

Dressed for War

Last week we looked at three ideas in this series:

1. Only “the new self” can “walk in a manner worthy of the calling”.
2. Putting on “the new self” IS “putting on the whole armor of God”
3. Each piece of armor represents a Christian doctrine.

Before we get into the specific pieces of armor we need to set the context.

- STORY of Jonny in a storm trooper helmet.

BIG IDEA:

The reason Christians need “armor” is because there is a war.

- Reminder: the armour is what we need in order to be strong in the Lord... we need the armour, to be strong in the Lord, because THERE IS A WAR.
- War implies an enemy... battles, high stakes, a lot to lose, a lot to gain.

Ephesians 6:11-12

Put on the whole armor of God, 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 rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

First – a word of warning. I think it is important to note that Paul assumes knowledge of the devils existence is common between him and his readers... but he does not give us a biography.

- I think this is important because his purpose is to WARN us, not to satisfy our curiosity.
- *There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.* (CS Lewis – Screwtape Letters)

What to Know about the War:

1. Our enemy is...**a. the devil and his minions.**

Ephesians 2:1-5 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ

Ephesians 4:25-27 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil.

Ephesians 6:12

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

b. powerful, but not equal to God.

- Sometimes we inadvertently fall into a pagan mindset that sees good and evil as equal but opposing forces... that's not true.
- Sometimes we attribute to Satan power that the bible does not: he is not omnipotent, omnipresent or omniscient.

Acts 19 And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹² so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. ¹³ Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims." ¹⁴ Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. ¹⁵ But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" ¹⁶ And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. ¹⁷ And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. ¹⁸ Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. ¹⁹ And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. ²⁰ So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

2. The battle ground is not physical, but...

a. in our minds.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ

- Strongholds – almost always (when used metaphorically in scripture) means a deeply entrenched belief.
- "Opinions" and "arguments" raised against the knowledge of Christ.
- This means both INTERNALLY and EXTERNALLY guarding our minds (and the minds of those God has given us, remember chapters 5 and 6 are on marriages and parenting) against LIES that set themselves up against Gods truth!

b. in our hearts.

THE WAR DESCRIBED: Ephesians 4:20-24

...put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Some may ask about spiritual warfare of the “supernatural” kind.

- Remember this story?

And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. ³ He lived among the tombs. . . . And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. ⁷ And crying out with a loud voice, he said, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? And they came to Jesus and *saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind . . .* And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.

- In this supernatural, bizarre encounter Jesus seems to have a much more obvious encounter with the “cosmic powers over the present darkness” and yet the result is similar . . . the man, in the end, was CLOTHED IN HIS RIGHT MIND.
- The terrain of the battle was his mind.
- We cannot ignore the fact that Jesus encountered many who were tormented by demons . . . BUT we also can’t ignore the fact that the bible doesn’t give us instructions on HOW TO cast out demons . . .
- Therefore what we have to work with is what we ARE instructed to do . . . and in Ephesians, though Paul is clearly instructing us in terms of spiritual warfare, he tells us to wage this war in our hearts and minds.

3. Our enemy has been defeated, but has not conceded defeat.

Colossians 2:6-15 Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. ¹¹ In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.