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# The Armor of God

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Scripture: Ephesians 6:10-20

<sup>10</sup> Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, <sup>15</sup> and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; <sup>16</sup> above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. <sup>17</sup> And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; <sup>18</sup> praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints <sup>19</sup> and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Previously in the letter, Paul discusses the type of power God had made available to us in Christ. He reveals to us that the same power God exercised to raise Jesus Christ from the dead is being wielded for our benefit:

"I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms"  
(Ephesians 1:18-20).

## 1. THE POWER OF GOD

It seems that the issue is not to gain this power, through prayer or other means, but that our understanding needs to "be enlightened" so that we may know "his

incomparably great power for us who believe...which he exerted in Christ" in his resurrection and enthronement.

It should be settled, then, that the power God has made available to us is more than sufficient. In fact, it is through "his power that is at work within us" that God will "do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20). We can have confidence to face pressure and adverse circumstances, knowing that God has put into us a kind of power so strong that it could raise Jesus from the dead. And this power has been given to every person who is in Christ.

This piece of information may come as a surprise to some Christians, especially for those whose lives are characterized by defeat and barrenness. Although God's power is available to every Christian, it remains dormant in some due to a lack of knowledge and understanding. This is precisely what the apostle seeks to remedy by asking that God will enlighten the Christians' minds, so that they may realize what has been made available to them.

So, Paul says to "be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power," not by requesting additional power from God, but by understanding his provisions given to us in Christ and applying this revelation into our lives. Pray then, for understanding and obedience.

When a Christian comes to the realization that God's power has been placed in him through Christ, he ceases to be afraid of what the devil is trying to do in his life. He is no longer fearful of other people. He remembers that the Scripture says, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

The apostle John says in 1 John 4:4, "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them." Who is he referring to when he says, "them"? He is talking about evil spirits – the spirits that inspire "false prophets," and even the "spirit of the antichrist" (v.3). And the reason why we "have overcome them" is "because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (v. 4).

Who is "the one who is in you"? Paul says that God has chosen to "make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). And the apostle John explains, "If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God" (1 John 4:15). The Bible even tells us that we are "God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in [us]" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

When Paul instructs us to "be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power," he is telling us to depend on and be strengthened by the greatest power in the universe, one by which God creates, sustains, and subdues all things. A realization of this fact should exclude fear and defeat from the Christian's life.

After all, "Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God" (1 John 5:5). Every one of us can overcome the world when we believe and depend on God's power. God's elect are destined for victory (Romans 8:37).

## 2. THE DECEPTION OF SATAN

Proceeding to the next verse in the passage, we read, "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes" (v. 11). The word translated "schemes" here refers to trickery or deceit – deception is the "method"

by which Satan seeks to defeat the believer. It is through putting on "the full armor of God" that we will be able to "stand against" the devil.

Christians need to be aware that the devil desires to trick them in different areas of their lives through various methods. Peter warns: "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings" (1 Peter 5:8-9).

Peter is telling his readers to stay awake – "be self-controlled and alert." There is an enemy who desires to destroy us, and he is identified as the devil. Although he "prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour," we can "resist him" and remain immovable in our stance of faith.

The apostle John assures us that, "We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him" (1 John 5:18).

In any case, God instructs us to be prepared. We must realize that deception is Satan's weapon. He will lie to us, and attempt to bombard us with unbiblical thoughts and anti-Christian arguments, and those who fail to "escape from the trap of the devil" are "taken...captive to do his will" (2 Timothy 2:26). On the other hand, Jesus says that, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32).

In fact, only those who belong to Christ are truly free. The rest of the world "is under the control of the evil one" (1 John 5:19). This is because only Christians

possess and assent to truth, and they are able to see reality as it is. As for non-Christians, Paul says, "**The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God**" (2 Corinthians 4:4). Those who reject the gospel are denying reality, and are blinded by Satan.

Obviously, Satan does not want people to understand and assent to the good news that we preach; therefore, he blinds the minds of unbelievers and prevent them from believing the Gospel. The mind is where the battle is fought. Even after your have become a Christian, the devil will try to continue attacking your mind with lies, and thus to undermine your faith in Christ.

Jesus provides us with some valuable insight into the devil's nature when he says to the Pharisees, "**You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies**" (John 8:44). When the devil tells a lie, he is doing so out of his own nature. Lying is natural to the devil. So, the devil attacks by speaking, whether through other human beings or not, into a person's mind. Whatever he says is false, and when believed, will lead one away from God.

Knowing this should cause us to take Paul's words seriously when he says, "**The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ**" (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). That is, the

weapons that God has given to us have "divine power to demolish strongholds," which are in fact "arguments" that are "against the knowledge of God." So, we fight to "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." This is how spiritual warfare is done, and it is for this purpose that the "full armor of God" has been given to us.

Moving on to **Ephesians 6:12**, Paul writes, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." Our fight is not natural, but spiritual.

