

THE SOVEREIGN GOD AND THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL: A STUDY OF EPHESIANS

(LESSON ONE HUNDRED AND TEN)

“PUT IT ON; PUT HIM ON” PART 2

EPHESIANS 6:10-12

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

In **Ephesians 6:10-18**, Paul describes the Christian life as one of struggle, conflict, and warfare. Struggle, conflict, and warfare, in a spiritual sense of course, is the inevitable consequence of a life lived “in Christ” and in particular, a life lived in the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

In verse **10** he writes, “*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*” The words “*be strong*” are the translation of a Greek word which means, “to make strong, endue with strength, strengthen.” The idea is to cause one to be able to function, or do something. Believers are to allow the Lord to strengthen them, and they are also to strengthen themselves in the Lord. The source of the strengthening in both cases is the Holy Spirit who indwells every believer. The command to “*Be strong,*” by itself, could possibly have the effect of encouraging believers to rely on their own self-effort at

being strong. But the qualifying phrase, “*in the Lord,*” helps us to understand that we have to depend on the Lord for the supply of that strength.

Paul says, “*Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*” The Greek word translated “*power*” is **kratos**: (**krat’-os**), which refers to manifested power, or power that is put forth in action. It is strength in operation.

The word “*might*” is a translation of the Greek word **ischus**: (**is-khoos’**), which refers to inherent power or force. It is that strength which one has in possession or ability. While **kratos** (power), refers to strength in operation, **ischus** (might), refers to inherent strength. The two words describe the power that is available to every believer as spiritual energy that is energetic, inherent in God, and able to overcome resistance. The idea is of the active strength of the might that is inherent in God.

In other words, God has vast reservoirs of might that can become actively operational as power in our daily lives. But His vast reservoirs of might will **not** become actively operational as power if we are passive. His might becomes actively operational as power in our daily lives as we step out in faith, relying on Him to work mightily in us and through us.

In verse **11** Paul writes, “*Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*” We must note carefully, that it is not **our** armour that Paul says we are to put on. He says we are to put on **God’s** armour. We must not attempt to engage in battle with the enemy of our soul based on human ability, or by employing carnal weapons. Spiritual warfare demands spiritual armour, and that spiritual armour can only be the “*whole armour of God.*”

The words “*Put on*” are a translation of the Greek word, **enduó**: (**en-doo’-o**), which means “to clothe or be clothed with.” The word is in a construction in the Greek which implies two very important things. Firstly, there is a sense of urgency indicating that it is a command to put

on the armour without delay. The second implication is that the putting on of the whole armour of God is the believer's choice. It is the believer himself or herself who must put the armour on.

One of the significant things about the armour of God is that it has to be put on from the **inside**! Christianity is not a religion of **prescriptions** but of a **living relationship** with Jesus Christ. This, of course, does not mean that once we are in Christ we can do whatever we want. That would amount to moral and spiritual anarchy which is contrary to the very nature of the new life in Christ. What it does mean is that the controls of the Christian life are operated from **within** the believer. It means that genuine holiness results from an **inward** conviction that is generated by a consciousness of the believer's union with Christ. The only power that can enable us to live holy lives in this unholy world is the Holy Spirit. The believer has the Holy Spirit living and working on the inside, but he or she must allow the Holy Spirit to "have" him or her by "walking by the Spirit."

Believers are to put on, "*the whole armour of God.*" The phrase is a translation of the Greek word **panoplia**: (**pan-op-lee'-ah**), which means, "wholly armed, in full armour." It refers to the complete set of instruments used in offensive and defensive war. The idea is of the full preparation of a foot soldier for offense and defense.

The Greek word **panoplia** gives us our English word, **panoply**, which refers to "a full suit of armor; ceremonial attire; something forming a protective covering; a magnificent or impressive array; display of all appropriate accessories." The Christian soldier needs to be protected from head to foot, and the **panoplia** of God, or "*the whole armour of God.*" is made up of **all** the various pieces of defensive and offensive armour. This armour of God both is the sense that it is **from** Him, and in the sense that it is **His** actual armour. In **Isaiah 59:16-17** we are informed that this is the armour that the Messiah wears:

16 And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.

17 For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak.

(King James Version)

It is His own armour that Messiah now shares with every person who places his or her faith in Him!

Brothers and sisters, **God has supplied** us with the complete armour, but He expects **us to put it on**. We need the divine equipment in its completeness, **without the lack of any single part**. God has not sent us out into battle without providing everything we need to guarantee our victory, and the armour that He gives to us is one that He Himself has tried and proven!

