

The Whole Armor of God

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Date: 12 May 2010

Preacher: David Carrico

[0:00] This was a little bit impromptu. I had just very little notice in putting this together.

So rather than develop something from scratch, I reached back to something I did with the men's night crowd a few months ago. Ephesians chapter 6. I think Ephesians 6, especially the verses 10 through 18 is one of the most profound passages in all of the New Testament. It's a passage that has been at the foundation of my understanding of the Christian life for over 20 years. God impressed this on me a long time ago. And of course, to do it full justice would require several hours. So we're just going to barely skim over actually verses 10 through 13. And I still have three and a half pages of notes. So that's going to be a good trick if I get all of that in. Ephesians 6, 10 through 13. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the full armor of God that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day and having done everything to stand firm. So starting with verse 10, Paul starts out with the word finally. That's a transition word where we're moving into the last theme of this book. I mean, Ephesians covers a lot of ground. There's a lot of very rich study in this book. But the last theme of the book is coming into this theme of protection for believers. What's involved with being a believer in the world back then? What's involved with being a believer in the world today? Because the times really aren't any different. People haven't changed in 2,000 years. The same things they dealt with back then are the same things we deal with today. Paul tells us to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Now, that's a pretty common literary technique for people of Hebrew and Jewish background to emphasize a thought by repeating it. So what

Paul is doing here is emphasizing this thought. Be strong in the Lord. Be in the strength of his might. And interestingly, at least to me, there are three different words used for strength in this one sentence. The first word is, if I have the pronunciation right, in dynamo. It's derived from the Greek word dynamis. It actually means to make strong, to be vigorous, or to strengthen.

As I said, it's derived from dynamis, which happens to be the root word for our words dynamite, dynamic, and dynamo, or generator. It carries with it the idea of strength in action, of capability in operation. So it's talking about, this is an active word. This is a word that talks about things happening, strength being used. The second word is kratos, and that translates the word strength, and it means to make, to a manifested strength or might. This is talking more about the presence of power and the strength rather than the exercise of it. So this is the difference between the bodybuilder pumping iron and the bodybuilder doing this. The kratos is this.

He's muscular. He's there. You see the power, but he's not doing anything with it at that moment. And then the word might is translated as iskus.

[4:18] And it's often used to talk about physical strength, but here it's referring more to the demonstrated power, power that's being worked. You see it happening. If you were in a generator house and you saw that dynamo spinning, that would be iskus, demonstrated power. In this case, the demonstrated power of God, the power that prevails. So before he addresses anything else in this passage, Paul spends time and words to tell us to take on the strength of the Lord. Well, that ought to be pretty intuitive to us that we're not going to deal with it, with the problems of the world in our own strength. We're not going to be very successful at that. We need to get strength from somewhere to deal with that. And Paul's saying, get that strength from the Lord. It's not the amount of strength that's available that's important.

It's where you get it from. It's the source of it. And Paul says in Philippians 4.13, I can do all things through him who strengthens me. So it's a consistent message from Paul.

When you read through his epistles, it's a consistent message. Go to the Lord for strength. You will find your strength in God, not in the things of the world. It's obviously an important teaching and it lays the foundation for the rest of the passage. So if it's so important for us to be strong, if it's so important for us to have God's strength and might available to us, how do we get it? Next question, right? We find that in verse 11. The word where he says, put on the full armor of God, put on is the word in duo. And it means to sink, to go in, to go under, to enter, or to put on. And this is a word that if you were talking about walking into your closet and putting clothes on for the day, this is a word that you would use to describe that. But it's also a word that's used to talk about spiritual changes. Changing the way we are spiritually. And the form that's in this verse carries with it the idea that this is a one-time action. You put the armor on one time. It's not like a shirt that you put it on, you take it off. You put it on, you take it off. It's not like football gear where you put on the pads in the suit and you go play the game and then you take the stuff off. Here the armor of God is something that you are to put on and to wear for the rest of your life. Don't take it off. And implied in that is the fact that the need to do this is great.

