

1 Kings 8:1, 6, 10-11, 22-30, 41-43

Psalm 84

Ephesians 6:10-20

John 6:56-69



PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD

This week we have our final lesson in Ephesians. The discussion on God’s standard of living continues in terms of the “old nature” versus the “new nature.” Review Eph 4:22-24: *Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

The *new nature* – life free of sin – is what God creates in every believer. It is not something you are required to invent or develop on your own. It has been created for you – *created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.* In this week’s lesson, the *armor of God* is described as an essential component of the new nature. Just as the armor of men is necessary to defend your body from attacks by evil men, the *armor of God* is necessary to defend your spirit from attacks by evil spirits.

Eph 6:10-20. *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength 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 are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.* ¹³*Therefore take 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 loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,* ¹⁵*and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace;* ¹⁶*besides all these, taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one.* ¹⁷*And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.* ¹⁸*Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,* ¹⁹*and also for me, that utterance may be given me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,* ²⁰*for which I am an ambassador in chains; that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.*¹

- *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might* (v.10). As the word *finally* implies, we have come to the last of a series of instructions on how to put on the new nature created by God, and live as Christ has taught us. Throughout Chapters 4 through 6 runs the theme that believers are to be strong, but not in our own strength. We are to be *strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might* (v.10 above).

In other words, we are in a contest that was never meant to be won in our own strength. We are weak, and the world is ready to offer well-meaning friends, distractions, drugs, alcohol – anything to keep us from relying on Christ. But if we rely on the world’s help, we are like the “rebellious children” of Judah in the days of Isaiah, who turned from God and appealed to Egypt for help, and then discovered this was not a good idea. God rebuked his people: “*For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, ‘In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.’ And you would not, but you said, ‘No! We will speed upon horses,’ therefore you shall speed away; and, ‘We will ride upon swift steeds,’ therefore your pursuers shall be swift*” (Isa 30:15-16). If we defend against spiritual enemies without the armor of God, we find ourselves in this same losing situation.

- *Put on the whole armor of God* (v.11). Paul was in prison when he wrote this. He was allowed to speak publicly, but always there were the guards, day and night. Many who heard Paul speak in that prison setting became Christians, including some of his guards. No wonder God inspired Paul to draw on this analogy between the soldier’s armor from head to toe and the believer’s “whole armor of God.”

¹ Bible quotations are from the RSV.

• *For we are not contending against flesh and blood ...* (v.12). The nature of the contest is made clear. The prize is the human soul – yours and mine – and, although we are each involved, the unseen contestants are Christ and the devil. This news brings comfort on one hand, because Jesus Christ sealed the fate of the devil, as well as those who are saved, once and for all on the cross. He spoke of “*the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matt 25:41), and of “*the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*” (Matt 25:34). But if we enter the contest *without* Christ, the outcome is a foregone conclusion.

• ... *but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness ...* (v.12). These are our spiritual opponents. The armor of God enables us to “*stand against the wiles of the devil*” (v.11). We face *spiritual* forces – *principalities, powers, world rulers of this present darkness, spiritual hosts of wickedness*. Men sometimes get a clear view of these things. Our Lord Jesus certainly did when he was tempted in the wilderness. Paul wished to visit the Thessalonians but, he said, “*Satan hindered us*” (1 Thess 2:18). Every pilgrim on life’s road becomes gradually aware of this personal enemy of humankind, as Holmes gradually became aware of Moriarty without ever having actually seen him.

It has been said that there are two ways to discover all of Satan’s power. One is to seek it, as Marlowe’s Dr. Faustus did. The other is to resist it successfully, as Christ did.

And as we strive to live as Jesus lived, it becomes clear that to resist the power of the enemy, we need help. We need the armor of God – things already prepared in the same way the new nature is prepared for us in Christ. There are six items in the armor of God, and then a seventh to complete the picture:

1. *Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth ...* (v.14). The first item is *truth*. Pontius Pilate asked, “*What is truth?*” People search for truth today – objective truth beyond the opinions of men. This kind of truth is in the Word of God, and in the person of Jesus who said, “*I am ... the truth*” (John 14:6).

2. ... *and having put on the breastplate of righteousness ...* (v.14). The *righteousness* of Christ is part of our new nature. When you “*put on*” the righteousness of Christ, it is like having a breastplate. The enemy no longer has easy access to your heart. You get better at blocking unexpected temptations.

3. ... *and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace ...* (v.15). The Bible says, “*Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God*” (Eph 5:2). Also, “*Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you*” (1 Pet 3:15). In other words, walk the talk. Don’t be shy about sharing Christ, in both word and deed.

4. ... *taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one* (v.16). Evil thoughts come suddenly and often into our minds from acquaintances, from the media, and from “*within*” as Jesus said: “*For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts ...*” (See Mark 7:14-23).

Sometimes we wonder, “*What made me think of such an evil thing?*” These are the *flaming darts of the evil one*. They are *shielded against* and *quenched* (drowned out), the Bible says, by *faith* in Jesus Christ.

5. *And take the helmet of salvation ...* (v.17). The *helmet* has always been vital in sports as well as in combat. *Salvation* is a kind of “*helmet*” because it is the vital factor that enables the believer to get victory over the sworn enemies of God. Moses said to the Jews, “*Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord ...*” (Ex 14:13). This is what allows believers to meet whatever comes, with confidence in the outcome.

6. ... *and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God* (v.17). The words in your Bible act as a *sword*, slicing through the enemy’s thick fog of lies. “*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart*” (Heb 4:12).

7. *Pray at all times in the Spirit ... making supplication for all the saints, and also for me ...* (v.18-19). *Prayer* is the final component in your spiritual warfare. Equipped with all the armor of God, we still need directions on how to proceed. For these we look to God in *prayer* and seek guidance.

In the church’s warfare, prayers are needed: (1) *for all the saints* (our fellow believers as well as those who do not yet know God), and (2) “*also for me,*” Paul said. We must turn from criticizing our pastors and instead pray for them, and thus seal off an area of vulnerability to the enemy. Will you pause for a moment now and pray for the needs of your pastor?