The **New English Translation** renders **Ephesians 4:22-24** in the following way:

22 You were taught with reference to your former way of life to lay aside the old man who is being corrupted in accordance with deceitful desires,

23 to be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

*24 and to put on the **new man** who has been created in God's image—in righteousness and holiness that comes from truth.*

Ultimately this “new man” that Paul instructs believers to “put on” is Christ Himself. Paul informs us of this in **Romans 13:14**. He writes, “*Instead, **put on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and make no provision for the flesh to arouse its desires*” (**New English Translation**).

In this verse Paul issues a command to all believers to “*put on the Lord Jesus Christ.*” The Greek word translated “*put on*” in this verse is **enduó: (en-doo’-o)**, the same Greek word translated “*put on*” in **Ephesians 6:11**. Paul is obviously speaking figuratively. He is not making a reference to that which is **external** but to that which is **internal**. He is speaking about the believer’s intimate identification with Jesus Christ.

John Wesley remarked that in the phrase “*put on the Lord Jesus Christ,*” “is contained the whole of our salvation. It is a strong and beautiful expression for the most intimate union with Him, and being clothed with all the graces which were in Him. The apostle does not say, ‘Put on purity and sobriety, peacefulness and benevolence’; but he says all this and a thousand times more at once, in saying, ‘Put on Christ.’”

To “put on Christ” conveys the thought that when others interact with us, when they scrutinize our lives, they ought to see Christ rather than us. Our hope of glory, according to **Colossians 1:27**, is not “Christ on the outside,” but “*Christ in you.*” Brothers and sisters, in a real sense, Jesus Christ is the armour that we must put on.

Why does Paul exhort the Ephesian believers to put on the whole armour of God? He does so because that is the only way that they will be “*able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*” The phrase, “*to stand against*” is a translation of the Greek word **histémi: (his’-tay-mee)** which means “to make to stand, to stand; to make firm, fix, establish; to cause a person to keep his or her place, or a thing to keep its place.” **Histémi** was a military term for holding one’s position and therefore not yielding an inch of territory to the enemy. The word conveys the idea of standing one’s ground, as opposed to taking flight.

Commenting on the Greek word **histémi**, the American theologian **Wayne Barber** explains that, “The word ‘*stand*’ there has the idea not of a casual standing but of a digging in. The sandals of the Roman

soldiers had spikes on them so they could dig in and hold their ground and not be knocked off course. That is the idea of standing. It is not just a casual standing up. It has the idea of standing firm and holding the ground that you are on, not being knocked off course."

From a practical standpoint believer's "*stand*" by living Holy Ghost-filled, Word-saturated lives (**Ephesians 5:18, Colossians 3:16**). In order for a believer to successfully stand against "*the wiles of the devil*," He or she must continually be controlled by the Holy Spirit, or to say it another way, he or she must have "*the word of Christ dwelling in them richly*." When the believer consistently lives in such a state, he or she will not quench or grieve the Spirit, and will therefore be empowered by Him to stand firm.

The greatest weapon we have in spiritual warfare is not what we say to the devil, but how we allow the Lord Jesus Christ to live His wonderfully efficacious life in us and through us. It is not by "binding," or "rebuking," or "pleading the blood," that we are enabled to stand, but it is by surrendering to the Holy Spirit's influence, His promptings and His leading. It is by saying "**Yes**" to the Spirit and "**No**" to the totally depraved adamic nature or the "flesh."

Paul explains it this way: "*I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me*" (**Galatians 2:20, New English Translation**).

In this verse, Paul explains to the Galatian believers, that he is no longer living a **self**-centered life, but a **Christ**-centered one. His new life is a **Person**, the Lord Jesus Himself living in Paul. And through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus is being made manifest in his life. The new life is no longer, like the former one, dependent upon the ineffectual efforts of a man attempting to draw near to God by trusting in his own righteousness. The new life is a Person within a person, living out His life in that person. Instead of attempting to live his life in obedience to a

set of rules in the form of the legal enactments of the Mosaic Law, Paul now yields to the indwelling Holy Spirit and cooperates with Him in the production of a life pleasing to God. This new life is energized by the divine life resident in him through the regenerating work of the Spirit. Instead of a sinner with a totally depraved nature attempting to find acceptance with God by attempted obedience to a set of outward laws, it is now the born again, or born from above believer living his or her life based on a new principle—the principle of the indwelling Holy Spirit manifesting the Lord Jesus in his or her life. That is what Paul means when he says: “*So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*” And this is the source of the believer’s ability to “*stand against the wiles of the devil.*”

The Phrase “*will be able*” is the translation of the Greek word **dunamai**: (**doo’-nam-ahee**) which means, “to be able, have power; to be able to do something; to be able, capable, strong, powerful.” In the context of **Ephesians 6:11**, this enablement is a supernatural one. **Dunamai** is God’s omnipotent, inherent, dynamic ability which enables us to accomplish what He commands us to do. In this case, He commands us to stand firm when the battle is raging all around us! Brothers and sisters, we could never stand against the devil in our own strength. It is only the Holy Spirit’s enablement that makes it possible for us to stand.

