

STRESSING THE NEED TO BE PREPARED

Ephesians 6:13

Intro: We all know, or should know, that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” The seal of the Holy Spirit is upon every page, even upon every word of Scripture. And it is all important. God’s Word would be incomplete without any part of it. It is all profitable, as we are told in 2 Timothy 3:16, “for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” It teaches us what God wants us to know, to understand, to firmly believe. It points out for us the things which God says are wrong, and which He does not want us to do. It tells us what God has done for us through the Gospel so that we can be pleasing to Him, and live the way He wants us to live. And then He gives us in great detail what Paul by the Holy Spirit called, “instruction in righteousness.” There is always more for us to learn about how to live a life that is pleasing to God.

Now, sad to say, most people are not interested in that kind of a life. People do what they want to do. There are people and movements in our country that are designed to make us forget all about God and to harden our hearts against all that the Bible has to tell us. But in addition to this, you and I were born with a nature that is antagonistic to God. So that the Godless influences that are everywhere about us, find us susceptible to their false teachings, but blinded to the influence and to the disastrous effects that they can have, and do have, in our lives. Sin is an awful reality in this world. Sin is anything that is displeasing to God. And it is still true regardless of what people may say to the contrary, “the wages of sin is death.” Sin may look like fun. Even the Bible talks about “the pleasures of sin,” but it says that it is only “for a season,” only for such a short time, and it produces such sad and harmful results, that it is not worth it!

The Bible tells us that we have three enemies. One is the world. The second is the flesh. The third is the Devil. The Devil is, for the present, “the god of this world.” The world is going the way that the Devil wants it to go. The flesh is not the body you live in. The is one use of the word flesh. But when the Bible speaks of the flesh it is referring mainly to the sinful nature that you and I were born with, a nature that is self-centered, is blinded to God and the things of God, but responsive to temptations of all kinds. The Devil is a person. He is not human, but he is an angelic being, a fallen angel. The Bible tells us that God prepared hell for the

Devil and his angels. The Devil is not omnipresent, and he is not omnipotent. But he is wiser than we are, and he is strong than we are, but all that he does is designed to turn us away from the God Who created us. The God Who created us is still in control. And He has set time limits on what the Devil can do, and the Devil knows it. So we can see in our generation that the Devil is doing all that he can do in the shortest possible time to ruin the greatest number of people. And he is having a very successful time.

But God knows everything that is going on. And He has given us His Word to tell us what is going on. God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, over two thousand years ago, to deal with the problem of sin. And He did when He died on the Cross for the forgiveness of all who had ever, or who would ever, turn to Him for forgiveness. So where the Bible says that “the wages of sin is death,” it also says “but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The Devil doesn't want you and me to know what is in the Bible. If you read the Bible, you will find out that there is a Devil and what his designs are on you and me. That is the reason that when we come to the end of this short letter the Apostle Paul wrote to the Christian in Ephesus shortly after Christ was here on earth, that the Christian life is a warfare. Even after we turn to God to forgive our sins through the death of Christ, and God makes us new creatures, the Devil is still after us. And so among all of the important things that you and I can read in the Bible, this is among the most important. In joining the Lord, we have become in a special way the enemies of the Devil. And although the Devil can't take our salvation away from us, he is out to do all that he can to ruin us. And only in the Bible do we have the information of how we as Christians, individually as well as members of the family of God, can live victoriously over all of the ways the Devil tries to defeat us.

I believe that God is dealing with the United States today in much the same way that he dealt with Egypt in Moses' day. Pharaoh didn't believe that the judgments that God was bringing upon Egypt had anything to do with God. As I expressed recently in one of our meetings, I have only heard of one person who said about the hurricanes and floods and other disasters that are taking place over a large segment of our country, “Why is all of this happening?” People talk about “mother nature.” Only Godless people who can't see beyond the end of their noses talk about “mother nature.” There is no “mother nature”! Read the Bible and you

will see that God is control of the wind and the water, and He can easily turn that which is usually a blessing into that which brings death and destruction. Does this mean that the people who are experiencing those devastating storms, are worse than we are? Our Lord answered that when he was here on earth. Listen to these words found in Luke 13:1-5:

1 There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

2 And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things?

3 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

4 Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?

5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

You see, a catastrophe is not just a message for those who are involved in it, but it is a message for the whole nation. So, although we haven't yet been involved in personally seeing the displeasure of God (unless it has been in the rising gas prices), yet what has happened to our countrymen (who in many instances has taken away all that they had) is a message to us also. And we had better be listening.

Every word in the Bible is important. It was not all written directly to us, but it has all been written for us. I have just taken one verse as my text for the morning, and you may be surprised at the one verse because it is practically a repetition of one of the verses we had last Sunday. My text is verse 13, but look at verse 11 and you will see practically the same thing. (Read verse 13, and then read verse 11). *Why would the Apostle Paul make two statements which say practically the same thing with only one verse between?* And that one verse is all one statement.

Let us consider for a moment,

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF REPETITION IN SCRIPTURE.

