

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

(LESSON ONE HUNDRED AND NINE)

“PUT IT ON; PUT HIM ON”

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. The more a believer comes under the influence and control of the Holy Spirit, the more he or she will experience the attacks of the enemy, for the devil does not waste his ammunition on believers whom he does not consider to be threats to his kingdom.

We said last week that in this section of his letter, Paul discusses four topics-The **Enemy**, The **Equipment**, The **Energy**, and The

Encouragement. We noted that if believers understand and consistently apply the truths relative to these four topics, they will be victorious over the “world,” the “flesh” and the devil.

The first topic that Paul deals with is **The Enemy (Ephesians 6:10-12)**. In verse **10** he writes, “*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*”

In our previous Lesson, we made the point that if we study this section of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, in the absence of the great doctrinal truths and practical exhortations dealt with in the preceding chapters, we may become confused and frustrated, for in this section of his letter, Paul issues a number of “warfare” instructions. But these instructions are all based upon the foundation that he has established in the preceding sections. Both the doctrinal instructions and the practical exhortations, are all intimately connected with our ability to successfully wage spiritual warfare.

Paul says, “*Be strong in the Lord.*” 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. In **Ephesians 3:16** Paul prayed for the believers that God would grant them to be “*strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.*” It is the Holy Spirit Who strengthens us with power in our inner being as we learn to surrender our will to His. The more the believer surrenders to the Spirit’s influence and control, the more he or she will be strengthened, and the more he or she will be enabled to strengthen himself or herself in the Lord.

The command to “*Be strong,*” by itself, could 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. The phrase

“in the Lord,” defines the strengthening as Christian strengthening. It is strengthening that can only be realized because of the believer’s union with Christ. As Paul wrote in **Philippians 4:13**, *“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”*

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. The word emphasizes the ability to accomplish something, not necessarily the accomplishment of the thing. We may think of **ischus** as God’s latent power. It is His ability to function effectively.

While **kratos** (power), refers to strength in operation, **ischus** (might), refers to inherent strength. The two words describe the power that is available to believers 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.”*

The **New English Translation** renders the verse in the following way: *“Clothe yourselves with the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.”*

The following comments by the American theologian, pastor, and author, **David Guzik**, help to contextualize our study this evening:

“The detailed teaching of spiritual warfare in this passage presents two essential components. **First**, you must be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. **Then**, you must put on the whole armor of God. The two are essential, and much teaching on Christian combat neglects the first. If you take a weak man who can barely stand, and put the best armor on him he will still be an ineffective soldier. He will be easily beaten. So equipping for Christian combat must begin with ‘*be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.*’ Before a soldier is given a gun or shown how to fire a missile, he goes through basic training. One great purpose for basic training is the build up the recruit’s physical strength. It is as if the army says, ‘Soldier, we are going to give you the best weapons and armor possible. But first we have to make sure that you are strong, and that you can use what we give you.’”

In verse **11**, Paul gives believers further explanation as to what they have to do in order to be successful in spiritual warfare. 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. As we have already stated, it is important for us to know our enemy. 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 which 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 (in the sense of sinking into a garment).” 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.

Brothers and sisters, it is we who make the choice to initiate the putting on of God's armor. It is only after we put it on that are able to participate in the benefits of having it on. No one is going to put it on for us. Not even God will force us to put it on. It is His command that we put it on, and it is His good and acceptable and perfect will for us to do so, but the actual putting on of the "*whole armour of God*" is our responsibility.

Brothers and sisters, knowing the truth is not enough. We have to eat it, digest it, and be renewed in your mind by it in order for our futile, carnal, worldly, thinking to be reprov'd, corrected and trained in the direction of righteousness. In this way we are transformed from the inside out by the Holy Spirit.

One of the significant things about the armour of God is that it has to be put on from the **inside**! In his commentary on **Ephesians 6:11**, **John Phillips** wrote, "**Roman** armor was designed to protect the soldier's **body** from the enemy's weapons. **Christian** armor is designed to protect the **soul**. God does not throw us unprotected into the battle against Satan's empire. God has provided all that we need for complete protection of **mind, heart, soul, spirit, conscience** and **will**. But we must put that armor on piece by piece-deliberately, thoughtfully, and intelligently."

Legalism encourages believers to put the armour on the outside, by a strict observance of rules, regulations and standards. This may cause us to look impressive in the pew or the pulpit, but legalism has no power to help believers overcome the lusts of the flesh. Paul informs us of this in **Colossians 2:20-23**. The **New Living Translation** renders the passage as follows:

20 You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as,

21 "Don't handle! Don't taste! Don't touch!"?

22 Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them.

23 These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person's evil desires.

Brothers and sisters, In **John 4:24** our Lord said “*God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.*” And truth is whatever the Word of God says. Indeed, Jesus Christ is Himself the truth, according to **John 14:6**. Extra-biblical rules and regulations appeal to the fallen, corrupt adamic nature, or the flesh. The flesh is still present in us, even after we are saved and it seeks to reign over the members of our body and to cause us to use them as instruments of unrighteousness (**Romans 6:11-14**). Some of the efforts of the flesh are very subtle, even appearing to be “good works,” when in fact they are promoting “*doctrines of devils*” (**1 Timothy 4:1-3**). They do not really honour God; they only satisfy the flesh.

The truth is that every false religious system utterly fails to make men better. While creating the impression that there is something the flesh can do to merit God's favour, these religious systems are entirely unable to restrain the passions and lusts of the flesh. The believer's secret to the victorious life is living by faith in the truth that, “*those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires*” (**Galatians 5:24**). The believer now lives for the glory of God, not out of fear of punishment, but compelled by love for the One Who loved us and gave Himself for us. In other words, it is **love**, not **law** that really makes us free to do what is right. It is God, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit Who effectually operates in the believer's life giving him or her the desire and the ability to live a god-honouring life. Paul informs us of this in **Philippians 2:12-13**. **The Message** translates the passage as follows:

12 What I'm getting at, friends, is that you should simply keep on doing what you've done from the beginning. When I was living among you, you lived in responsive obedience. Now that I'm separated from you, keep it

up. Better yet, redouble your efforts. Be energetic in your life of salvation, reverent and sensitive before God.

13 That energy is God's energy, an energy deep within you, God himself willing and working at what will give him the most pleasure.

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 for a holy life 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."

Alexander Maclaren summarizes the solution for fallen mankind's problem writing that, "There is only one thing that will put the collar on the neck of the animal within us, and that is the power of the indwelling Christ."

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 armor. 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 is of God both in 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 their 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 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 of you,” but “*Christ in you.*” Brothers and sisters, in a real sense, Jesus Christ is the armour that we must put on.