

God's Armor, Satan's Attacks & Our Choices

Matthew 6:13b

Part of our asking God to protect us, delivering us from the evil one is tied to some choices. Choices to flee, choices to stay vigilant, and choices to put on the armor God has prepared, described, and commanded us to wear.

We Must Wear the Armor of God

Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) who wrote the 18th Century, six-volume classic entitled, **The Decline & Fall of the Roman Empire**, traces one of the causes of the military decline of Rome's nearly invincible legions came *with a gradual decline in the discipline of wearing and using the uncomfortable, bulky, heavy, and challenging armor.*

Today we could trace the weaknesses of the 21st century church to a gradual decline in the discipline of wearing and using the uncomfortable, bulky, heavy, and challenging armor of God.

- How well do you know the armor of God?
- How often do you think about wearing it?
- How practiced are you in understanding how it works?
- How good are you at standing against all that Satan can throw at you?

That is what we need to ponder today! Start with me back in the first explanation of the armor of God in the seventh century BC. The prophet Isaiah tells us how God readied Himself to defend Israel. If this is what God pictures Himself wearing, how much more should we want to always wear the armor of God!

Isaiah 59:17 (NKJV) For He put on **righteousness as a breastplate**, And a **helmet of salvation on His head**; He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, And was clad with zeal as a cloak.

Now turn onward to Romans, where Paul was laying the groundwork for the church at Rome *to be able to thrive right in the center of the Roman world filled with glittering distractions, numbing materialism, paralyzing temptations, blinding false teachings, and laced with simmering hostilities.*

How does a church survive when so surrounded by the Evil one?

Romans 13:11-14 (NKJV) And *do* this, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation *is* nearer than when we *first* believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, **and let us put on the armor of light.** ¹³ Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. ¹⁴ But **put on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts.

To the most troubled New Testament assembly, the Corinthians, Paul says the same:

2 Cor. 6:7 (NKJV) by the word of truth, by the power of God, **by the armor of righteousness** on the right hand and on the left.

In his very first Epistle to one of the first churches he had founded, Paul writes these words to the Thessalonian believers:

1 Th. 5:8 (NKJV) 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.

Finally, we all need to turn back to the most complete armor of God passage in Ephesians chapter 6.

The Complete List of the Believer's Armor of God

Starting at verse 10, please stand with me for our time of all together as Christ's body, listening to the voice of God through His Word:

Eph 6:10-17 (NKJV) Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power 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 do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.** **¹³ 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. **¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,** **¹⁵ and having shod your feet** with the preparation of the gospel of peace; **¹⁶ above all, taking the shield** of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. **¹⁷ And take the helmet** of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

Pray

Beware of the Evil One

Last week we examined just who this evil one is that we are warned about. Because of what we have seen we can understand why Jesus asked us to regularly ask God our Father to deliver us from the crippling, deadening power of the Deceiver, and the Devil, who is the Ministry-Disruptor, and the Mind-Blinder.

We also saw that Peter warns all of us that Satan prowls around, and when he finds one of those places as Paul called them, (Eph. 4:27), he has an opening from which to launch his attack where he can devour (1 Peter 5:9) believers. What exactly are those places where Satan can find an open and unprotected spot from which to launch his attacks? Those landing places for Satan are listed by Paul in Ephesians 4.

Paul warned the new believers in Ephesus that they must not surrender any part of their lives to the Devil. Once he gets a foothold he can defeat us in other areas of our lives. That is why they rid themselves of everything that could be used by Satan to distance them from God. We must do the same.

Landing Places For the Devil

When we look back at history, landing places or footholds, were the key to the outcome of World War II. After the string of devastating set backs for the months after Pearl Harbor, the tide began to turn. On August 7, 1942, the Allies began their first offensive action in the Pacific.

Allied strategists believed that the central Pacific fortress of Japan could be cracked. They did not intend to seize each island separately. This would be too costly and take too long. Instead, they decided on a plan of island hopping, or seizing key islands from which to attack the next target, bypassing other targets.

The idea was to capture certain key islands, one after another, until Japan came within range of American bombers. Led by General Douglas MacArthur, the Gilberts, Marshalls, Marianas, Carolines, and Palaus were taken in seemingly endless, bloody battles — ultimately leading to the unconditional surrender of the Japanese.

