

The Believer's Armor – Part 4

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 6:14-17)
3. The Believer's Perseverance (Ephesians 6:18-20)

c. opening

1. the reality of *spiritual warfare*
 - a. **question:** how would Paul have felt while he waited for a response from Ephesus?
 - b. **Paul insists that every believer struggles against forces of evil (not comfort), and that this evil is so great that it requires the fullness of God's power over us to combat it and survive**
2. the reality of *divine protection*
 - a. **Paul uses a metaphor of as a picture of God himself, adorned with all of the elements of his own righteousness coming against each force of evil arrayed against him (and us)**
3. the reality of *the armor*
 - a. the "belt" – the essential "girding" of security that sits *at our very core*
 1. the **primary attack:** "has God [really] said?" – attacking the **content** of our faith
 - b. the "breastplate" – the core of Christ's own righteousness *covering our heart*
 1. the **secondary attack:** are you *worthy* to stand before God? – attacking our **position**
 - c. the "shoes" – the gospel of peace with God which gives us *stable footing*
 1. the **additional attack:** are you really *safe* in the sight of God? – attacking our **assurance**
 - d. the "shield" – the armor that protects us from the *arrows of the devil*
 1. the **additional attack:** are you *sure* you know what God *means*? – attacking us with **doubt**
 - e. the "helmet" – the understanding we must have of what it truly means to be saved
 1. the **secondary attack:** are you *feeling* good about life? – attacking us with **emotionalism**

II. The Believer's Armor (Ephesians 6:14-17)

Content

g. the "sword of the Spirit" (v. 17b)

1. "sword" = a weapon; typically a double-edged blade 12-24" in length
 - a. **note:** the verb/participle "take up" is *assumed* within the "and" conjunction of the sentence
 - b. the picture is synonymous with every sword imagery common to soldiers
 1. **note:** such a weapon is both *offensive* and *defensive*, and Paul seems to mix them together
 - c. metaphorically, a device that is used to "cut" or "divide" (**i.e.** piercing; **Hebrews 4:12**)

"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

 1. **IOW:** something that divides one thing from another, particularly one *thought* from another
2. "the word of God" = the revelation of God by which divine distinctions are established
 - a. the assumption is of Scripture (**i.e.** the word of God as *breathed out* by God; **2 Tim. 3:16**)
 1. what God has revealed through the verbal, plenary inspiration of men (**2 Peter 1:21**)
 - b. the more likely idea is the fullness of what God has revealed through every avenue of revelation
 1. **i.e.** the message (word) of God revealed in Scripture, through the *Imago Dei*, in nature, and in the person and work of Christ – all that we know of God through every means he uses
 2. **e.g.** distinctions revealed in the inherent nature of conscience, ethics, etc.
 - c. this "word" (then) is the revelation of God which makes clear moral and practical distinctions between opposing positions – God clearly defining what is "good" and what is "evil"
3. **Paul continues his metaphor with this reality – taking up the sword of the word of God is to apply the revelation of God to draw clear moral distinctions against the wiles of the devil**

- a. **another attack** of the devil will be to *minimize* such distinctions – “(implied) you can have both life and knowledge ...” (**Gen. 3:6**) – there are no distinctions or sacrifices to be made
 1. **IOW:** you can eat from both the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
- b. this is the *error* of **relativism** creeping into Evangelicalism – removing moral distinctions between courses of action in the Christian life – removing the idea of “personal sacrifice” as a distinction
 1. relativism = that all views of either truth or morality are relative to differences in perception and consideration (or experience) – there is no “universal” set of moral truths except that which is embraced by the individual out of his or her experiences, customs, or frame of reference
 2. **i.e.** a “Christianity” that is not based on clear moral distinctions, thus each “believer” is free to judge for himself what he will embrace, believe, and practice (without sacrifice)
 3. **e.g.** the (lost) idea of actually *committing* to Sunday worship over against other pursuits
- c. **we take the sword of the word of God by embracing the moral and practical distinctions that God has revealed to us in order not to be swayed by the devil into that which becomes immoral through our lack of sacrifice or commitment**

