

Dressed for the occasion....Ephesians 6:10-18

These verses, written by Paul to the believers in the church in Ephesus, describe how God's mighty power is completely sufficient to equip the believer to live for Him. Living the Christian life is a battle against our unseen enemy, the devil. Thankfully he is ultimately and defeated and the victory is secure, but meanwhile we have been given everything we need to stand firm day by day.

- We will usually give a lot of thought to wearing the right clothes for a special occasion, even if it means emptying the wardrobe and going back to what we first tried on! One of the benefits of Lockdown is not having to worry too much about what we're wearing as no-one, apart from those we might be living with, will know! Recently clothes shops, categorized as selling "non-essential" goods, have been able to re-open. However, there is nothing non-essential about the clothing Paul describes here!

-Every day for the believers is an important occasion and we need the right spiritual clothes – we need "battle-dress", armour and weapons because we are engaged in daily warfare. We are urged here to "put on" the same outfit, every day, without a single item missing. This isn't "power-dressing" to give an impression or image of power, but is the source of power itself – God's "mighty power" available each one of us, as we trust Him.

1. The Battle is Real

An important element of military strategy is to know your enemy! But for believers....

The enemy is unseen:

- Ephesians 2:1-2 speaks of *"the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient."* The world lives in disobedience and hostility to God and under the rule of Satan. So as individual believers and as a church we are constantly in a battle, a "struggle" as Ephesians 6:12 puts it, against *"the devil's schemes" and "the rulers.. authorities.. powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."*

- This is where the real battle is, not with the outward circumstances e.g. the opposition from hostile authorities or governments, rejection and scorn by unbelievers even difficult personal situations. The warfare is spiritual, with a spiritual enemy who will use those things to disrupt our walk with the Lord, to discourage, tempt and attack us with doubts. He's the "roaring lion" who "prowls around looking for someone to devour." (1 Peter 5:8)

God is powerful:

- Christians may inherit a powerful enemy, opposed to us in every way, BUT we have a God with "mighty power" far beyond that of Satan. Psalms 68: 33-35 describes the awesome majesty of God, ruling with "power and strength" which he gives to his people.

- Take time to reflect on, praise God and be thankful for his incredible and mighty power.

2. God's armour helps us stand firm

The battle is already won!

- 4 times in this passage Paul tells us to “**stand**”, clothed head to toe in God's armour. We don't need to do more against the enemy because Christ has already fought and won the war on our behalf. Satan is already defeated. Christ died “*so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death*” Hebrews 2: 14-15. The victory is secure and we stand defending the territory already won!

- United to Christ (as we thought about recently) we are “*strong in the Lord*” (Ephesians 6:10) as we are “*armed*” with his mighty strength and power (Psalm 18:32), enabled to “*stand firm*” against Satan and his attacks. We become strong, not in our own efforts and determination, but through God's mighty power, by putting on His armour.

- We are to wake up each morning as a soldier preparing for battle! Maybe, it's felt a bit like that literally in the last few months – as you've prepared for a trip to the supermarket or the next home-school lesson! But the battle Paul describes, involves not summoning up our courage and determination, but to take hold of and carefully “put on” every single piece of weapon and armoury He has given us – the “full armour of God” v11, giving total protection. No soldier goes into battle half-dressed! Otherwise we're vulnerable, exposed to the devil's attack. The armour makes us strong. It's how we “resist” the devil (1 Peter 5:8)

So every Christian dresses the same spiritually and needs to “put on” ... (v13-17)

The belt of truth – Satan is the “father of lies” (John 8:44) but knowing and learning God's truth protects us. God is completely faithful and “does not lie” (Titus 1:2)

The breastplate of righteousness – Clothed with the righteousness of Christ, the devil cannot accuse and condemn us “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1)

The boots of the gospel of peace – we need to “ready” to grasp opportunities to share the gospel of peace with God with others, building the church, which the devil wants to destroy.

The shield of faith – by faith we silence the doubts Satan assails us with, trusting in God and unfailing promises of his Word, that he is sovereign, faithful, good and kind.

The helmet of salvation – the hope of our full salvation when Christ returns, knowing “we have been justified through faith” (Romans 5:2) enables us to persevere with peace, joy and patience through trouble and hardship and every spiritual attack.

The sword of the Spirit – The word of God, the only weapon of attack, sharp, “living and active” (Hebrews 4:12), empowered by the Spirit to transform lives and to challenge Satan, as Jesus did – “it is written” (Matthew 4:4,7,10).

- Undergirding every piece of armour is **comprehensive and regular prayer** – on “all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests” v18. Prayer should characterize the life of the soldier of Christ. We are to be “alert”, watchful for the attacks of the enemy, inspired and guided by the Spirit (“in the Spirit” v18) who helps and intercedes for us in our weakness – Romans 8:26.

- Pray for God’s power to be known in your life as you put on each piece of this divine clothing and **pray too for each other** to be strengthened in doing this too, as we pray for “all the saints”. As soldiers in Christ’s army we all need to stand firm together!

Take time to apply...

1. Why is it so important to be “alert” to the fact we’re in a spiritual battle?
 - What difference does it make knowing God has “mighty power” and we fight the battle in his strength not ours?
2. Why do you think Paul emphasizes (he mentions it twice) the “full armour” of God?
 - Which piece of armour/weaponry listed do you particularly need to make sure you don’t neglect to put on at the moment? Where are you vulnerable?
 - What difference will it make to do that each day?
3. Corrie ten Boom said “***When a Christian shuns fellowship with other Christians, the devil smiles. When he stops studying the Bible, the devil laughs. When he stops praying the devil shouts for joy.***”
 - What difference should it make to our prayer life realizing it’s an essential part of the spiritual battle – enabling us and others to stand firm.
 - How will it change the way you pray, in line with v18?
4. How can we sensitively encourage each other to “put on” a particular piece of armour listed in these verses? Can we see when others are vulnerable to Satan’s lies and attacks?

To reflect:

As we each stand firm in the battle by God’s mighty power and reach out to call others out of Satan’s grip, the church is strengthened and grows till the day Christ returns takes us to be with him for ever.

- Praise God for Christ’s victory over sin, death and the devil
- Praise God that by his power he defends and keeps us now and forever.

***“O Church arise and put your armour on;
Hear the call of Christ our captain;***

***For now the weak can say that they are strong
In the strength that God has given.
With shield of faith and belt of truth
We'll stand against the devil's lies;
An army bold whose battle cry is "Love!"
Reaching out to those in darkness."***

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