

March 6, 2016

## *Jesus and His Church*

*"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms. 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. Stand firm then..."*

Ephesians 6:10-18

Within the context of this letter these last verses must first and foremost be about relationships. So, Paul wants us to understand that our world is a battlefield and we constantly must survive in an extremely hostile environment. On one side in this awesome and horrible battle are God's forces including you and me. On the other side are the forces of Satan. Yes, the devil is real and his forces are powerful!

Second, our battle is with these forces and not with other people. All of humanity are sinners. All of humanity are lost. All of humanity are in need of God's grace. And Jesus died for all humanity.

How does Satan attack us? Satan's favorite ploy is to constantly encourage us to gratify our selfish desires at the expense of our relationships. Why? The source of our sin is always our own selfish desires. Our personal selfish desires are our weak spot and he will always attack us where we are weak. He wants to destroy our relationships because this destroys the message of the gospel.

Paul tells us that our task is to stand against these attacks and to do so we must put on the full armor of God. Now let's understand a little bit about armor. Good armor never comes off the rack. Armor is fitted for the one wearing it. The armor that the Apostle begs us to put on is not generic it is specific. I must put on my own armor and you must put on yours. The armor that we wear as believers and the battle that we fight is not out there somewhere. It is within us individually and personally.

What is this armor? It is easy to get caught up in Paul's analogy and lose his point. The armor of God includes:

>**Truth:** Where do you get your truth? The internet? Others? Or do we get our truth from God's word? The only trustworthy source of truth is God's word. The "father of lies" wants us to forget that.

>**Righteousness:** There are two kinds of righteousness. One saves the other destroys. Self-righteousness comes from the belief that by keeping the rules I somehow am righteous because of my own perfection. True righteousness comes from the Father through the grace he has poured out in his Son. That righteousness, founded on my constant acknowledgement of my own sin, saves.

>**Readiness from the Gospel of peace:** Jesus, by his own admission, came to seek and save the lost. His final command was to make disciples. It must be our single focus, our mission.

>**Faith:** How resilient is our faith? How much do we depend on God daily? How often do we look to him for direction? My faith is my faith. Your faith



is your faith. On the battlefield weak faith can leave us exposed to Satan's attacks.

>**Salvation:** Do you believe you are saved or is the best you can say is that you hope that you might be saved. If my salvation is because I have received grace then I can be confident in it.

>**Spirit/the Word:** As is true with every other piece of God's armor the primary focus needs to be within. Does the Spirit dwell in me, is he producing his fruit in my transformed nature, does the Word live in me and do I live in him?

>**Prayer:** Finally, we must be constantly connected to the head. Command and control are essential. Cut us off from that and we are lost.

When I put on my fully developed and personally fitted armor I can take my stand against Satan on the battlefield that is life. If I enter that battlefield unprepared and unprotected I will be destroyed and may well lead others to be destroyed as well.