You're not going to put on the armor of God for something silly. You're not going to put on the armor of God to deal with something trivial. You put on the armor of God to deal with the problems of life, to deal with the trials of life, to deal with the temptations of life, and you don't take it off. To take it off is just foolhardy.

[7:58] Take up the full armor of God. Panoplia is the full armor and it means the entire suit of armor. Now if you want to think of it like the Middle Ages knight who was in sheet metal from head to foot and just clanked around, you can think of it that way. But Paul's thinking about the Roman legionary who had a suit of armor. He had breast protection. He had loin protection. He had greaves on his legs and a shield in one hand and a helmet and a sword. That was the image that Paul had in his mind.

And it was enough that if you knew how to use it, it protected all of you. If you wore it all and you knew how to use it, it protected you. So we're supposed to put the whole thing on, not just the parts we like, not the parts that are easy to wear or easy to carry or the parts that are comfortable. We're supposed to put it all on because otherwise we leave ourselves exposed and we might as well not be wearing any of it at all. Of course, in verse 14, Paul begins a very detailed discussion of that armor and we're not going there tonight, but that's worthy of study just in and of itself, 14 through 18.

So, we assume the strength of the Lord by entering into or putting on the full armor of God, but now we come to the question of why. Why do we do that? Well, he says that you may be able to resist in the evil day.

Actually, resist is the word histemi. No, actually, the word we want is having done everything to stand firm.

[9:52] Histemi is the word stand firm. Sorry, I got confused. And it means to be set in place or to stand fast. And this is a word that had military application.

This was a word of art in the study of strategy and tactics. And what it meant was to hold a critical position against attack. And John uses a synonym of this word to express a very similar idea in Revelations 2.25 when he tells the church at Thyatira to hold fast to what they have.

So, we're supposed to stand firm, we're supposed to hold fast, and we're supposed to be prepared for attack. Things haven't changed in 2,000 years.

Those words are just as true today as they were when Paul wrote them. So, who are we or what are we to stand firm against? That you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

The word methadoya is the word that's translated as schemes, and it means process, craft, or while.

[11:14] W-I-L-E. Which, you think of Wile E. Coyote. While is related to sneaky. Process, craft, while, what would those include?

Any temptation you can think of. You know, greed, lust, immorality, materialism, doubting God. Anything that Satan can use to get in your head and tempt you to think differently from the way God would have you think is what he's going to use.

And that's going to be different from each one of us. I have no trouble at all resisting drugs and alcohol. Not a problem. But you put a Krispy Kreme in front of me.

And I have a real... I laugh at it too, but I have a real problem dealing with certain... with food temptation. We all have different weaknesses.

And Satan doesn't beat us up where we're strong. He tries to beat us up where we're weak. And that's where he tries to attack us. And that's why we need to fill our minds with the word of God because that's the only armor we've got against those thoughts, against those temptations. [12:36] Okay. Schemes of the devil. The word diabolos is... The word that's translated as devil. It literally means a false accuser.

It is the second most common name for Satan in the Bible. It's used 35 times all in the New Testament. It's second only to Satan.

It's the word Satan itself, which is used, I think, 56 times. That's who's attacking us. That's who's accusing us.

So, verse 12. What are we supposed to do? Our struggle. Pali is the word that's translated as struggle, and it literally means to wrestle.

But in our culture, we're not thinking the right thing when we think of wrestling.

[13:44] This is not Hulk Hogan. This is not WWE on Thursday night or WWE Raw on Monday night or whatever. Yeah. This is literally hand-to-hand combat, is what this is talking about.

This is talking about an intense struggle with life itself as the victor's prize. So, our struggle is not against flesh and blood.

Satan is no friend of man. He has been in rebellion against God for ages, and his primary battleground is the hearts and minds of mankind. He seeks only to attack, pervert, and destroy, and there are umpteen verses in the New Testament where you can find that.

I mean, the one that comes to mind immediately is the one that says, Satan is a roaring lion prowling around seeking for whom he can devour. I mean, there's just verse after verse after verse to support that.

And although Satan will use humans as his tools, he will break and destroy them along with his targets and then discard them as he moves on to the next target of opportunity.

