

Raised to Life – Dressed for Battle

6/11/17 – Pastor Randy

Ephesians 6:10-20 (NLT)

A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. 12 For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God's ambassador. So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should.

1. We are in a Battle. Receiving forgiveness and being “raised to life” as a child of God meets our greatest need. It is the most awesome gift God could ever give you, but it places you in a battle that you were not in before. The NT does not depict the Christian’s environment as a playground, but as a battleground. That should not discourage us, because it also depicts the Christian as one who is thoroughly equipped for victory.

The battle against sin and Satan doesn't begin until we become Christians. Before Christ, the devil had us. Look at how Paul describes our pre-conversion condition: Ephesians 2:1-3

Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. 2 You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. 3 All of

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us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else.

Colossians 1:13-14

*For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, **14** who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.*

We were “sons and daughters of disobedience”, and “children of wrath” by nature. We did not battle against the enemy of our souls because we belonged to the enemy of our souls! Now you don't belong to him anymore. You need to know you are in a battle in order to be prepared to win the battle.

2. Identify the Real Enemy

Know who your enemy IS NOT! Paul thought it important to remind his readers who the enemy was not. He wrote, *“For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies.”* You don't want to wake up one morning to find you have been fighting the wrong enemy. The real enemy is not flesh and blood. In other words, people are not your real enemy. This is not only the case when the people in question are other Christians. Christians are not simply non-enemies, they are teammates. They are family members. They are in the truest sense “one of us”. Some of the strongest warnings in the NT are directed at Christians for fighting against one another. However, non-Christians, even those who might persecute us, are not our enemies. Then why did Jesus tell us to “love our enemies”? He was saying to love those who treat you as the enemy. You might be their enemy but they are not your enemy.

Know who your enemy IS!

Jesus said, Love your enemies. He never said, “Love the Devil.

*“...stand firm against all **strategies of the devil.*** I realize that many people scoff at the belief in the existence of Satan, demons or angels, but that doesn't change reality. Here are some fast facts about the devil.

1. He was created as one of God's good angels.
2. He and the other angels rebelled against their creator.
3. The Devil (lit. *slanderer*) is also referred to as Satan (lit. *accuser*), In the NT he is described as “the evil one”, “the ruler of this world”, “the prince of demons”, “the god

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of this age” and “the prince of the power of the air”. He is THE deceiver of the whole world, THE tempter, and THE accuser.

4. He is the driving force behind all opposition to the gospel and God’s people.
5. He has the power to oppress people, and afflict their minds and bodies.
6. The threat he poses to Christians in the NT almost exclusively takes the form of trickery and deception.
7. At the cross (Col. 2:15) he and the other demons were disarmed of power and following the return of Christ they will be destroyed forever. (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10)

The widespread rejection of the existence of Satan, as a powerful, yet already defeated spirit being has left many people vulnerable. He shouldn’t be feared, but he must not be ignored. Keith Green wrote a song entitled, “*No One Believes in Me Anymore*”. It was written from Satan’s perspective. In the song, Satan says,

*Oh, my job keeps getting easier
As time keeps slipping away
I can imitate your brightest light
And make your night look just like day
I put some truth in every lie
To tickle itching ears
You know I'm drawing people just like flies
'Cause they like what they hear
I'm gaining power by the hour
They're falling by the score
You know, it's getting very simple now
'Cause no one believe in me anymore
Oh, heaven's just a state of mind
My books read on your shelf
And have you heard that God is dead?
I made that one up myself
They dabble in magic spells
They get their fortunes read
You know they heard the truth*

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*But turned away and followed me instead
I used to have to sneak around
But now they just open their doors
You know, no ones watching for my tricks
Because no one believes in me anymore”*

Here is the simple point: You will never guard yourself against an enemy you don't believe actually exists.

3. God has Equipped us for the Battle.

The fact that the NT frequently describes the Christian life in military terms, depicting our life as a battle, should not discourage us, because it also depicts the Christian as one who is thoroughly equipped by God for victory.

a. We don't fight FOR God, we fight WITH God. If you try and fight the battle for God, but not with God, you are destined to fail.

“Be strong in the Lord” is better translated, “Be strengthened by the Lord”. Be strong is modified by “in the Lord.” Don't be strong “in yourself”. Be strong “in the Lord”! Just in case Paul wasn't clear enough, he adds, “and in His mighty power.”

What makes this even clearer is the fact that the armor is referred to as “**God's armor**”; meaning not only that this armor comes from God, provided for us by God, but it also means that this “armor” consists of what God himself is clothed with. Many Christians have correctly associated Paul's imagery here to the armor worn by Roman soldiers, in whose custody he was kept at the writing of this letter, but often what has been ignored is the relationship between this passage and the picture of God as a warrior in Isaiah. Specifically, in Isaiah 59:16-17 we read, “*He was amazed to see that no one intervened to help the oppressed. So he himself stepped in to save them with his strong arm, and his justice sustained him. He put on righteousness as his body armor and placed the helmet of salvation on his head. He clothed himself with a robe of vengeance and wrapped himself in a cloak of divine passion.*”

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Isaiah employed this metaphorical language to create a vivid picture of God as One who steps in to save the oppressed because he is motivated by a passion for justice and righteousness and truth. To put on this armor is essentially to put on all that God is. When God equips us with truth, righteousness, faith, the hope of salvation (See 1 Thess. 5:8), the good news of peace, and His word, God is equipping us with Himself! To put on the armor of God is to put on the character and strength of God!

