

Staying True in a World Far from God

Prepare for Battle

Wednesday, October 4, 2023

Scripture & Study Notes

Daniel 10:1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a message was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar. The message was true and was about a great conflict. He understood the message and had understanding of the vision. ² In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three full weeks. . . **10** Suddenly, a hand touched me and raised me to my hands and knees. ¹¹ He said to me, "Daniel, you are a man treasured by God. Understand the words that I'm saying to you. Stand on your feet, for I have now been sent to you." After he said this to me, I stood trembling. ¹² "Don't be afraid, Daniel," he said to me, "for from the first day that you purposed to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your prayers were heard. I have come because of your prayers.

Spiritual Warfare

There is a reason why Paul writes about putting on “the whole armor of God” in Ephesians 6:10-18.

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and by His vast strength. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the tactics of the Devil. ¹² For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens. ¹³ This is why you must take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand. ¹⁴ Stand, therefore, with truth like a belt around your waist, righteousness like armor on your chest, ¹⁵ and your feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In every situation take the shield of faith, and with it you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word. ¹⁸ Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert in this with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints.

A soldier who puts on armor is making a statement about the world into which they step. The moments in front of them are not perfectly safe. There is real danger in their future—danger that is not just threatening in a general way, but which offers a particular, specific threat to them personally.

There is likewise this element of danger in the Christian life about which Paul cautions the Ephesian church. It is a danger that is not just from within ourselves, but that also has a particular, specific external source: a spiritual entity we call Satan (“the accuser”), or the devil. We know this because in verses 11-12 Paul says that the reason for putting on the full armor of God is so that **“you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against . . . the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”**

Scripture tells us that there are real, actual spiritual forces arrayed against the triune God and His every goal, among which are your continued faithfulness and allegiance to Jesus.

As to what it is, let me offer this as a short definition: *Spiritual warfare is the leveraging of everything that God promises against everything that opposes God's purposes.* God is a God of purposes and promises. Purposes to redeem the world and promises to judge wickedness. Purposes to grow His children into maturity and promises to unfailingly steward that process. Purposes to save us and glorify His name, and promises about our lives and about His holy character. Satan and his spiritual forces oppose all of that. They oppose all of God's purposes for salvation and redemption, as well as His every promise for accomplishing it.

In non-Christians the enemy and his forces will attempt to thwart salvation (Luke 8:11-12) and encourage sin (Ephesians 2:1-3).

In Christians they will attempt to sever our connection with God, prey on our natural inclination to sin, and deceive us into believing untruths that might hinder our discipleship or cause us to lose our effectiveness for God's kingdom. Their primary tools for this opposition are lies (Genesis 3:1; John 8:44) and temptations (Matthew 4:1-11).

Given that dramatic and scary context, Scripture has two valuable promises for us, **one ultimate** and **the other immediate**. The first is that while these forces are admittedly powerful (Satan is described as a “roaring lion,” looking to devour people), they are **ultimately subservient** to our almighty and omnipotent God.

- “I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

- “My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand” (John 10:29).
- “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

The other promise is that we have immediate assistance available to us. This is the purpose of the “armor of God” that Paul mentions. While we are ultimately destined for the safety of heaven, in the here and now we are assailed by “the fiery darts of the evil one” (Ephesians 6:16). When that happens, we have the promise that, in our instant gratification, right-now need, if we don the full armor of God—the full array of His promises for us, which are truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, God’s Word, prayer—we can stand firm against any attack.

If this is not you—which is to say, if you are a Christian brother or sister who constantly seems to be getting cut, bloodied, or wounded by the jabs and thrusts of the enemy and cannot understand why—I have difficult and exciting news to share: there is armor available to you. Learning to put it on will likely be hard work, *but the best of your spiritual life is in your future.*

You and I are not meant for weakness. We are meant for strength (James 4:7)—a strength that comes not from us, but to us, from Christ (“be strong in **the Lord** and in the strength of **His might**” [Ephesians 6:10]). That’s why there is no armor of “self-help section at Barnes & Noble.” There is no breastplate of mindfulness or shield of “staying in the moment,” no helmet of centering breathing or sword of “self-esteem mantra.”

The armor is God’s, and it’s ours for the wearing. Don’t protect yourself with tissue paper—not when steel is needed, and when steel is at hand.