



The Christian Warfare

Ephesians 6:10-20

The Christian life is war and it starts with the new birth. Before that we were dead in sins, under Satan's rule and his willing slaves. We were drugged to sleep with worldly goals and pleasures. But Satan has been toppled and God has taken over the government. There is still opposition to Him. When the USA and the UK invaded Iraq and Afghanistan, there was the initial conquest but then there was the ongoing war against pockets of resistance. God has conquered us, yet there is still the flesh deep down inside us, sinfully craving and leaving us easily tempted. There is the world around us which pressurises us to be like themselves living in pleasure. Then too there is the devil still tempting us and stirring up the flesh and the world against the holy Christian life. Sometimes we feel overwhelmed by despair. We feel we are making no headway, yet we are. Victory is sure. Where He begins the good work He will bring it on till the day of Christ (Phil. 1:6).

The Enemy

In any war it is vital to know your enemy. The devil, Satan, was a mighty angel but was cast out of heaven when he sinned. Many other angels followed him and became demons. He hates God and he knows that his time of freedom is short. His whole purpose and ambition is to hurt God and if he cannot do that, he will hurt what belongs to God and is precious to Him. He tries to get God's children to sin, so that he will bring shame on God and also cause God to be angry with them and chastise them. He loves to make life hard for the Christian and to take away their peace and joy. He is called Apollyon, the destroyer, because he is the opposite of the Creator. He is described in Scripture (Eph. 6:12) by various terms which speak of his great power: 'principalities and powers' (angelic beings), 'rulers of darkness' (great forces), and 'spiritual wickedness in high places' (wicked spirits in the heavenly realm). It was far easier for David to fight Goliath than it is for us to fight Satan. He is invisible, cunning, powerful and experienced, and has access to our minds. He hates us with a bitter hatred.

Wiles

Satan has many wiles (Eph. 6:11). Sometimes he comes as a roaring lion to frighten us and other times as an angel of light, quoting Scripture to deceive us. He can come to us directly or through other people. Sometimes he will even use a Christian to deceive us. Jesus, discerning that his disciple Peter was being used in this way, had to say to him, 'Get thee behind me Satan' (Mt. 16:23). He can work on our pride, our lust, our anger and our covetousness. He came to Eve saying to her that if she obeyed him and sinned she would be like God (Gen. 3:5). To Jacob he said, you will miss out on the blessing and Esau will get it (Gen. 27). To David, with regard to Bathsheba, the devil said, you can have fun and no-one will find out (2 Sam. 11). To Peter, he whispered, you will be arrested and suffer greatly if you don't deny Jesus (Lk. 22:54-62). To Demas he said, look at the worldly riches and pleasures which can be yours instead of the trials you now face (2 Tim. 4:10). Sometimes he comes indirectly. Balaam wanted the reward which was promised for cursing Israel. He couldn't curse them so he didn't get the reward, but then he advised the Moabites to send their beautiful young women to invite the Israelites to parties, and to try to involve them in idolatry and immorality. He got the desired result. Many Israelites died under the chastisement of God. But he himself also felt the judgment of the Lord. He was slain by Israel (Numb. 25; 31:8,16).

Resist

Watch and pray! Be on your guard constantly as the enemy is always looking for an opportunity to overcome you. If you were fighting ISIS in Iraq or the Taliban in Afghanistan you would have to be always on watch for snipers and roadside bombs. Sadly, we are often caught off guard and sin. We feel pathetically helpless but must not give up. We disgrace God by falling again but we must get up, repent, and trust in Christ and resist the devil. We are powerless in and of ourselves. We need the armour God provides. Let us fight the good fight with the equipment the Lord gives.

The Armour (Eph. 6:14-18)

1. The belt of Truth (v. 14). Loose robes were commonly worn in New Testament times. These are kept from tangling the feet by the girdle or belt. What is this belt of truth? Some think it is the Bible, but that is the sword of the Spirit and would be needless repetition. Others think it is truthfulness and sincerity but that is always deficient and is not really truth. All of us are deceitful and hypocritical to a certain extent. Rather it is the truth subjectively considered — receiving the truth and standing on the truth. Jesus said, *'The truth shall make you free'* (Jn. 8:32). Receive the truth, not traditions, nor human reason, nor philosophy which are mere spiders' webs. You need a strong and reliable belt.
2. The breast plate of Righteousness (v. 14). Some say Paul is referring to our own righteousness and holiness, to our good life, but, alas, at its very best that is full of holes. No, rather it must be the righteousness of Christ which alone is perfect. You have sinned, Satan says, so just give up and despair. You might as well sin more. No, you must say, I will not give up, I am justified and forgiven.
3. The shoes of the Gospel (v. 15). Alexander the Great and the Romans had great victories because of their good footwear and so being able to march fast. The gospel fills our hearts with joy. It makes us light of foot because Christ died and we have peace with God.
4. The shield of Faith (v. 16). The Roman shield was like a door: four feet tall by two and a half feet broad. It could guard against darts which were dipped in pitch and set on fire. These are blasphemous and unbelieving thoughts. We wonder where they came from. Whatever the temptation cleave to Christ. Sometimes we have sudden attacks of lust. Run to Christ. That is faith. Trust Him. Look to Jesus alone. Like a limpet cling to the Rock.
5. The helmet of Salvation (v. 17). You are saved. Your sins are forgiven. Christ is in you. Nothing shall separate you from the love of Christ. You have a great hope of salvation. Having this hope for the future purify yourself *'as he is pure'* (1 Jn. 3:3).
6. The sword of the Spirit (v. 17). This is the only weapon for attack. It is not to be your reasoning and arguments by which you vanquish Satan. He is too clever for you and me. Rather, like Christ our great example, we should say to him, *'Get thee behind me Satan for it is written...'* Quote to him the commandments and the promises and the warnings. He cannot resist God's Word.
7. Conclusion (v. 18). We are to be praying always with all prayer and supplication. This is not an extra piece of the armour but rather is to go with all the rest. As you put on the armour and in using it, pray. Be always watching and praying so as to discern the enemy. Be a fighter for God and seek the Lord's help by prayer. You shall yet have the victory. *'We are more than conquerors through him that loved us'* (Rom. 8:37).

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