[14:59] When you look at it correctly, we should not grow angry with the people that Satan uses against us. Actually, the emotion we should feel is pity.

Because they are being used to attack God's chosen ones, and God will not forget that. Our greatest enemy is not the things we can see.

It is not the material world, corrupt and wicked though it might be. It is the spiritual world that we cannot see. And Paul tells us, he lists the rulers, the powers, the world forces of this darkness, the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

That part of that verse alone is worth a couple hours of discussion because what that's really talking about is orders of spiritual beings.

And you really have to get into Jewish theology to understand what Paul is talking about there, that they believed that there were ranks of angels, both fallen angels and good angels, and he's referring to what he believes are fallen angels in the spiritual realm that Satan uses to oppress us.

[16:27] That's what he's referring to there. And like I said, we could spend forever talking about that. The one word that I really want to point out of that, the spiritual forces of wickedness, is the word translated as wickedness, and what it really means is maliciousness.

And malice is an evil that is committed with forethought. It is evil committed by intent. So this is not random chance.

This is things happening by someone's desire and intent. We are the target of the enemy, his chosen target, his desired target.

And he has not changed in 2,000 years. This is the reality. This is our environment. And many of our problems in our lives and many of our problems in the church occur because we forget this. We either don't know this, we don't believe it, we don't take it seriously, or we just flat forget that this is part of it. This is in God's word.

[17:41] This is Jesus telling us through Paul that we need to be prepared to deal with these kinds of things. We need to be prepared to deal with them scripturally and not out of our own human reactions, emotions, and resources.

Okay, as believers, we are no longer directly under Satan's power within his grasp. Colossians 1, 11 through 13 will tell you that.

But that does not mean that we are free from danger. Satan knows who you are. He knows where you live. He is the ultimate terrorist.

He knows what your weaknesses are. And he will not hesitate to take advantage of them. We need to believe that. We need to understand that. But we also need to believe and understand that he can be defeated in the daily battlegrounds of our lives.

If we are defeated, it's because we are not claiming God's armor. We are not putting on God's armor. We are not claiming his strength. We are trying to do it on our own.

[18:47] And that is a recipe for failure every time. So how do we do that? Verse 13. Therefore is another pivot word.

Having laid out the bad news, Paul now proceeds to tell us what we need to do about it. He comes back to what he said at the beginning of the passage, only this time the wording is a little different. Instead of put on, Paul says, take up the full armor of God. Analambano literally means to take up. But it carries with it the idea of taking it up with the idea of burying it and using it.

In other words, don't just pick it up and hold it in your arms. Pick it up, put it on, and put it to use. We are to take the armor of God and use it. We are to take the full armor of God, put it on every piece of it so that there are no gaps, no chinks, no loopholes that the enemy can take advantage of.

And when we have done that, what's he say at the end of the verse? We are to resist in the evil day. Resist is another form of the word that we translated as stand firm back in verse 11.

[20:11] And the apostle, and not the apostle, but James in chapter 4, verse 7 of his letter, actually supports this idea where he says, resist the devil and he will flee from you.

So we're not to do battle alone. This idea of standing firm, this idea of resisting, the overriding image of the passage is that we are soldiers under command.

We do not charge out alone to take the enemy on by ourselves. No, we equip ourselves. We lock ranks together.

And we resist the attacks of the enemy as a whole. So that we can support each other. And we await the commands of our leaders to deal with the enemy.

Paul's final command in the passage is we are to stand firm. We are to take our stations. We are to stand our ground. And we are to stand firm.

[21:16] And we are to stand firm. If you study history at all, you can find, I don't know how many examples of battles that were lost by the armies that should have won them because they broke ranks.

And they would not stand together. And therefore, therefore, they could no longer effectively do battle. So we're to stand firm. Christ himself promises in Matthew 16 that the gates of Hades would not prevail against his church.

And for years, I misread that passage. I assumed that the church was on the defense. And I was always confused by the image of the gate attacking the church.

But in actuality, it's the other way around. The gate is the defensive structure. And the church should be on the offense. But we can't be on the offense if we don't do this.

So we have to start by standing firm.