

The Armor of God

The Armor of God and how to succeed in spiritual warfare:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying 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, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak. (Ephesians 6:10-20 ESV).

Introduction

We live in an age where it is all too clear that we have an enemy that deceives, steals, kills and destroys (John 10:10). We all have experienced what it means to be under spiritual attack. Some people don't realize that they are under attack because they don't realize that they have been deceived. But it is clear from the passage that we just read that our main enemy is not other people, even evil people, but our warfare is against the evil spirits in the air. Just the past year I have heard some strange stories of people who were demonically possessed and people who have suffered under the attacks of Satan. We should never underestimate the power and influence of Satan and his hosts, but on the other hand, we should never overestimate Satan and his agents. Jesus said in Matthew 28:18 "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto Me... Go, therefore. Satan and evil are mighty, but God

is almighty. Satan and the evil spirits are powerful, but God is all-powerful.

If we look at the book of Ephesians, we see that there is a progression in the spiritual life. A few years back I read a book of Watchman Née called "Sit, walk, stand." It was an exposition of the book Ephesians, and I will by memory relate some of the things I have learned in that book and which I believe the apostle Paul by the Holy Spirit wanted to convey to all believers as well. The first book I studied as a Christian was a book by Bennie Mostert called "Spiritual Warfare" 20 years ago and I can still remember many things in that book as well. He taught me to memorize the armor of God, and I would urge you to do the same for your own spiritual progress. These two books made a huge impact in my life as a young Christian.

When it comes to spiritual warfare, we know that theory doesn't help only. We need to experience the victory of Christ from day to day and from hour to hour. We as human beings are in a battle. A battle for our souls. A battle between life and death. A battle between good and evil. A battle between salvation and damnation, a battle between sin and righteousness, a battle between doubt and faith in God and a battle between lies and deception and the truth.

I will look at the following points in this study:

1) Sit and walk before you can stand!

2) Put on the Full Armor of God to be successful in spiritual warfare.

3) The Elements of the Armor of God

1) Sit and walk before you can stand!

In Ephesians 2:4-6 Paul wrote the following: "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, (Ephesians 2:4-6 NKJV)

Ephesians was written to believers in Christ. Those who have been made alive in Christ. Before we as Christians can stand against the

enemy, Satan, and evil spirits, we must sit with God in the heavenly places. What do we mean by that? We as human beings in our own strength are not strong enough to win ANY battle against Satan. But Christ Jesus has overcome Satan. He conquered Satan by His perfect life and perfect death 2000 years ago. Colossians 2:15 states that God disarmed principalities and powers and made an open spectacle of them when He hung on the cross for us. Jesus triumphed over Satan because He never sinned until He died. Hebrews 2:14 tells us that the devil had power over death because he catapulted the human race into death by deceiving the first man and women to sin in the garden of Eden. But because Jesus, the second Adam came and never sinned and fulfilled the righteousness of the law, (Romans 8:3,4) He took the power the devil had over death back and thereby demolished the power of Satan, sins, death, and hell forever.

The Bible states that the same power that God wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead is working in us who believe (Ephesians 1:19-21). If we repent of our sins and trust in Jesus Christ as our only Savior and Lord, if we believe that Jesus Christ died as our substitute to pay for our sins and that He rose from the dead for our justification, God will save us. If we have trusted in Jesus Christ as our Savior and King, then we have been born of the Holy Spirit, born from above. We are then Gods children (John 1:12,13). If we have been united to Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit we "sit" spiritually in heavenly places! That is our privileged, spiritual position. That is so because Jesus is seated in heavenly places and if we are united to Him we "sit" there as well. If we have been united with Christ by faith, heaven is our home, and we are then citizens of a heavenly kingdom. As Paul said in Philippians chapter three: "Our citizenship is in heaven." We have then a position of authority that surpasses that of the devil and his demons (Ephesians 1:20-22). If we have sat with God in heaven, we will have victory over Satan and ONLY then! Somebody who attempts to gain the victory over evil without being born of the Holy Spirit will always fail. He cannot be successful against Satan because he still belongs to Satan and the kingdom of darkness. He is then still a child of Gods wrath (Ephesians 2:1-3) and seated, if you will, in spiritual darkness.

