

ST. SIMEON ANGLICAN CHURCH, OFF FUTA ROAD, AKURE

BIBLE STUDY, 29/04/2009

STUDY 6

THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOUR

Ephesians 6:10 ó 18

In this study the apostle shows by a graphic figure that Christian's life is lived on the battlefield, for we are not only pilgrims but soldiers; we are not only in a foreign country, but in the enemy's land. Though the redemption which Christ has purchased for His people is free and full, yet, between the beginning of its application to us and the final consummation of it, there is a terrible and protracted conflict through which we have to pass. The fight or conflict to which God's children are called in this life has to do with more than human foes; the enemies we have to meet are superhuman ones, and therefore in order to fight successfully against them we need supernatural strength.

"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might". The words "be strong" mean to muster strength for the conflict, and be strong "in the Lord" signifies that we must seek strength from the only source from which we can obtain it. "Be strong": in faith, in hope, in wisdom, in patience, in fortitude, in every Christian grace. To be strong in grace is to be weak in sin. It is vitally essential to have our strength and courage renewed daily.

It is impossible for us to stand against the wiles of the devil unless we avail ourselves of the provision which God has made for enabling us to stand. It is no imaginary one, and no ordinary foes we have to meet; but spiritual, superhuman, invisible ones. Those enemies seek to destroy faith and produce doubt. They seek to destroy hope and produce despair. They seek to destroy humility and produce pride. They seek to destroy peace and produce bitterness and malice. They seek to prevent our enjoyment of heavenly things by getting us unduly occupied with earthly things. Their attack is not upon the body, but upon the soul. Therefore, our duty is to take and put on the whole armour of God and then to stand our ground, and withstand our enemies.

1. The mind, the heart, the will

Ephesians 6:14–15; I Peter 1:13; Psalm 51:6; Proverbs 4:23; I Thessalonians 5:8; Psalm 110:3; I Peter 4:17

"Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth". The girdle of truth signifies, then, the mind being regulated by real sincerity; and this alone will protect us against Satan's temptations unto slackness and guile and hypocrisy. Only as this is "put on" by us shall we be able to *"stand against the wiles of the devil"*: to "stand" is to "resist" that he does not throw us down. *"And having on the breastplate of righteousness"*, to put on the breastplate of righteousness means to maintain the power of holiness over our affections and conscience (Acts 24:16). *"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace"*. Just as the girdle of truth has to do with the *mind*, the breastplate of righteousness with the *heart*, so the shoes for the feet area figure of that which concerns the *will*. The feet carry the body from place to place, and the will is that which *directs* the activities of the soul; what the will decides, that is what we *do*. The will is to be regulated by the peace of the gospel. What is meant by that? In becoming reconciled to God and in having good will to our fellows, the gospel is the means or instrument that God uses. The gospel is not only a message of good news, but a divine commandment and rule of conduct. "Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" signifies that you must with readiness respond to God's revealed will.

The *peace* of "the gospel" comes from walking in subjection to its terms and by fulfilling the duties which it prescribes. Just so far as we are obedient to it we experimentally enjoy its peace.

2. Faith, hope and the sword

Ephesians 6:16-17; Colossians 3:16; I Thessalonians 5:8; Psalm 119:11; Matthew 4:4, 6-7, 10

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked"; faith is all in all in resisting temptation. The whole victory is here ascribed to *faith "above all"*; it is not by the breastplate, helmet or sword, but by the shield of faith that we are enabled to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. The attacks and temptations of the devil are likened to "fiery darts," because of the *wrath* with which he shoots them; because he *inflames* the passions and distress the conscience; and because of *the end* to which they lead if not quenched; should Satan's temptations be followed out to the end they would land us in the lake of fire. Taking the shield of faith is appropriating the Word and acting on it. The shield is to protect *the whole* person, wherever the attack is made, whether on spirit, or soul, or body; and there is that in the Word which is exactly suited unto each, but *faith* must lay hold of and employ it.

"And take the helmet of salvation", "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet the *hope* of salvation" (I Thessalonians 5:8). Here in Thessalonians, we have "hope" directly connected with "the helmet." Satan often seeks to cast a cloud of gloom over the soul, or produce anxiety about the future. Despondency is one of his favourite weapons, for he knows well that "the joy of the Lord" is our strength" (Nehemiah 8:10), hence his frequent efforts to dampen our spirits. To repulse these, we are to "take the helmet of salvation": that is, we are to exercise hope—anticipate the blissful future, look forward unto the eternal rest awaiting us; look away from earth to heaven.

"And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God", God has provided His people with an offensive weapon as well as defensive ones. It is significant to note *how late* the "sword of the Spirit" is mentioned in this list. Why? First, because all the other graces that have been mentioned are necessary to make a right use of the Word. Without a sincere mind and a holy heart we shall only handle the Word dishonestly. Without a practical righteousness, then we shall only be handling the Word theoretically. If there is not faith and hope we shall only misuse it. All the Christian graces under the other pieces of armour must be in exercise *before* we can profitably handle the Word of God. Second, it teaches us that even when the Christian has attained unto the highest point possible in this life he still needs *the Word*. Even when he has upon him the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, his feet shod with the shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace, and has taken unto himself the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation, he still needs the Word!

3. Praying always with all prayer

Ephesians 6:18; Psalm 27:8; Luke 18:16-17; Colossians 4:2; I Thessalonians 5:17; I Peter 4:7; Genesis 32:24-28

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints". Prayer is that which alone gives us the necessary strength to use the other pieces of armour! After the Christian has taken unto himself those six pieces, before he is thoroughly furnished to go forth unto the battle and

fitted for victory, he needs the help of his General. We are to pray "always" with all supplication in the Spirit. We are to fight upon our knees! Only prayer can keep alive the different spiritual graces which are figured by the various pieces of armour. "Praying always": in *every* seasonô in times of joy as well as sorrow, in days of adversity as well as prosperity. Not only so, but "*watching thereunto* with all perseverance": that is one of the essential elements in prevailing prayerô persistence. Watch yourself that you do not let up, become slack or discouraged. Keep on! The eighteenth verse is as though the apostle said, "Forget not to seek unto *the God of* this 'armour' and make humble supplication for His assistance; for only He who has given us these arms can enable us to make a successful use of them." Some have called it the "all verse." "Praying always with all prayer . . . with all perseverance, and supplication *for all saints*"—*think* not only of yourself, but also of your fellow soldiers who are engaged in the same conflict.