Even a small part of our life, allowed to become a landing place for the devil can lead to ongoing spiritual defeats and greater bondage to sin.

Ephesians 4:25-32 (NKJV) Therefore, putting away lying, “*Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,*” for we are members of one another. ²⁶ “Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, ²⁷ **nor give place to the devil.** ²⁸ Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with *his* hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. ²⁹ Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. ³² And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

What does it look like when Satan finds a weak point? Here are three examples of how Satan devours believers.

Examples of Satan’s Attacks

Satan attacks individuals who allow him to (Acts 5:1-11).

Satan attacks couples who allow him to (1 Cor. 7:3-5)

Satan attacks who allow him to (1 Tim. 3:7)

Satan Attacks Individuals Who Allow Him To

Satan and his demons attack us as individuals.

Look at Acts 5:1-11. Here is a direct Scriptural example of two believers who through pride, hypocrisy and deceit, allowed a place for the Devil. They left open the door, and he filled their hearts to lie.

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession.² And he kept back *part* of the proceeds, his wife also being aware *of it*, and brought a certain part and laid *it* at the apostles’ feet. ³ But Peter said, “**Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself?** ⁴ While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in

your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”

⁵ Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. ⁶ And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried *him* out, and buried *him*.

⁷ Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ And Peter answered her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?” She said, “Yes, for so much.”

⁹ Then Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband *are* at the door, and they will carry you out.” ¹⁰ Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying *her* out, buried *her* by her husband. ¹¹ So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

Look again what Peter said in v.3: "Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" Ananias allowed Satan a place, and Satan filled his mind with lies. Listen to what one pastor says about this verse:

I don't believe in a righteous Christian's life [Satan and demons] have that access. In an obedient Christian's life I don't believe [Satan and demons] have that opening. But somehow [Satan and demons] can come and influence us through the system and if we're open to them and living in disobedience, they have some access to the controlling factors of our conduct. ¹

Satan Attacks Couples Who Allow Him To

Paul explained that Satan wants to disrupt marriages and families. He wants to temp, derail, destroy, defile, and eventually divorce them. Look at one of the key ways he does so in 1 Cor. 7:3-5.

Paul tells us in verse 3,

"Let the husband fulfill his duty to his wife," (that's talking about physically, sexually), "and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife doesn't have authority over her own body but the husband does, likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body but his wife does."

In other words, you need to give your body to your partner. Why? Verse 5:

"Stop depriving one another unless it's by agreement for a time that you may devote yourselves to prayer and come together again lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control."

“Nothing would make Satan happier than to come against a Christian couple and because one is holding back the physical relationship against the other, raise the level of temptation to that one struggling with self-control and destroy that family. And again, he can do that through the environment, through controlling the environment that person is in so they are unduly exposed to wicked temptation. And if there's an opening in the life and disobedience, there is reason to think that he can somehow push the buttons even within us”. ²

¹ John MacArthur, 1 Peter 5:7-8, electronic edition.

² *ibid.*

Satan Attacks Leaders Who Allow Him To

When Paul laid out the standards for church leaders in 1 Timothy 3, he added this very interesting note. In v. 7 he says that Satan sets snares for leaders in the church.

1 Tim. 3:7 (NKJV) Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

He wants to entrap them in pride, in lust, in anger, in self-indulgence. Each of the spiritual qualifications for elders and deacons are there as a fence to keep church leaders out of Satan's snares.

As you pray, remember to pray for the elders and deacons of this church. We need God's protection. We must avoid Satan's snares, he sets traps for people in spiritual leadership.

Satan's Goal is to Devour Saints

Turn with me to 1 Peter 5:8 (NKJV).

Be sober, be vigilant; because **your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion**, seeking whom he may devour.

When he devours we find ourselves overwhelmed by doubts (the opposite of faith), we are immersed in fear (the opposite of hope), and we are consumed by selfishness (the opposite of love).

God wants us walking in faith, living in hope, and serving in love. Satan devours us to be overwhelmed by our doubts, chained by our fears, and driven by our desires. That is all the Evil One has to do and we are devoured, rendered useless to God.

The Spirit is grieved, our testimony fades, and our joy and peace evaporates. Downward we go. Next, look at James 3:13-18. The Evil One is also:

Satan's Goal is to Bring Confusion

Here we see how the Evil One can destroy the joy, peace, hope, and effectiveness of believers.