But before we can stand against the schemes of Satan we have to experience something else first. And that is walking in the Spirit. Let's look at two sections of the book of Ephesians.

"I (Paul) therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called" (Ephesians 4:1 NKJV).

"Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma" (Ephesians 5:1, 2 NKJV).

Some Christians are born of the Spirit, but they don't walk in the Spirit. That means their lives have not been put under the control of the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:16 says "walk in the Spirit then you will never fulfill the lusts (or desires) of the flesh." If we walk according to the flesh, we will suffer defeat after defeat in spiritual warfare. Sin will overpower us frequently, and we will suffer many unnecessary things. Although all Christians will suffer in this world (Acts 14:22) there is a kind of suffering that we can avoid as Christians. If we walk after the flesh and after the dictates of our flesh it may be an indication that we have not sat with Christ in heavenly places. It may be an indication that we are not born again. But it can also be an indication that we have lost our first love and that we are in a backslidden state (Revelation 2:1-7). May God have mercy on us if we have been born again and still love the things and sinful activities of the world. May God grant you mercy if you are one of those. The fact is that God's desire is that we walk in love, that we walk in the Holy Spirit, that we walk in holiness and in a way worthy of the calling which He has called us with. As Christians, we are called to follow Jesus Christ, to deny ourselves and to take up our crosses (Matthew 16:24). Only after we have truly sat with God in heavenly places and only after we have begun to walk in the Holy Spirit will we experience success in our battles against Satan. We will only be successful in this spiritual battle after we have experienced the redemption of Christ Jesus, confessed our sins to Him, repented of our sins and trusted in Christ as our only Savior and Lord. In submission to Jesus Christ as Lord, we will gain the victory.

2) Put on the Full Armor of God to be successful in spiritual warfare.

Now we turn to our text. Paul repeats the fact that we have to stand against the devil and his hosts three times (verse 11,12,13). "Having done all, stand..stand therefore..but in conjunction with this command he says twice, "put on the full armor of God." Brothers and sisters, without putting on the full Armor of God it is impossible to have progressive success in our battles against evil and evil spirits. Like in any battle, there are setbacks, but the secret to have successive victory is like Psalm 91 states: "to abide in the secret place of the Almighty", and I understand that to mean, to put on the FULL ARMOR of God. We will see that the Full Armor of God relates to the Work and Person of Jesus Christ in all it's facets. That is why we find that in Romans 13:14, Paul states: "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Romans 13:14 NKJV). To put on the Full Armor of God means to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. It means to have union with Him. It means to abide in Him (John 15:5) and to draw strength from Him. Ephesians 6:10 starts with "be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." This text reiterates what we have said earlier. Sitting with Christ and walking in the Spirit makes you strong in God. We now turn to the different elements of the Armor of God. Every element is important, and it will go well with us if we make sure that all these elements have taken root in our lives.

In the olden days, in Jesus' time when soldiers went out to battle they put on an armor to protect themselves against the enemy. A soldier would have been useless if he had a sword but not a helmet or a shield. Also, what would it have helped a soldier in warfare if he had a shield and good shoes and a belt but not a sword? All the elements of the armor were essential to have success in the battle against an enemy. So if we want to be effective and successful in battle in God's army let us take heed and put on the FULL Armor of God. Then we will be able to withstand the enemy and then we will be able to conquer.