There are many people who have been attacked by adverse circumstances, and when they attempt to fight in the natural, the problems either remain, or they keep on returning. They just cannot seem to be loose from the problems. The reason is that they are not attacking the problems at their roots, but they are merely fighting the superficial manifestations of them.

We must understand that demonic forces are real. Failure to recognize their existence and activities does not grant one exemption from their attacks, but merely prevents one from resisting them. But when the Bible shows us, as it clearly does, that our fight is in the spiritual realm, and not with flesh and blood, then it is toward this area where we must concentrate our efforts.

However, this is not to say that a spiritual fight is a mystical one – one which consists of invisible swords, shields, and arrows. By saying that we have weapons with "divine power," Paul refers to the God-given ability to "demolish arguments

and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." Let us not think, as some tend to do, that by "spiritual" we are referring to the mystical rather than to the intellectual. The same applies to our understanding of the armor of God described in Ephesians 6.

Rather than fighting against the symptoms, if we will learn to direct God's weapons of "divine power" against the root of the problem, then we will have truly destroyed the devil's strongholds. This introductory exposition of Ephesians 6:10-17 is designed to train the reader on doing precisely this.

Recall how in the previous chapter, we mentioned that God has placed in you the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. It is this same power that energizes our Christian work: "We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me" (Colossians 1:28-29).

How can Satan possibly withstand this kind of power? Indeed, he cannot. This is why when we "put on the full armor of God," we will be able to "stand against the devil's schemes." This is also why the apostle James can assure his readers, saying, "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

### 3. THE STAND OF FAITH

**Ephesians 6:11** instructs us to "**put on the full armor of God**," that is, we must take up every piece of weapon that God has given us and not neglect any one. Having done so, we will be prepared to "**stand against the devil's schemes**."

**Verse 12** then further informs us, saying that "**our struggle is not against flesh and blood**," but "**against the spiritual forces of evil**." We must recognize the reality of demonic powers, that evil spirits are real. These intelligent beings wield their deceptive powers to blind men and women from the truth of God's word. It is through the power of God the Holy Spirit that we are enlightened concerning the truth and are thus enabled to assent to it. As the apostle Paul explains, "**No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit**" (**1 Corinthians 12:3**).

The Holy Spirit removes our spiritual blindness, after which God transmits his truths to our minds through the Scripture. Jesus prayed to God for his disciples, saying, "**Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth**" (**John 17:17**). So, not only does our initial enlightenment concerning the things of God come from the Scripture, but all subsequent spiritual growth comes through knowledge of the same, and this is the basis of our progressive sanctification.

In connection with this, Paul writes to his readers, saying, "**be transformed by the renewing of your mind**" (**Romans 12:2**). It is important to learn that we are "**renewed in knowledge**" (**Colossians 3:10**), and not through mystical experiences, or even just through prayer. It is only when we understand and retain biblical truths in our minds that we may live our lives in obedience to God and to successfully resist the devil when he comes against us.

**Matthew 16:21-23** serves to illustrate something else that we must learn: "From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 'Never, Lord!' he said. 'This shall never happen to you!' Jesus turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.'"

In other words, when Jesus predicted to his disciples his impending death and subsequent resurrection, Peter protested and said that it would never happen. Whatever his intention for saying this, Peter was contradicting the plan of God in his thought and speech. But when Jesus replied, he spoke against Satan, saying, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

Here, Jesus saw through the surface of the issue and discerned the root, or the origin of the thought that resulted in Peter's words, and corrected it with his rebuke. Likewise, the Bible says to us, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

Let us turn to another passage that illustrates a different type of problem: "While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, 'Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel'" (Matthew 9:32-33).

The passage shows that what is apparently a physical disability may have its origin in demonic activities. In another place, Peter points out that those whom Jesus had healed were "**under the power of the devil**" (**Acts 10:38**). What we need to do is to attack the problem at its roots: "**And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke.**" More than a few of us fail to realize that many of the problems we face are due to demonic activities. Often, Christians do not take the devil seriously in that they fail to discern the evil origin of anti-Christian thoughts, speech, circumstances, doctrines, and cultural trends.

Paul continues in **Ephesians 6:13**, "**Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.**"

Not only does the full armor of God protect us from the "**devil's schemes**," but it enables us to stand firm "**when the day of evil comes.**" That is, when every piece of armor that God has provided for us is intact in our spiritual life, then we can face the enemy in hand-to-hand combat with confidence.

The Bible says that some "**were broken off because of unbelief**," but we "**stand by faith**" (**Romans 11:20**). It is "**by faith**" that we are able to "**stand firm**" (**2 Corinthians 1:24**).

The Christian walk, from the very beginning, is one of faith. We are "**justified through faith**," and therefore "**we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand**" (**Romans 5:1-2**).

Through faith, we have been justified, or declared righteousness, by God. But our faith does not end here, and Paul says it would be foolish to think otherwise: "Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?...Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?" (Galatians 3:3, 5). Not only have we been justified by faith, but through faith, God's power continues to be at work in our lives.