

**THE CHURCH ON OFFENSE IN
CONFLICTED DAYS
FALL/WINTER 2020/2021
“THE SPIRIT-FILLED BELIEVER AT WAR”**

March 31, 2021

EPHESIANS 6:10-20 and other selected support Scriptures

I. PAUL'S PREPARATION OF THE EPHESIANS

- A. He held back nothing that was PROFITABLE v. 20
- B. He testified that the gospel was about REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD and FAITH TOWARD THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. That means that they would have to change their mind about who the Sovereign One was and put their trust in the Son of the Sovereign One, the Lord Jesus Christ v. 27
- C. He testified of the GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD v. 24
- D. The main focus of his preaching was PROCLAIMING THE KINGDOM OF GOD. v.25
- E. He declared to them the WHOLE COUNSEL (WILL, PURPOSE, INTENT, DESIRE) OF GOD.

He trusted God with them, encouraging them to guard themselves against the FALSE TEACHERS and FALSE TEACHING that was going to come.

TONIGHT: We examine Paul's deep insights into the believer's role in the most ancient of wars from Creation. This war of the sons of God of the Divine Council for control of the kingdom of God with separate but equal glory/honor/power with God has used the human race to conduct the day-by-day battles in the conflict. Alone, humans are no match for the usually invisible angelic host conducting their business most often in the confines of heaven. This seems to be where the seat of this war is. Earth was created for humans and its affairs were assigned to them. They are responsible for the stewardship of the earth. Since it is here in the temple of God, the Garden of Eden, that this first battle was engaged, earth and its control have become a strategic piece of property and humans a major target by the members of the divine council, known in the New Testament as principalities, powers, thrones, dominions, rulers of the darkness of this age and are accompanied by spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies or heavenly places. Let's take a look

II. PAUL'S ADMONITION FOR NO LAXITY DURING THE WAR

- A. *With an invisible enemy, caution is always advised!*
- B. *The best caution is to use the strength provided for believers*
1. *“...be strong...” To be powered by someone outside of you is the most likely understanding of this verse since the object of the empowerment is the Lord. This would be the passive understanding. It could be a middle voice imperative. That would be translated power up yourself with the Lord. This would still be an action the power of which would not be in himself. It is him, the believer, uniting himself in or with the Lord.*
 2. *“...in the Lord...” Here is the believer’s original and only source of power.*
 3. *“...and the power of His might...” Here, the believer is exercising faith that God has already proven Himself to be the savior of the believer and that He has excelled over all enemies, domestic and foreign. He rehearses in His mind all the powerful things God has already done in the past. Blessed assurance.*
 4. *PRACTICAL APPLICATION: How is this done? The humble action of faith, identical to how the believer is first saved: He comes to the voice that has called him by taking the step of the received faith toward Him and He brings you to Himself. It is identical to be “filled” or “completed” by the Spirit (5:18). We make the humble, obedient step in faith to what we were commanded and He completes us. The believer being strong in the Lord faithfully acknowledges there is a war, there is a real enemy and the true God has the believer taken care of in advance. It is to believe God has the strength for Him. Secondly, in all humility he acknowledges that he is not the equal of his adversary and especially not of the God he serves. So the believer does not act like some spiritual Rambo ready to take on the heavenly adversaries who “shudder” at his presence but as a man clothed in the strength of the Lord who “teaches his hand to war.” (Ps 144:1 ¶ Blessed be the LORD my Rock, Who trains my hands for war,). Thirdly, by faith he receives the Lord’s strength and steps into the battle with courage.*
 5. *Paul further illustrates this action of God on his behalf by means of the gear of the Roman soldier. He has many occasions for which he could relate to these soldiers. He says for the believer to put on the whole armor of God. In doing so, he would be strong in the Lord.*

6. *With this armor, Paul acknowledges the true enemy of the believer and how the armor will protect him from him. The schemes of the devil are not effective against this armor. Worn and used properly, it will protect the believer and those for whom he is fighting against those schemes.*
 - a. *The believer's battle is not against flesh and blood. If it was against them, the believing community would be like Israel in conquering the promised land. The armor we are putting on would not be metaphorical but real, actual armor to prepared us for war and conquest. That was not in the plan of God for the church or the community (fellowship) of believers for He was not expecting us to be killing our "enemy" but rescuing him from the real enemy, the despot of the soul of man, the devil.*
 - b. *Such a war is conceived and planned in the heavens by the heavenly adversaries of God's will and authority. And that is where its strategic and tactical moves are made. Citizens of the nations become their servants and earth's kingdom leaders, their pawns in a "game" of wits with God.*
 - c. *The major "players" are the principalities and powers and the host of heavenly beings they have recruited to their rebellious plans. These are the members of the divine council who were assigned the nations at the tower of babel as their guardians and teachers. Since Acts 17:26-27 tells us God organized the nations in their boundaries and times that "they might seek God...and find Him." It may be too presumptuous to assume these trusted members of God's council were to aid the people in their discovery of God and their living in the various lands, climates, geologies and conditions of the regions to which God had scattered them. Whatever the actual duties they were supposed to perform, we can know what they did! They, believing the same lie Satan told Adam and Eve, conducted themselves as "gods" of those nations and assumed to themselves powers of the lie that glory, honor, power and authority equal to but separate from God could be obtained by grasping it and rejecting the authority of God.*
 - d. *Paul has spoken of these principalities and powers in other passages as well revealing a body of truth that would be otherwise unknown to us. He tells us in Col 1:16 that Jesus is the One who created them. They were created through Him*

and for Him. He is also the One to whom they must answer and He has reconciled in His body the chaos they had created in heaven. It only awaits final sentencing. He told the Romans that even the principalities could not stop God's great love from saving those He wanted to save (8:38). They are always watching the behavior of the gathered church to behold our obedient order and gaining wisdom of God from it. Eph 3:10 From Colossians 2:15 we learn of Christ's defeat of them and open, public triumph over them.