3) The Elements of the Armor of God

The first element is the belt of truth. A belt in olden days was essential to make a soldier agile, fast and unburdened in battle. To gird

your waist meant to take any hindrance away that would hinder you to be effective in warfare. In olden days soldiers didn't have trousers. They wore a one piece garment which went to the knees and below. The belt was used to tuck in the garment so that the soldier could be agile and move freely without hindrance. Now Paul applies this to believers and He commands: **put on the belt of truth**. We should be lovers of the truth. In John 14:6 Jesus said: "I am the way the truth and the life..." The Holy Spirit is also called the Spirit of truth (John 14:17). "Your righteousness is righteous forever, and your law is true. But you are near, O Lord, and all your commandments are true" (Psalm 119:142, 151 ESV). The law of God is the truth showing us the holy character of God. In it, we see our own corruption. And the church of God is called the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). The word of God is also likened to the truth in John 17:17. So to put on the truth means to put on Jesus Christ. It means you are united to the Spirit of God and to the church of God. It means you are changed by the word of God. It means you have confessed your sins to God because 1 John 1:8-10 says that if we say we have not sinned we lie, and the truth is not in us. To put on the belt of truth means you have come to see yourself in the light of God's law and character. It means you have come to see your depraved and wicked heart in the light of who God is. It means you have confessed and forsaken the lies and deceit of your former life. In Psalm 51:6 David cried out to God and said: "Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being.." (Psalm 51:6 ESV). To put on the belt of truth means you have come to know the truth, love the truth, speak the truth and live the truth. It means you have confessed your unrighteousness to God and taken Jesus to be Your guide and life.

The second element is righteousness. We are commanded to put on the breastplate of righteousness. A breastplate for a soldier was meant to protect himself against the spears and arrows or any weapon of war. It served as protection for the heart and vital organs of the body. If the heart or lung were pierced, it would mean possible death for the soldier in battle. The righteousness we must put on is not our own righteousness. Isaiah 64:6 says that our own righteousness is like filthy rags in God's sight. Our good deeds and righteousness don't count firstly in the battle against evil. Our righteousness doesn't justify us before God. Romans 1:16,17 says it so wonderfully as do the whole

book of Romans (Romans 3:24-27; 9:30-33; 10:1-4). "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:16, 17 NKJV). The revealed righteousness of Christ Jesus is what we need.

The righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to us saves us from the wrath to come. Christ's perfect obedience to the law obtained and fulfilled all righteousness, and he gives it to believers so that they can stand blameless in God's court of justice. If we have sinned once we would have a flawed and imperfect righteousness. But when we trust in Christ Jesus as our Savior and Lord He gives us His righteousness (perfection, sinlessness) and our sins are accounted to him. Our sins are what He bore on the cross. The debt of our sins was paid in full, and the wrath of God was borne on the cross because Jesus fulfilled all righteousness. If we are clothed in Christ's perfection and righteousness, we have solid protection against judgment day. With that foundation deeds and acts of righteousness will flow powerfully and freely by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 5:21 states that Christ is our righteousness. The more we realize how awesome His righteousness is, and rest in His righteousness, and know that God has given it to us freely, the more we will show His goodness, kindness and love to all around us by the Indwelling Holy Spirit. Putting on the breastplate of righteousness also means you hunger and thirst for acts of righteousness and to see it flourish in society (Matthew 5:6). Putting on the breastplate doesn't stop with the imputed righteousness of Christ, or the imparted righteousness of the abiding Holy Spirit, but follows in acts of righteousness. As Psalm 23 states: "You lead me in **PATHS** of righteousness for Your Name sake." Have you given your bodies as instruments of righteousness for the glory of Jesus Christ?

