

Put On Your Armor! (1)

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“God does not clothe Christians with strength and power without earnest effort on their part, and without their making just such efforts and doing just what He commands. The spiritual or inner man becomes strong only by experience. God has thus prepared and furnished armor to be used by the Christian soldier. It is composed of weapons both offensive and defensive, those which ward off blows of the enemy and with which they are to strike offensive blows to conquer others” (**Commentary on New Testament Epistles**, Vol. IV, Lipscomb, pp. 125-126). As the reader dives into **Ephesians 6:10-17**, one thing becomes abundantly clear: the strength that we need to overcome the spiritual battles we face every day does not come from ourselves. Many have made the mistake of thinking that victory is found in devices of our own design. Instead of relying on the arms which God has provided, many have been disposed to trust in that which they have provided for themselves. *“Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might”* (**Ephesians 6:10**). The sentiment here is one that leads us to find strength in God. In other words, if I am seeking validation, fulfillment, or victory in money, prestige, popularity, or anything else that is earthly, I will be sorely disappointed.

Spiritual Combat

“Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil” (**Ephesians 6:11**). Our marching orders are laid down in plain and simple terms: we fight against the devil, and our victory is found in resistance against his schemes and total dependence on God. There are several lessons that must become apparent about our combat, though:

- It is spiritual in nature, and only carnal as a byproduct. Too many of us have failed to grasp this, and have spent much of our time and energy fighting the physical manifestations of this war while neglecting the spiritual causes. Modesty, for example, is a battle that is lost if we think forcing people to wear “modest” clothes is all we need to do to overcome the devil. Until the heart is changed, the battle is never won (**1 Peter 3:3-4**).
- The devil is our enemy, not each other. There is a tendency to fight against the tools of the devil (false teachers, immoral influences, etc.) rather than the source of all the evil. Paul even goes on to say, *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood...”* (**Ephesians 6:12**). Remember that God wants all people to be saved, so it is not humanity itself that we are pitted against (**1 Timothy 2:4**).
- Our desire should not be to overcome or defeat people, but to release them from corruption. Instead of seeing others as enemies, we should treat them compassionately, as those who are deceived and held captive (**2 Timothy 2:24-26**). We are able to do this only when we have to come to grips with our sins – we too were once held captive to do the work of the devil (**Ephesians 2:1-3**).
- In a sense, Christianity seems like a paradox to an outsider. While we are called to be soldiers for God’s cause (**2 Timothy 2:3**), we are also told to conduct ourselves without bitterness and anger (**Colossians 3:8-11**) and to seek the renewal and healing of the world, rather than its overthrow. We fight, not so we can destroy, but so we can build up. We wage war, not to defeat, but to persuade

those who are opposed to God. In this most definitive sense, then, our battle is not a physical one!

- There is nobody on the sidelines in this battle. No observers or non-combatants. Everybody must choose which side they will be on in this one. This is also not a regional war, for **1 John 5:19** states the world itself lies in the power of the evil one.

Full Armor

“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” (Ephesians 6:13). Notice that God provides a full arsenal. Perhaps we might be able to find earthly sources of contentment that can replace one or two of the following implements, but nothing can replace the *full* armor provided by God. Nothing is as all-encompassing. Christianity is not a religion of either the heart, mind, soul, or body to the exclusions of the others. Rather, it covers all. Everything about my life can be placed in God’s hands. Every anxiety (**1 Peter 5:7**), every care and burden (**Psalms 55:22**). In our next article we will take a look at the specific components of the armor of God.