One thing that we can say immediately is that it certainly indicates the importance of what the Apostle Paul was saying to them. We might not noticed the similarity of these two verses if Paul had been speaking, and so he would have repeated himself because there was only one letter for the whole congregation. But he did this in writing. Every time you and I read through Ephesians we come across this repetition, and yet I suppose

that none of us would have noticed the repetition unless we had been memorizing the whole epistle. Paul was writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit, and God does not have to repeat Himself in order for it to be important. He wrote it the first time because he wanted them to put on the whole armor of God, but he wrote it a second time so that they would see that it was not only important for them to put on the whole armor of God, *but that it was very important* for them to put on the whole armor of God!

We all should be able to understand that we do not have our own armor which will enable us to stand against the Devil. But the glorious truth is that God has provided an effective armor for us. If we could only learn this lesson at the beginning of our lives as Christians it would save us a great deal of trouble. But unfortunately we try to resist the Devil in our own strength, deal with temptation in our own strength, only to find in every instances that we do not have in ourselves what it takes to stand against a person like the Devil. But when we learn that God has provided an armor for us, for everyone one of us, then we experience the difference.

But he stressed how important it was that they put on the whole armor of God in another way. He changed some of the wording in verse 13 from what he had used in verse 11. He used two different words in the two verses both of which in reality mean the same thing, that we need to put on and to take advantage of the provision that the Lord has made for us. There may be the suggestion in verse 13 that instead of knowing that we need the whole armor, we need to be acquainted with each part, how to put it on, and how each is to be used.

Verse 13, beginning with the word “wherefore,” indicates that because of the nature of our enemy, that we can’t actually see him, this is especially why we need the armor of God.

But another reason Paul would repeat these instructions for us, is because we so quickly forget even what we read in the Bible. In fact, is it too much to say that many times and many of us forget verse 11 by the time we get to verse 13. Or, possibly it is there to keep us from forgetting.

The idea is that we can’t see the Devil or one of the demons heading our way that so we have a little time to get the armor on, but just the opposite is the case. We can’t know when “the evil day,” the day when we will be

under attack is coming, or has come, and so we need to be ready for his attacks *at all times*. We don't know when the Lord will come to take us to heaven, nor do we know, on the other hand, when the Devil will put us under attack. So the armor of God needs to be our protection at all times! Fortunately it is not an uncomfortable armor like the soldiers of old wore, but it is one which is very satisfying to wear, and one which gives us the protection that we need. *We need to live with our armor on. And the more we know about using the armor, the better off we are going to be. Paul was speaking about hand-to-hand combat.*

Now how much this means to you can be determined by how much thought you have given to your armor since you started reading Ephesians, and especially since our time together in this passage last Sunday. I have often been very thankful about many things that Lord said to His disciples just before He went to the Cross. But one thing is this, which has to do with the ministry of the Holy Spirit. I am thinking about the Lord's words in John 14:26 where He spoke of helping us with our memory of the truth of the Word. Listen to what He said:

26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

This includes all of the Bible. It is all what He has said to us. So when you think of some Scripture that helps you in a time of temptation, don't congratulate yourself. Give the glory to the Lord and to the Holy Spirit. How does the Devil tempt us? He tempts us to sin in many ways – by feeling of pride and self-confidence, by discouragement, with criticism, with ungodly thoughts, with feelings of revenge, anger, jealousy. He tempts us to neglect our responsibilities, or to be careless in our obligations to others.

Let me make two more brief points before I close.

II. WE NEED TO KNOW THE PARTS OF THE ARMOR OF GOD.

They are all listed here. There are no other parts. And we need to know what they are. The best way to do that is to memorize verses 10 through 20. How can you benefit from them if you don't know what they are?

There are actually seven of them:

- 1) The girdle of truth (v. 14a).
- 2) The breastplate of righteousness (v. 14b).

- 3) The footwear – “the preparation of the Gospel of peace” (v. 15).
- 4) The shield of faith (v. 16).
- 5) The helmet of salvation (v. 17a).
- 6) The sword of the Spirit (v. 17b).
- 7) All prayer – *i.e.*, all kinds of prayer (vv. 18-20).

This is, or these are, “the whole armor of God.” They are issued by God and provided for every believer. We need to get acquainted with each one, and learn how to use them. But one thing remains before we discuss them. This is my last point this morning.

III. WE ARE COMMANDED TO PUT THEM ON.

They won’t do us any good unless we put them on. Both James and Peter expressly tell us what to do if we are to have victory over the Devil.

James said,

6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you . . . (James 4:6-8a).

The Apostle Peter said,

5 . . . Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world (1 Peter 5:5b-9).

The Apostle Paul had said earlier in Ephesians 4:27, “Neither give place to the Devil.” And this is consistent with his words in Ephesians 6:11, 13, and 14: “Stand” and ‘withstand.’”

Concl: How eager we should be to learn about our armor! The Lord does not promise us an easy time with our enemy, the Devil. But He does promise us victory. However, let us all remember that there is only one armor. Yours is exactly like mine, and so mine is exactly like yours. What is crucial is:

- 1) That we are persuaded that there is only one armor for each of us.
- 2) That we know what it is.
- 3) That we know how to use it.
- 4) That we put it on, and that we use it.

But it is important for us to remember how Paul began this part of his epistle. Victory over the Devil depends on our being strong, not in ourselves, but “in the Lord, and in the power of His might.” That is the only power that prevails, and this is the only armor that the Devil cannot penetrate. May God in His wonderful grace keep us from falling by enabling us to stand against the wiles of the Devil.