Thirdly we have as feet shod the preparation (or readiness) of the gospel of peace. Without feet we can go nowhere, and a soldier will be useless. This element shows us that in this spiritual war we should go on the offensive. There are times where we will have to defend truth in argument and so forth. But as the Bible says "the gospel is the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16) and "God has chosen the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe" (1 Corinthians

1:21). The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the message that we have to run with. It is the GOSPEL that will save people, and we know what the gospel is. In a nutshell: God sent His only begotten Son Jesus Christ to this earth, to live a sinless life and fulfill all righteousness, died in our place as our Substitute, bearing the wrath of God for sin, satisfying His justice and reconciled us to God. And after three days He rose from the dead, conquering sin, Satan, death and hell and provided forgiveness of sins, the gift of eternal life and the gift of the Holy Spirit for all those who will repent of their sin and receive Jesus Christ as their only Lord, Savior and treasure of Righteousness. The question is: are you prepared to share this gospel? Are you always ready to proclaim this good news to all around you? The "readiness" is part of the Armor of God. If you only sit back in the comfort of your home always, you are disobeying God! God calls us to share the gospel and always to be ready to share the hope that is within us (1 Peter 3:15). "Gospel" means "good news" in Greek. Believers have the good news that can change people's lives. Have your feet been made ready with this gospel of peace? This gospel and this gospel only will give lasting peace. Peace between you and God. Jesus is called the Prince of Peace in Isaiah 9:6,7 and is the substance of the gospel.

Fourthly: "taking up the shield of faith whereby you will be able to quench and extinguish the fiery and flaming darts of the evil one".

In any battle, there will be attacks, darts, fiery darts trying to undermine, discourage and destroy you. One of Satan's main weapons is sowing doubt in your heart. Doubt about the authority of the Bible. Doubts about the reliability of the Bible. Doubts about the trustworthiness of the Word of God. Doubts about the sufficiency of the word of God. Doubts about the genuineness of your conversion and salvation. Doubts about the fact that you are a child of God and whether you are born of the Holy Spirit. Doubts are not all bad, because it can lead to greater confidence in God and in His word. But it can also lead you to forsake God or backslide. In the garden of Eden Satan planted in Adam and Eve the seeds of doubt...Satan asked: "Did God really say? (Genesis 3:1) And that led to their fall and rebellion. The doubt led to sin, and that should make us careful. 1 Peter 1:3-11 speaks about the trying of our faith that is more precious than gold. Our faith will be tested and tried by doubts, but if we stand the test of time and

affliction and doubts, our faith will be found as precious as gold. Romans 10:17 says that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. As we listen to the Word, as we read and meditate on the Word of God (Psalm 1:1-4) and upon the promises of God and apply it to our lives and stand on it, our faith will grow, and we will become strong. By faith, we will be able to quench the fiery darts of the enemy. Satan and his hosts will throw doubts at us of various kinds, and we have to use our shield to protect us from his attacks. We must remember: although we have to fight the good fight of faith, faith in God is essentially a gift from God. It is something God gives us and not something we earn (Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 3:24,27). We can never boast about our salvation or the gift of saving faith. But having received faith from God we should use it in the battle to protect us, as a soldier would use his shield.

Fifthly: "And take the Helmet of Salvation"

A helmet was used to protect the head and brain which is essential to the human existence. In a battle, it is even more essential, because a helmet can prevent you from being struck, and it can prevent a blow that could cause your physical death. Psalm 27:1 states: "The Lord is the my light and my salvation." By putting on the helmet of salvation we are not only putting on an experience of salvation, but a Person, Jesus Christ. He is our Salvation. He has become our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification and our redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30). Without Christ, we are lost and damned and hell-bound. Jesus came to save us from our sins and the wrath of God (Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:10). He came to save us from eternal punishment. The scriptures divide salvation into three parts: Justification, sanctification, and glorification. And in Christ we have, are having and will have all of these. Justification happened when we first believed in Christ. Justification deals with our past sins. Our sins were forgiven by faith, and we were found not guilty in God's Courtroom by Jesus acting as our Substitute and Advocate. Sanctification deals with our conformity into Christlikeness. We are being saved from the power and slavery of sins daily and will until the day we die. It is a process. Glorification deals with our body. If we are believers in Christ Jesus, we will receive a glorified body (Philippians 3:20,21) one day and be freed from the presence of sin. Glorification is coming. Sanctification is going on now

for the believer and justification is something that happened in the past. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 says that human beings consist of three things: a soul, a spirit, and a body. Or to put it in other words. Our spirits have been saved, made alive, (refers to being born again), our souls are being saved from the power of sin (sanctification) and our body will be saved from the presence of sins (glorification).