III. The Believer’s Perseverance (Ephesians 6:18-20)

Content

a. prayer as the completion of the armor

1. **question:** is this “element” (prayer) a continuation of the armor imagery, or something else?
 - a. the English construction of the sentence could lead to the conclusion that **v. 18** is a part of **v. 17b**
 1. **i.e.** that prayer is what Paul means when he says to take up the sword of the word of God – to wield the sword in the means of prayer itself
 2. I have taken that tact in the past, arguing for prayer to be an element of the armor that is not *specifically* taken from an actual soldier’s armor, but appears as a “part” of the whole
 - b. but, the Greek construction uses two *new* participles (“*praying*” and “*keep alert*”) and these seem to start a new thought building on the idea of the whole imagery (**i.e.** a conclusion)
2. **answer:** prayer is the *proper response* of the Christian soldier – properly dressed, ready for action
 “Stand up, stand up for Jesus, Stand in His strength alone; / The arm of flesh will fail you, Ye dare not trust your own: / Put on the gospel armor, Each piece put on with pray’r; / Where duty calls, or danger, Be never wanting there.” (George Duffield, Jr.)
 - a. **note:** it is possible to be fully dressed, but not actually ready to go out and face the enemy
 - b. or (in the soldier analogy), **ready to take orders from headquarters (from the commander)**

b. prayer in the Spirit (v. 18)

1. it must be **constant** in its breadth (“*at all times*”)
 - a. the phrase “*with all prayer and supplication*” is a part of this concept in the Greek
 1. notice the redundancy = **i.e.** pray with all prayer (huh?) – either:
 - a. pray with all *kinds* of prayers (and supplications; NIV), or
 - b. lit. with all prayer and supplications, praying at all times in the Spirit, to that end ...
 - b. **remember:** the armor is the very *essence* of God’s own nature over us (**i.e. Isaiah 59:14**)
 1. this is not some “self-help” program to fight the wiles of the devil
 2. we “put on” this armor by going to God for his power over us, and that power is through prayer and supplication – beseeching God to work against evil for us and through us
 - c. **so, since the battle against evil is constant, the prayer for God to gird our loins, cover our hearts, establish our feet, shield our bodies, envelop our minds, and protect our consciences must be a constant appeal to our divine commander**
2. it must be **Spirit-empowered** at its core (“*in the Spirit*”)
 - a. permeated by the power of the Spirit and in *full alignment with the will of God*
 - b. Charismatics assume that this phrase means “in method or language of the Spirit” – in some sort of “spirit” language that allows the believer to communicate with the Spirit “in his native tongue”
 1. however, Paul squarely repudiates this type of thinking in **2 Corinthians 14:6-19**
 - c. instead, Paul is *probably* thinking along the lines of **Romans 8:26f**
“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”
 - d. **the prayer of the Christian soldier is aligned with the will of God through the interceding work of the Spirit – bathed in the prayer of humble submission to the will of our commander**

3. it must be **alert** to surrounding evil (*“keep alert”*)
 - a. Roman soldiers were trained to be alert – **e.g.** falling asleep at post was a capital offense
 1. which makes the story given to the soldiers in **Matthew 28:13** implausible
 - b. Christian soldiers need to be *trained* to be alert – **i.e.** the entire point of this section
 1. we need to be reminded regularly of the presence of sin and evil all around us
 - a. many *ignore* that truth in favor of seeking comfort and peace
 2. we need to be reminded regularly of the consistent need for repentance and discipline
 - a. many to come to church for *emotional therapy* rather than conviction
 3. we need to be reminded regularly of the completed work of Christ in victory over both
 - c. **the prayer of the Christian soldier is to be with eyes wide open to the realities around us – being honest of our urgent spiritual needs before our commander**
 4. it must be **zealous** in its devotion (*“with all perseverance”*)
 5. it must be **ecumenical** in its nature (*“for all the saints”*)
- c. prayer for Paul (vv. 19-20)**