

The Believer's Armor – Part 2

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul encourages believers to be strong in the Lord, wearing the full armor of God
2. aim – to cause us to stand fast against the temptations and oppositions of the world in full faith
3. passage – Ephesians 6:10-20

b. outline

1. The Believer's Struggle (Ephesians 6:10-13)
2. The Believer's Armor (Ephesians 6:14-18a)
3. The Believer's Perseverance (Ephesians 6:18b-20)

c. opening

1. the reality of *Paul's condition*

- a. to Paul, his house arrest in Rome was a very real example of the war going on between the forces of the gospel (on the one hand) and the forces of evil trying to stop it (as seen in his own enemies)
 1. Paul never seems too terribly concerned about the “happiness” or “comfort” of believers
 2. Paul focuses his energies on the *spiritual* battle that engulfs the church, not its physical issues
 3. thus, his own imprisonment is simply another “example” of this war – God's gospel going out into a world and being rebuffed by a world locked in darkness and lies (**John 8:43ff**)

“Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character [native language], for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.”

2. the reality of *spiritual warfare*

- a. a Christian worldview *embraces* the existence of “*heavenly places*” (**v. 12 cf. 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10**)
 1. another realm of existence, a spiritual “plane” occupied by the ascended Christ, angels, saints, and the forces of evil under Satan, which coexists alongside the natural world
 2. yet, many Christians (having imbibed naturalistic secularism) *deny* (or *ignore*) the existence of this spiritual world and the struggle we have with the malevolent forces emanating from it
 3. the problems of life (for the Christian) are not primarily issues of “*flesh and blood*” (**v. 12**) – they are the realities of a spiritual warfare arrayed against us to destroy our faith
- b. **reality: Paul contends that the church struggles against the forces of evil, and that this evil is so great that it requires the fullness of God's power over us to combat it and survive**

3. the reality of *divine protection*

- a. the *metaphor* of a suit of armor, worn by a soldier as *he goes into battle*

1. Paul may have gotten the “genesis” of the idea from the soldier chained to him
 - a. however, that soldier (in all likelihood) was not wearing full battle armor (**i.e.** no shield)
2. Paul more likely got the picture from his recollection of **Isaiah 59:14-18**

“Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands far away; for truth has stumbled in the public squares, and uprightness cannot enter. Truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. The LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede; then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him. He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds, so will he repay, wrath to his adversaries, repayment to his enemies; to the coastlands he will render repayment.”

- a. the world is a place where justice and righteousness is not *common* (this is the “*evil day*”)
 - b. those who would pursue truth and righteousness become *prey* (in this “*evil day*”)
 - c. there is no help from others because all others are swallowed up in evil
 - d. so, God himself puts on the armor of his own righteousness and brings back justice
- b. **the metaphor that Paul uses is a picture of God himself, adorned with all of the elements of his own righteousness coming against the forces of evil arrayed against him**
 1. the picture painted in **vv. 14-18a** is of the “*armor of God*” – the fullness of the very nature of God *himself*, which is the only way that we can “*stand firm*” in the “*evil day*” (**v. 13**)
 2. **each element of the armor represents a particular aspect of God's own nature that is provided to resist a specific way that the forces of evil will attack the believer**
 - a. **i.e.** not a picture of a soldier *per se*, but a metaphor of the nature of God in and over us

II. The Believer's Armor (Ephesians 6:14-18a)

Content

a. the seven (7) elements of the armor

- note (**again**) a series of *participles* (i.e. fasten, put on [x2], take up, pray) – an adjectival verb, modifying a noun to make it active (e.g. filled with the Spirit = singing, giving thanks, submitting, etc.)
 - IOW**: although the various elements are fixed things in believers (i.e. like truth or righteousness), we are to *actively* use them (**wield them**) when we are faced with temptation to sin
- note that most of the participles are actually in the *aorist* tense (i.e. having fastened, etc.) – the sense of an action completed in the past but having continuing consequence in the present
 - IOW**: each of these items is something *we already possess* (as Christ-followers) – now we turn to their power in everyday life (e.g. we are already *righteous* by faith; now we wield it against sin)
- note the *nature* of the metaphor – each element is *defensive* in nature (i.e. by which to “stand firm”), yet the *totality* of the armor is actually designed for an *offensive* maneuver
 - IOW**: the soldier wears each element to protect some particular area of his body, but (ultimately) his goal is to *defeat* his enemy, not just stand and “take it”
 - so, the “armor of God” is designed to protect us against evil as it tries to destroy our relationship with God, but it is also used to *advance the cause of Christ* (note the **transition** in v.17)

b. the “belt of truth” (v. 14a)