James 3:13-18 (NKJV) Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that* his works *are done* in the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. ¹⁵ **This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.** ¹⁶ For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, **confusion and every evil thing are there.** ¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. ¹⁸ Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

God's wisdom from above brings confidence, but the Evil One brings confusion.

Satan is Already Defeated: We Must Resist Him

Hebrews 2:14 tells us that at the Cross Jesus destroyed the Devil (NKJV) so that he has

been rendered powerless (NASB). Satan is defeated when we walk by faith in obedience to God. Satan has been rendered powerless

In 1 John 3:8 we see that Jesus destroyed the works of the Devil. He no longer can deceive, capture, and ensnare us when we walk in faith, obediently with God.

John goes on to tell us that the One within us is greater than the adversary outside of us (1Jn. 4:4).

All of these verses mean that we do not have to be defeated. We are winners not losers. Satan is vanquished, Christ has won. But that doesn't mean we are off the hook. We still must stay sober minded, discipline ourselves to follow the Lord, seeking His protection.

We must resist the Devil for him to flee from us (James 4:7). If we do not seek and find God's protection, we will be devoured.

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A Mighty Fortress # 26

2 Cor. 10:3-5 Use the Weapons of our Warfare

Look at 2 Corinthians chapter 10. Second Corinthians chapter 10, verse 3, Paul says, "For though we walk in the flesh," we're human, physical, "though we walk in the flesh we don't war according to the flesh." There's no physical strategy against Satan. There's no mental strategy against Satan. There's no verbal strategy against Satan. You can't say words and make him run. We don't war according to the flesh. Verse 4, "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses." The contrast between the flesh and the divine, between the human and God. And we don't battle Satan with human plans, human ingenuity or human words but with a divinely powerful expression of God. What is that? Verse 5, "We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."

1 Timothy 1:18 Fight the good Fight

There's the key. Everything becomes captive to the truth and obedience to the truth. As I know the truth, as I obey the truth, Satan is resisted. And whatever enemy comes against me becomes captive as I stand on the truth, as I obey the truth. First Timothy chapter 1 verse 18, "This command I entrust to you, Timothy my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you," now listen to this, "that by them you may fight the good fight," here's how, "keeping the faith and a good conscience." What does that mean? Holding on to the faith which is the truth, the faith, the Christian faith, the revealed truth and a good conscience means that you've not only believed the truth, you've what? You've obeyed it and your conscience isn't accusing you, same principle.

How do you fight the good fight? How do you keep from the shipwrecking disaster that delivers you over to Satan, as he mentions in verse 20? How do you prevent that? Keeping the faith, holding it, guarding it and having the good conscience that doesn't accuse you because you haven't violated its truth. Beloved, there's only one way to resist the devil and that is to know the truth, to believe the truth, to stand on the truth, to obey the truth. And when you do that, you stand against him and he what? He flees. What you say is immaterial. There's no formula for this.

2 Tim. 2:3-4 Stay Un-Entangled

Second Timothy chapter 2, verse 3: "Suffer hardship along with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." We're soldiers in a spiritual warfare. And how are we to fight? Verse 4: "No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier." Two things, if you're going to be a good soldier you know what the commander told you to do and you do it, right? That's how you please him. Same thing, you hold to the faith and you obey it.

Ephesians 6:10-17 Know How to Wear Your Armor

And then that key passage, Ephesians 6, turn there quickly, Ephesians 6, verse 10, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." That's that divinely powerful weaponry. "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil." Here he gives you the details of it, the details. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenlies" as they come against us as individuals, as families, as leaders, as churches.

Monitor Your Spiritual Immune System

Our spiritual immune system is laid out in Scripture as having three factors:

- **spiritual health** (eating and drinking in God's Word, plus exercising each day by walking in the Spirit);
- **spiritual armor** (understanding and uses the armor Paul commands us to use in Ephesians 6:10-18); and
- **spiritual warfare** (resisting the devil and his demons).

If we neglect any part of our spiritual immune system—Satan and his army have a point to step up their campaign.

One final point that is perhaps the most important one of all for each of us: when the church cleans house, when believers renounce hidden sins, when there is a banishment of all hypocrisy and pretense, and genuine holiness begins to permeate Christ's church—*unbelievers become attracted to this new way of life*. Which reminds us of: