slew his brother. Remember what Paul prayed:

"16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." (Eph 3:16-19)

The man who is planted by the rivers of water in Psalm 1 is a man who delights in the words of God and meditates in them night and day. He is prepared for what life brings to him for he is rooted in the gospel of peace.

B. I will pick it up with the shield of faith. It is faith that quenches the fiery darts of the wicked. The shield of faith: The long shield that covered the whole body. Faith protects the whole man against the things you do not see, do not anticipate. You do what you can, and you trust God for the rest. The fiery darts are manifold spiritual, devilish assaults—and they may come within and they may come from without. Personal, daily faith and trust, will give you peace so that you will not fear. This is personal, active, individual faith:

1. Fiery arrows are described in Scripture:

a) Arrows:

(1) Ps 64:3-4 Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words: 4 That they may shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.

(2) Ps 11:2 For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart.

(3) Ps 22:7,8 All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in

him.

(4) Ps 58:7 Let them melt away as waters which run continually: when he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces.

b) Fear comes:

(1) “Ye shall not fear them: for the LORD your God he shall fight for you.” (De 3:22 av)

(2) “The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted.” (Pr 10:24)

(3) Fear is a powerful motive to turn you away from truth and the righteousness spoken of in this passage. You fear something, and your lie or your try to manipulate the truth, and you are overcome by your fear. It is faith that will guard you from this so you do not get crosswise with the truth and integrity.

2. It is faith that quenches the fear in the heart and enables us to stand against the fiery darts:

a) “In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.” (Ps 56:4 AV)

b) “The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?” (Ps 118:6 AV)

c) “So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” (Heb 13:6 AV)

C. Helmet of salvation: This is the hope of the Lord. We do not fear them that can destroy the body, but him that has power over the soul and body and can reward in heaven or punish in hell forever. Our hope is in the ultimate triumph of truth and goodness, so we will not surrender in our witness to the truth and our love for the right, for we know our cause will prevail ultimately

1. When there is no hope, there is no faith. When faith is strengthened, then hope is strengthened. The hope of eternal life and eternal fullness in Christ become clear and shines through out of the mist and fog and smoke of battle, as we see clearly the hope that is set before us.

2. It is the hope of salvation that removed the instability and uncertainty of doubt and fear. If we see clearly the mark before us, we can plow straight. We put our hand on the plow and do not look back because our hope is in Christ alone, and

glory is in the cross of Christ, and our affections are set on eternal things where Christ sits at the right hand of god.

3. I spoke of this back in chapter one: faith, hope, charity—these are the things that strengthen the inner man

4. Scripture It is this hope that keeps away those doubts and fears and discouragements.

(1) “15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, 16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; 17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: 18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,” (Eph 1:15-18 av)

(2) “2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” (1Jo 3:2-3 av)

(3) “7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: 8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: 9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” (1Pe 1:7-9 av)

D. Sword of the Spirit: This is the same sword that proceeds out of the mouth of Him who rides upon the white horse. And goes forth conquering and to conquer. We are to speak as Christ speaks, and are to know what the Bible says and speak it intelligently and boldly. You cannot persuade others if you cannot persuade yourself. Being firmly convinced in your own mind. Can you defend your faith in the midst of trials.

“8 Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: 9 Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. 10 For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: 11 Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. 13 And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? 14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to

every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” (1Pe 3:8-15)

E. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and watching with all perseverance and supplication. This emphasizes the spiritual character of the war that disturbs the church. Praying for Paul. What? For the apostle. Yes. All Christians are to pray for all the churches. Strong in the LORD

F. To be able to stand. Sometimes all you can do is stand. This word is used a number of times in this passage. Other places:

- “By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.” (1Pe 5:12)
- “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,” (Jude 1:24)
- “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” (2Ti 2:19)
- “Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” (Col 4:12)
- “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;” (1Co 15:1)
- “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Ro 5:2)

Conclusion: In any warfare, there will be wounded and hurting people. This is true in the great warfare in which we are engaged. People will not always stand strong and true. Those who stand will be wounded and hurt. Often these are the weak and the poor and the needy. Because of this we do not willingly rush into war and conflict. This is the reason we must encourage and stir one another up to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, for we are not to please ourselves but the Lord Jesus who died for us.

Wives, pray for your husbands; husbands pray for your wives; Parents, pray for your children; Children pray for you parents; Members pray for one another; Pray for your minister and your elders and deacons; Pray for those in authority. Let us love one another; Be not overcome with evil, the Bible says, but overcome evil with good.

23 Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

24 Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

Beloved, we do not wrestle with flesh and blood, but our conflict must sometimes involve flesh and blood, for Satan does not come in his own face. Even Peter spoke for the devil when he tried to persuade Jesus from going to Jerusalem. Jesus rebuked Peter, saying, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” The Lord did not disown Peter, nor abandon him because of his unrighteous words, but

reproved him sharply as we also have been commanded to do.

May God bless you.

Amen and Amen.