

22.07.07 Coromandel Baptist 10:00 a.m.

Christian Armour

Bible Readings = Is. 52:7-10; 59:16-21 and Eph. 6:10-17.

Introduction:

- (1) This week we begin to look at the concluding section of Ephesians, marked by the word 'finally'. In this concluding section we see that the great themes of the letter come to a head in terms of very practical application.
- (2) It has been said that the letter is governed by three verbs 'sit, walk, stand'.
 - a. Seated with Christ, walking in Christ, and standing in the battle.
 - i. We are not to see this as merely a description of our individual position, but the whole community of the household of God.
- (3) However, we must take a wider view as well. It is not just that we 'sit, walk and stand' in Christ, but our sitting, walking and standing are for the plans and purposes of God to be revealed in the cosmos, and for the glorification of the Father.

This week we aim to see the nature and intensity of the spiritual battle of which our prayer is a part, and the glorious truth that God himself is our armour in the midst of it all.

1. Seeing Things in the Big Picture

- (1) We have already noticed that the whole of the letter is governed by the opening chapter. The themes there nominated are picked up and discussed as the letter unfolds.
 - We notice that all things come from the Father (1:3) in Christ (1:4ff.) through the Spirit (1:13f.). This means that all things are done to the praise of the Father's glory, or to the glory of his grace (1:6, 12, 14).
 - This goal will mean all things will be summed up in Christ (1:10) and we as the Father's redeemed sons (1:4-5) may share in the glorious inheritance he has ordained for us (1:18ff), through Christ.
 - It is this new *community* in Christ that is in focus all the way through. It is the community redeemed by his mercy and raised up with Christ for good works (Eph. 2:1-10), and can be described as 'one new man' (2:15); the Father's 'household' (2:19); his 'temple' and 'dwelling place' (2:21-22); in which there is no division between the Jews and Gentiles who are fellow heirs with Christ (3:1-13); so that we are his 'family' (3:14ff.) to be filled unto all the Father's fullness (3:18f.); who walk in the oneness of the Godhead (4:1ff.); having put on the 'new man' in Christ (4:20ff.); and living in the Spirit's fullness (4:30ff.; 5:18ff.); and as the bride of the Christ we share his glory (5:25ff.)
 - Elsewhere we are told that God's purpose is to bring 'many sons to glory' (Heb. 2:10), and that we are to be conformed to the very image of the Son (Rom. 8:29), who is the first born of many brothers.
- (2) The arena for the declaration of the glory of the children of God is the 'heavenly places'.
 - We have characterised this previously as the place of blessing and battle (e.g. 1:3; 1:20f.; 2:6 cf. 6:12).

- We know that God's purpose is to vindicate his holy name in the heavenly places, and this through his redeemed people (Eph. 2:6f. cf. 3:10 and other mentions of the principalities and powers such as Rom. 8:38; 1 Cor. 2:8; Col. 1:13).
 - Salvation is not about 'us'. It is about the holy name of God, declaring itself amidst the entire host of heaven, and in the face of all evil rebellion.

§ Salvation must be understood as 'salvation from our enemies' (e.g. Luke 1:71ff. cf. Ps. 106:4, 10; Is. 14:1ff.; Jer. 30:9-11; Zeph. 3:14-20; Zech. 9:9-10; 1 John 3:8).

§ Thus, we see those who are once the enemies of God enslaved the arch-enemy (Satan) are now sons of God, filled with the Spirit, of the Father's family, and lovers of Christ (Eph. 2:1ff.; cf. our status 'in Christ'). We did not understand the nature of the spiritual battle (or if even there was such a thing!) before we were the Father's children.

(3) All this means that the discussion about the armour of God and the prayer of the Church is not so much about one or the other individual, but about the whole body.

- Contrast with the pattern sometimes promoted in 'spiritual warfare' literature about how to put on the armour and how to engage in spiritual battles!

2. The Armour is God's Armour

(1) The Old Testament passages (from Is. 52 and 59) from the background to Paul's language here in Ephesians.

- Some speculate that Paul (a prisoner, as made plain in Eph. 3:1) sees the armour of the soldiers guarding him... may be so, but the meaning and content of his description comes from the Old Testament.
- In Is. 52, the message of the good news is that God has come to deliver his people from their enemies, and that he brings comfort to his people. In Is. 59, the picture is of the destruction and oppression of the innocent at the hands of the wicked, and when no-one was able or willing to intervene for God's people, he himself took up the armour (as a warrior) to fight for them and deliver them.

(2) The 'Redeemer to come from Zion' (Is. 59:20) is none other than Christ, and he is the armour of God revealed in the world. In the Old Testament God Himself = salvation and deliverance (e.g. Pss. 18:2; 46-48; 35:1-3; 37:39f.; 65:5; 70:4f.; Is. 33:2, 6; 45:17; 46:13; 51:5f.; Jer. 31:33).

- God himself comes to us in Jesus (Immanuel) and saves us from our sins (Matt. 1:21), and thereby rescues us from our enemies (cf. Luke 11:21-22)
- Christ himself is Truth; Righteousness; Peace; Salvation; etc. His word is the the Sword. We simply stand in him. We exercise faith in the victory of Christ (cf. I Jn. 4:4; 5:4; Col. 1:13; 2:14-15; Rev. 12:10; etc.) He has already conquered (e.g. 1 Cor. 15:55-56; Heb. 2:14-15; Jn. 12:31; 16:11).
 - In a very real sense, putting on the armour of God is the same as putting on the New Man (in Eph. 4:24).

3. The Armour is Corporate

(1) We must see that the evil one is incessantly and implacably opposed to God, and thus to God's people. He hates God, and hates those who bear his name and image. He hates the marks of the work of God in them.

- He patrols around the people of God (who are a unified entity in the Son) seeking some mode of access. Hence Paul's comments re anger etc. in Eph. 4:26-27.

(2) Thus we stand in the armour as we walk in the things that are already ours in Christ (e.g. truth with one another in love; peace with one another in the peace of Christ; forgiving one another in the forgiveness of Christ; encouraging one another to faith in Christ; etc.).

- These weapons are not fleshly, but mighty in the Lord (2 Cor. 10:4).

(3) This enables us to 'stand' (cf. James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9) in the 'evil day'.

- On the one hand this evil day is always here (e.g. Gal. 1:4); yet still the evil day is to come (e.g. Mk. 13:4-23; 2 Thess. 2:3).

(4) Because it is God's own armour (= Christ!) in whom we stand, we are to 'be strengthened' (i.e. plural, passive, imperative).

- As we do so, we are enabled to pray, and particularly, we are enabled to pray for utterance to be given to the gospel, which is the power of God at work in the world.