

STAND!
Eph. 6:10-14
Webnotes

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness.

Review from last week – a summary of vv. 10-12:

THE CHARGE:
Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

THE REALITY:
The existence of invisible spiritual forces of evil fighting against us

THE OBJECTIVE:
To stand against the devil's schemes

THE MEANS:
Put on the whole armor of God

V. 13 – Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day.

Several implications:

THE DAYS IN WHICH WE LIVE ARE EVIL.
Paul mentioned this earlier in chapter 5 -

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, *because the days are evil*. Eph. 5:15-16

There the exhortation is to watch the way you live and to make good use of your time, use your days wisely. As John Piper's book title says, don't waste your life. Make your life count, make the best use of your time – why? – because the days are evil. Look carefully then how you walk, be careful how you live – why? – because the days are evil, and if you're not careful how you live, you'll be adversely affected by the evil days, by the evil in the world, by the prince of the power of the air who is at work in those who are disobedient and who would seek to make you ineffective and unwise in how you live, and who would love to have you not make good use of your time and to waste your life on a thousand trivialities that are of no eternal value.

Here in our verses for this morning, the exhortation is to take up the whole armor of God in order to stand – why? – because the days are evil.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from *the present evil age*, according to the will of our God and Father. Galatians 1:3,4

So Christ gave himself, in other words he gave his life, he died on the cross, he experienced Calvary's crushing blows, he endured being the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, in order to deliver us from the present evil age. Jesus not only saves us from our sins and the punishment that comes as a result of our sins, but he sets us free from the dominating control of this present evil age. And this has happened because it was the will of our God and Father. Our heavenly Father wanted for us to be delivered, set free, from the present evil age, so he sent his Son, the Lord Jesus, to give his life for this purpose.

So the days in which we live are evil, this is the condition of the world in which we live, and it will continue to be so until Christ returns.

It's easy for us who seek to follow Christ while living surrounded by all the comforts, luxuries and amenities of the easy life, and in a culture where the church is generally prosperous and sufficiently respected, to be relatively complacent, unworried, unbothered, unconcerned with the idea of spiritual warfare...

John MacArthur writes of the "victories" of comfortable Christians:

Theirs is the victory and peace of the draft dodger or defector who refuses to fight. They are not interested in armor because they are not engaged in the war. (John MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 343)

So the real challenge before us is for this final section of Paul's letter to really get inside of us. Because he is telling us that God's people are at war and that we will continue to be at war until Christ returns and takes charge of this planet. And that our only hope of overcoming and prevailing is by taking up and putting on the whole armor of God, which is our second observation.

YOU WILL NOT PREVAIL APART FROM THE ARMOR OF GOD.

So that's our stated goal or objective – to be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Our objective is to stand, prevail, endure, survive, stay alive. In the movie, *The Last of the Mohicans*, from James Fenimore Cooper's novel, there is one scene where Hawkeye, the main character played by Daniel Day-Lewis, and the two other Mohicans, along with the two sisters, Cora and Alice, are fleeing from the Huron Indians who have just massacred hundreds of Anglo-Americans. And they're in a cave-type formation underneath this thunderous waterfall. Hawkeye and his two fellow warriors are about to jump into the falls so as not to be captured, and he yells at Cora, "Stay alive. I will find you."

That's one of the base, essential objectives of the people of God in this present evil age, to stay alive. Stay alive spiritually, prevail, endure, overcome, until you either leave this world or until Christ returns to rescue those he loves, whichever comes first. Satan schemes and plots, using whatever means necessary to cause us, at the very least, to be temporarily sidelined, removed from the battlefield, taken off the front lines, and at the most, to be completely taken out of commission, destroyed, eliminated. I'm mixing my movie imagery here, but it's like the scenes you'll see in *Saving Private Ryan* or other war movies where you see army tanks that were once powerful at combating the enemy,

now sitting by the sides of roads having been hit by grenades, with their tracks blown off and worthless to the war cause, left to rust. Paul would tell us that apart from the armor of God, such will be our fate as well.

As he continues to think about the reality of spiritual warfare while sitting in a Roman prison, Paul has had time to think about this a lot as he has observed the Roman soldiers who keep guard over his cell. And he finds himself thinking even more strategically about the nature of warfare and the importance of having all the armor in place if a soldier is to engage successfully with the enemy. He is going to focus his attention on six indispensable items:

- Belt
- Breastplate
- Sandals
- Shield
- Helmet
- Sword

And one final piece of armor, a non-clothing item but nevertheless a part of the weaponry, which we will refer to when we get there in a few weeks as John Bunyan did in Pilgrim's Progress as the weapon of "All-Prayer." This morning we'll look at the first two pieces, the belt and the breastplate.