I didn't feel led to expound on every piece of armor, but I do feel led to say something about righteousness and faith and how they serve to protect us.

1. Righteousness – This refers to the individual's moral and ethical conduct. Last week I mentioned that God commands that we live morally and ethically upright lives, to both honor Him as the one who is perfectly righteous, but also to protect us from the destruction that results from immorality and corrupt behavior. Daniel is a beautiful example of a man who lived a blameless life. His enemies spied on him to try and find a basis to accuse him, but they couldn't find any corruption in him. If you had people spying on you to find a basis for accusing you, how frustrated would they be? How long would it take for them to succeed?

Honesty Protects. Liars have the burden of having to possess a really good memory. It is much easier to recall facts as they actually happened than to recall facts that were fabricated in the moment. Most dishonesty with others begins with lying to ourselves. The more we do it, the easier it becomes. By determining to be honest with ourselves and others in the small things, we protect ourselves from becoming people who due to habitual dishonesty, can no longer distinguish truth from falsehood.

Purity Protects. A pastor I know shared with me the story about a young lady he was counseling who was seduced by a charismatic young man. It was her first time yielding to temptation, but that was all it took for her to contract HIV as a result.

2. Faith - Faith is a shield against doubts, accusations of false guilt, and discouragement; the three greatest threats to our ability to persevere. They have great potential to paralyze us or sideline us, hindering us from fulfilling God's will.

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"It was advertised that the devil was going to put his tools up for sale. On the date of the sale the tools were placed for public inspection, each being marked with its sale price. There were a treacherous lot of implements. Hatred, Envy, Jealousy, Doubt, Lying, Pride, and so on. Laid apart from the rest of the pile was a harmless-looking tool, well-worn and priced very high. "The name of the tool?" asked one of the purchasers. "Oh," said the adversary, "that's Discouragement." "Why have you priced it so high?" "Because it's more useful to me than the others. I can pry open and get inside a person's heart with that one, when I cannot get near him with other tools. Now once I get inside, I can make him do what I choose. It's a badly worn tool, because I use it on almost everyone since few people know it belongs to me."

The devil's price for Discouragement was so high, he never sold it. It's still his major tool, and he still uses it on God's people today. "

- John Lawrence in *Down to Earth*

All of the verbs associated with the purpose of the armor suggest a defensive posture. However, the call to resist and stand firm does mean we are only on defense mode in this battle. Sometimes we stand firm and resist attacks aimed at influencing us to do what we know we shouldn't do or to think what we shouldn't think. In this case we are on the defense. But other times we stand firm and resist attacks aimed at stopping us from doing what God has called us to do. We resist attempts to stop or slow our offensive progress. We do have one piece of equipment that fits the definition of a weapon, rather than armor.

In 2 Corinthians 10:4 Paul wrote,

"For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ..."

Look at this statement. Here, the Christian is not equipped with armor, but spiritual weaponry. These weapons have "divine" power. In other words, their power comes from God. These weapons are directed against falsehood; every idea and thought that is contrary to the true knowledge of Christ. Paul does not say he is resisting accusations and false arguments, but countering them to destroy them.

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4. Prayer is our Perpetual Posture for Battle.

Paul's extreme emphasis on prayer which follows his description of the Christian's armor is not a new thought. Prayer, while not referred to as a piece of our armor, is the perpetual posture of the person who is equipped with God's armor. We can't walk in righteousness, truth, confidence and faith without a perpetual posture of prayer. We can't be carriers of the good news of God's peace (shalom) or demolish strongholds of falsehood with God's word without a perpetual posture of prayer.

5. The War is Already Won.

We fight battles in a war for which we are already certain about the outcome; and the outcome is in our favor. We win!! Knowing the outcome changes the way we respond when things are not apparently going well.

I have always enjoyed playing and watching sports, and I can often watch without being affected one way or another by the outcome. But there have been times when I was overly emotionally invested in a team's performance. I became too closely identified with them, that a victory for them was a victory for me, and a loss for them was a personal loss for me. This is unhealthy! When you find yourself stressed out because someone you have never met, and with whom you have no personal relationship, swings at a ball and misses...; when you get really angry at a bunch of grown men who are running around with a ball...because they didn't do what you wanted them to do with the ball...., it's time to get counseling! NOW modern technology allows me to record games so I can watch them later if I am not available to catch them live. I have discovered an amazing difference in my stress level, and in my emotional response, when my team begins to perform poorly and falls behind during the game...*if I know the final result ahead of time.*

Knowing the outcome changes my response to the particular ups and downs of the game. In the same way, being assured of our ultimate victory in Christ helps us to respond with peace and hope to the various setbacks, or failures along the way.

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