Although we have salvation already, we also look to future salvation. It is written in 1 Thessalonians 5:8, "But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation." Let us hold on to what God has already given us (Revelation 2:25). Let us not fall again into the things He has delivered us from! Let us go forward into battle!

And lastly "take the Sword of the Spirit which is the word of God".

The shoes as readiness for the gospel of peace and the sword of the Spirit go hand in hand because the gospel of peace is part and parcel of the Word of God. Hebrews 4:12 says: "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12 NKJV). The word of God has the power to change lives. And this is the word "rhema" in Greek, meaning the word that is spoken in season according to the will of God at the right time. We have all experienced how someone has spoken the word of God to us that we just needed at that time. But it also refers to the spoken word of God. Jesus said you are clean by the word He has spoken to you (John 15:3) and that He is washing us by the word of God (Ephesians 5:26) and that His words are spirit and life (John 6:63). People are born again by the incorruptible Word of God (1 Peter 1:21-23), and faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). By using the word of God, we are being used by God to pierce the darkness and to advance the kingdom of God. The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit. The Word of God brings light into souls bound by the forces of darkness. Listen how Paul connects, Christ, the Word of God which he calls "the word of truth" with the gospel of our salvation, faith and the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 1:12: "In him (Christ) you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed

with the promised Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 1:13 ESV). It is essential for believers that we know the Word of God and meditate on it day and night (Psalm 1:1-4). There is great blessing when we know and obey the word of God (Joshua 1:8-10). God promises us that His Word will never turn to Him void. "So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11 NKJV). Jesus said "The heavens and the earth will pass away, but My word will never pass away" Matthew 24:35. And Jesus also said that He will judge the world in righteousness. His word will judge the living and the dead. "His word is forever settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89). Jesus also said: "We shall not only live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the desert after He fasted for 40 days, He declared "it is written" every time He was tempted. If Jesus quoted Scripture to defend Himself how much more we who are weighed down by a sinful nature! By knowing, obeying, believing in and using the word of God we are sure to advance against every attack from Satan. The word of God is our fortress and our sword.

When we use the word of God as the Sword of Spirit, as we walk in the Spirit, we will advance in the spiritual battle against Satan. But we have to do it as we pray and as we are submitted to God and as we are being controlled by the Holy Spirit. Paul ends this passage by saying that as we use the word of God, we must pray in the Spirit with supplication for all the saints. When we pray for the saints, we are to do so in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit gave the word of God (2 Timothy 3:16) and therefore it is fitting to pray in the Holy Spirit while handling the word of God. Only by reliance and dependence on the Holy Spirit will be effective and victorious in the battle against the flesh, sin, Satan and the evil spirits. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 says: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (II Corinthians 10:3-5 NKJV).

Therefore, in conclusion, as we sit with God in heavenly places, united to Christ Jesus by faith, clothed in His righteousness, and as we walk

in the Spirit, let us take up the Full Armor of God and stand against the evil one. Let us put on the Lord Jesus Christ. We will have to go through many tribulations and suffering as the Scripture tells us in Acts 14:22 but Lo, the lion of Juda, the Lamb of God has conquered and stands in victory. He had won the decisive victory on Calvary when He spilled His own blood as a perfect, sinless, atoning sacrifice. As Revelation 12:11 says: "we HAVE OVERCOME by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of our testimony, and we did not love our lives unto death." May this be true in our lives as we venture into the battleground of the world from day to day. May we rely on God and abide in Christ as we battle, knowing: "the battle belongs to the Lord!" (2 Chronicles 20:15). Jesus Christ has overcome, and all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Him!