BELT OF TRUTH

"having fastened on (girded your loins with) the belt of truth"

We would be apt to think of a belt as that which we slide through the belt loops, maybe to hold one's pants up, but for us it's almost as much or even more about completing the look of the outfit than it being an absolute necessity for avoiding any embarrassment. But for a Roman soldier, it was a different story. From what I understand, the Roman soldier always wore a tunic which was an outer garment that served as his primary piece of clothing. It was essentially a large, square piece of material w/ holes cut out for the head and arms, and it usually draped rather loosely over most of the soldier's body. So in hand-to-hand combat, you can imagine this loose material getting in the way. So prior to battle, the soldier would cinch it up and tuck it into a heavy leather belt that wrapped around the soldier's waist and loins. Even the average Roman and Middle Eastern citizen used a belt for similar reasons, so that when they were doing heavy work or were in a hurry and needed to run from one place to another, their tunic wouldn't get in the way. When God was getting the people of Israel ready to eat the Passover meal just before they left Egypt, he told Moses what they were to do:

In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened (loins girded), your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. Ex. 12:11

Importance of truth:

You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. John 8:32

Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. John 17:17

In other words, make them holy by the truth. Make them men and women and young people who are set apart from the world and who increasingly have the markings of being the people of God, and do this by the truth. God has not left us in the dark. He has revealed truth to us. Some of it we will like, and frankly some of it we won't like. But we need it. And without it, without the belt of truth girded about you, you don't have a chance withstanding the assault on our minds by the enemy. You will be confused, you will buy into the messages of deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons, you will be

tossed to and fro by your doubts, you will not have answers either for yourself or for others who ask you for answers, and you will succumb to the whisperings of the enemy that will seek to undermine your confidence, joy and peace.

BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

“and having put on the breastplate of righteousness”

The breastplate covered the front of the body and in some cases the full torso. It was a tough, sleeveless vest, often made of leather or heavy linen, onto which were sewn overlapping slices of either animal hooves or horns or pieces of metal, like chain mail. Some were made of large pieces of metal molded and hammered out to conform to the individual soldier's body, custom-fit. And I think the purpose of that particular piece of armor is fairly obvious – to protect the heart, lungs, intestines and other vital organs. The soldier wanted to protect this whole part of the body. You could live with a slice to the leg or the arm, but if the mid-section of the body was pierced, you were pretty much done for because of internal bleeding or infections caused by the puncture.

So how does this apply to spiritual warfare? In ancient Jewish thinking, the heart represented the mind and the will, and the bowels were considered the seat of emotions and feelings. Now think about it for a second: what are the two primary areas where Satan most frequently and most fiercely attacks us? The mind and the emotions. He wants to get at our thinking and our feelings. If he can confuse us or create doubt or get us to buy into lies, cloud our minds with false doctrine and false principles and false information, and if he can disrupt our emotions, get us all stirred up inside, mess with our affections, fill us with anger, jealousy, suspicion, bitterness, fear, despondency, guilt, whatever it might be, and get that emotion to control us, he's got us right where he wants us. He's sidelined us and we're out of commission, maybe for a day, maybe for a week, maybe longer.

So what's the protection? The breastplate of righteousness. And I'm going to suggest that there are two aspects to this. It begins with God's own righteousness which is freely given to those who believe in Christ. We are made right, declared to be in right standing with God, through faith. And this righteousness is made known to us through the gospel.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.” Romans 1:16,17

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul talks about his own experience of receiving God's righteousness:

I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith. Philippians 3:8-9

Other scriptures: Rom. 4:6, 11, 22-24; 2 Cor. 5:21

The second aspect I believe is the practical righteousness that comes from a life lived in obedience to God. It's the putting on of right behavior and putting off of wrong, sinful behavior. It means to live in daily, moment-by-moment obedience to our heavenly

Father. God himself puts on our imputed righteousness, but we must put on our practical righteousness.

Conclusion:

Kent Hughes writes the following:

“In ancient times, before a squire was knighted he would spend the night in vigil in the castle chapel, with his armor spread before him as he offered up his soul to God. This is the way to don the armor of God, for he is the One who teaches us the ways of war and fights the battle through our hands and feet. It is in communion with Christ that the armor is set and reset for battle. We must allow him to cinch the belt tight, and to lower over us the breastplate of righteousness. Thus armed, we may ask that his truth and righteousness permeate our lives.”

(R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians*, 229)