- “belt” is a modern English addition – the phrase is best rendered “*having your loins girded*” (KJV) – the Greek word means having your midsection wrapped or tied to hold together your clothes
 - a sense of security (inner fortitude) – of having everything “held in place” – not having to have one hand tied up with keeping your trousers from falling down or your shirt being untucked
- “belt of truth” = the girding about our *center* with the truth of God
 - truth as either 1) the concept of Christian doctrine or the content of God’s revelation (objective), or 2) truthfulness or sincerity (i.e. without the article “the”) – *being* truthful (subjective)
 - belting ourselves in the middle of our lives with the fullest revelation of God’s Word (e.g. **Ephesians 4** and the importance of learning and maturing in “*sound doctrine*”)
 - or, living out that truthfulness in everyday life, being sincere and honest and trustworthy
 - so, is Paul saying that we need to be belted about with a set of sound doctrine, or is this belt more of how we choose to be truthful and honest and sincere throughout life?
 - we need not choose between these alternatives – truth and truthfulness go hand in hand – those who are filled with the knowledge of God’s truth will (by necessity) speak truthfully and honestly *as a result of having that truth within them* (**remember Isaiah 59:14 above**)
- Paul starts his metaphor with this reality – sound doctrine (and its results in life) is an essential “belt” of security that every believer must have to withstand the wiles of the devil**
 - the **primary attack** of the devil will be to ask the question “*has God actually said?*” (**Gen. 3:1**) – do you *really* know what God has commanded and what that means for your existence?
 - this is the *error* in so much of Evangelicalism – a lack of doctrinal training leaves “Christians” with little defense against doctrine-by-opinion, tradition masquerading as truth, or outright heresy
 - we buckle on the belt of truth by ever-maturing in our understanding of Scripture even**

c. the “breastplate of righteousness” (v. 14b)

- “breastplate” = the *thoraka*; a molded shield that the soldier wore over his chest (and back) to protect the vital organs in the mid-section of the body against the thrust of a sword (e.g. a Kevlar vest)
 - a shield over the *heart* – metaphorically, the control-center of a man; i.e. his very nature wherein the substance of his thoughts, words, and deeds emanate (**Matthew 15:18-19; 5:8**)
“But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander ... Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”
- “breastplate of righteousness” = a protection of our *inmost* self with righteousness
 - righteousness as either 1) our justification – our *positional* nature of being declared righteous before God by faith, or 2) our righteous acts – our *practical* living in ways that are righteous
 - wearing a righteousness within us (in our heart) that is *imputed* to us from Christ (i.e. an *alien* righteousness) that covers our sinfulness with the perfections of his holy life
 - or, living righteously – resisting temptation, repenting from sin, disciplining ourselves
 - so, is Paul suggesting that we need to be protected with an internal righteousness imputed to us from Christ, or is this breastplate more of how we are to be sinless throughout our lives?
 - we cannot choose between these alternatives – our imputed righteousness is a heart that has the law of God written upon it, thus we will *live according to our nature* (**Jer. 31:33**)
“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

3. **Paul extends his metaphor with this reality – Christ’s righteousness (and its results in life) is an essential “breastplate” that every believer possesses to withstand the wiles of the devil**
 - a. the **secondary attack** of the devil will be to question the validity of your justification – are you *really* worthy to stand before a holy God given your continuing sinfulness? **(Zech. 3:1-7)**

“Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him ... Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. And the angel said to those who were standing before him, ‘Remove the filthy garments from him.’ And to him he said, ‘Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments.’ ... And the angel of the LORD solemnly assured Joshua, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here.’”
 - b. **we put on the breastplate of righteousness by continually relying on the righteousness of Christ within us, even as we fall short of perfection under the attacks of the devil**