The word **dunamai** is in the **present tense** indicating that the putting on of the whole armour of God, will allow for us to be **continually** provided with the divine enablement to stand. The word is also in a construction in the Greek which indicates that this enabling is an **internal** enablement provided by a source other than the believer. That source is, of course, the Holy Spirit.

Now what does this mean practically? It means that we have to be willing to allow God to enable us. We have to be willing to let Him have His way in our lives. We have to be willing to pray, “Not my will, but thine, be done.” We have to be willing to allow His Spirit to

strengthen and control us at every moment during the battle. And when He strengthens us with might in our inner man, we can then make the choice to take a stand, to hold firmly to our position, to resist the temptation to succumb to doubt and fear, and the temptation to gratify the flesh. We are more than conquerors through Christ Who loved us, and will love us to the end (**John 13:1**). With such assurance and empowerment we can stand firm against every assault of the adversary to the praise of the glory of His grace which He so richly lavishes upon us (**Ephesians 1:6**).

It is noteworthy that Paul uses **dunamai** three times in this section on spiritual warfare. He uses it in verses **11**, **13** and **16**. This clearly indicates our urgent and continual need for spiritual enablement, as well as our urgent and continual need to yield to the Holy Spirit's influence and control in order to receive the enablement.

We have just said that we have to be willing to allow God to empower us. But what guarantee do we have that He is willing to empower us? And if He is willing, how does He empower us? Paul answers both questions in **Philippians 2:12-13** **The New English Translation** renders the verse as follows:

12 So then, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence but even more in my absence, continue working out your salvation with awe and reverence,

13 for the one bringing forth in you both the desire and the effort—for the sake of his good pleasure—is God.

In verse **13** Paul explains how it is possible for us as believers to obey the command to continually “*work out*” our salvation. Brothers and sisters, our initial salvation or **justification** was a supernatural work of God. Why would we think that the supernatural work of daily **sanctification** is anything less than His ongoing supernatural work in us!

Verse **12** explains the **believer's** role in his or her sanctification, whereas verse **13** explains **God's** sovereign role in the sanctification process. It should be very clear to us that without God effectually “working” sanctification “in” the believer, it would be entirely impossible for the believer to “work it out.” In other words, the process of genuine sanctification would be impossible without the “working in” of God.

Brothers and sisters, God is not merely **willing** to empower us, He is continually doing so! And He is doing so by supplying us with both the desire and the energy to do all His will, including our standing firm against the devil's schemes. Paul says in verse **13**, *“The one bringing forth in you both the desire and the effort—for the sake of his good pleasure—is God.* He is emphasizing God's vital role in this process. It is God and God alone who is bringing forth in us both the desire and the effort! Paul wants us to be mindful that we cannot carry out this supernatural work of living a Christian life without divine assistance. We can certainly live a religious life without divine assistance but not a Christian life. To attempt to live a Christian life without divine assistance is like taking “Christ” out of the word “Christian!” All we are left with is, “ian.” That is why so many professing Christians are living “ian” lives! We need to keep this in mind as we seek to carry out the many commands in the New Testament.

Theologian **Gordon Fee** comments that, “God empowers both our 'doing'...and the 'willing' that lies behind the doing. Christian ethics has nothing to do with rules that regulate conduct. Rather, it begins with a mind that is transformed by the Spirit, so as not to be conformed to this age but to the character of God, knowing God's will, what is good and pleasing and perfect to him (**Romans 12:1-2**). We are not those who have been begrudgingly caught by God, so that we obey basically out of fear and trembling over what might happen if we were to do otherwise. Rather, being Christ's means to be converted in the true sense of that word, to have our lives invaded by God's Holy Spirit, Who

creates in us a new desire toward God that prompts godly behavior in the first place."

J. Ligon Duncan explains that "When we talk about **justification**, we're talking about God accepting us. When we're talking about **sanctification**, we're talking about God changing us."

God's grace is both the **desire** and the **ability** to do the will of God.

Brothers and sisters, if we are not consistently reading the Word of God and endeavouring to apply it in our daily lives, we are not going to be strengthened in the inner man. If we are not consistently seeking to hide the Word in our hearts, thus allowing God's eternal perspective and truth to radically transform the way we think and live, then we have missed the whole point of what this conflict is about. The conflict that Paul speaks about in this section of his letter is not about power against power. God can easily defeat the devil. But the conflict is a battle for the truth. That is why it is so important for us to understand that we need to be strengthened in the inner man at all times because that affects the way we think and how we think affects the way we live.