e. Like Job, one of the first recorded battles of this type of warfare, we cannot fight these powers with earthly weapons. Paul said the same thing in 2 Cor 10:3-5. We must fight with the rules of engagement given to all sides of this war. We cannot violate the authority of our adversaries since God is the One who gave it to them. We can fight with the authority given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ over these rebellious beings' stranglehold on the sons of disobedience they control. (Eph 2:1-3)

f. We know our main weapon is the gospel of the Christ proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the announcement to human beings held captive by the adversaries of the various people groups of the world, that the Christ has come to save us. He has defeated the power of the wicked one of the fear of death (Heb 2:14-15) and of the lies he has told from the beginning. It is the message of true freedom, but it is not our message as the source. It is the message of Christ and it is to be proclaimed faithfully and accurately to the captives. Consequently, the believer must first be filled with the Spirit to assure the accuracy and power of the message. Then he is told to put on the whole armor of God. NOTE: It is the WHOLE armor of God and not just selected pieces for the convenience of the believer. Twice this is repeated! Let's look at the components of truth the Spirit-filled believer must have in his consciousness always.

A BELT TO HOLD ALL THE COMPONENTS TOGETHER:

TRUTH. This is biblical truth, pure truth, absolute truth. It has no mixture with the philosophies of the world nor of the theologies of other world religions. It is derived carefully from proper interpretation of Scripture. Scripture is its source, its only source. The believer acknowledges natural

revealed truth from observation but notes the limitations of the interpreter of the observation, the universality or locality of the observation, the changeability of the truth when another displaces it etc. Truth is what holds all the rest of the components in place. Since lies are what holds the rebellion of Satan together, biblical Truth is the only thing that can offset it. This belt is utilitarian: the breastplate is held in place by it; the sword sheath hangs on it; the canteen or water source is held in place here.

THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS - protects the vital organs from sword thrusts or arrows from an enemy. The righteousness of Christ protects one's heart from the accusations of the wicked one. Since it is not his own righteousness that saves him, the believer in Christ, when accused by the adversary, relies on the righteousness of Christ to be his release from Satan's attempts. The righteousness of Christ assures the believer's heart of his justification since it is Christ, the pure and faithful whose righteousness has been applied to him. On the basis of a purified heart by Christ, the believer can work from this heart to behave righteously empowered by the Spirit of God.

FEET SHOD WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE – As soon as the believer heard the gospel of Christ, he knew it was good news! When he trusted Christ that good news was downloaded to him and he is motivated to tell it to anyone who will listen! Added to that is the motivation and longing of the Spirit of God to tell the story of the Christ and the drawing of the Father to bring people to His Son and a powerful witness is being developed. The believer is ready then to speak that good news.

“Preparation” is probably better understood to our age as “readiness.” The believer in Christ is both prepared and ready to give the good news.

THE SHIELD OF FAITH - the fiery darts of the wicked one of lies, accusation, deceit and argumentation are powerful human motivations to justify one's self or destroy another human being. I do not like to remember the arguments I shut down thinking I won them only to find out that the one with whom I argued was totally unconvinced of my great

ability to reason and had been offended by my proud approach to truth! As we invest confidence in the gospel of Christ and the Truth of God's Word (faith) our shield becomes invaluable and is readily wielded against lies and the other fiery darts of the wicked one.

THE HELMET OF SALVATION - protects our head, the headquarters of everything we do. Doubt is a crippler; guilt destroys one's motivation. When our gift of salvation is considered or meditated upon and we understand the priceless gift it is from Christ our thoughts are purer. When we meditate on the things Paul told us to in Philippians 4:8 or we allow the words of Philippians 4:6-7 adjust our emotional anxiety into the peace of God, the helmet is doing the chore for which it is worn. When we consider the tenses of our salvation - we ARE saved, we are BEING saved and we WILL BE saved - our security in Christ grows! Our lives are purified as we look to the ultimate salvation at Christ's coming (1 John 3:1-3)

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT - This is our only "attack" weapon! Notice it is not simply a sword. It is not a physical weapon since that is not the warfare we are waging. Nor is it the sword of our apologetics or evangelism of our intellectual creation. It is the sword of the Spirit; it belongs to Him. Its effectiveness is found in Him not in the person wielding it. He is the source of its power. The word is not a logos type word but rhema type word. It is not a general doctrinal word but a word appropriate for the occasion.

- C. *When we compare the use of this armor with a related passage in which Paul explained not the parts of the armor but the use of the armor (2 Cor 10:3-5) we see that this armor is used by the believer for his own convinced assurance of the power of the gospel and, using the word, for the pulling down of strongholds. Strongholds are those established traditions that set up stubbornness in us to resist change or the truth of God's word. These are usually the objections to truth that have been suggested by the culture affected by the lies told by adversaries to God's way. The Pharisees and the Sadducees would be two groups in which we find this. But our weapons also cast down arguments against the knowledge of God and every high thing (heady philosophy) that exalts itself (believes it is superior to God) against that knowledge.*