

THE ARMOUR OF GOD PART ONE.

I am planning to do a series of messages out of Ephesians 6 on the Amour of God.

It will be a bit disjointed because of some travel commitments that I have.

I want to begin today by setting the scene.

Before looking at the Amour of God in particular, I want to look at the wider setting of this passage.

It isn't an isolated passage.

It is part of a wider context. It is the end of the Epistle that Paul has sent to the church at Ephesus.

When you look at Paul's correspondence it is clear to see that the churches that he wrote to were involved in a historical setting and culture that affected them profoundly.

The Corinthians had significant issues with sexual purity that had to be addressed.

Their city was the centre of the world at that time when it came to sexual debauchery. In this time, if you wanted to describe a person's behaviour as loose sexually, you would call them a 'Corinthian,' or you would say they were a 'Corinthianizer.'

Paul had to spend a significant part of his Epistle to instruct them how to live with sexual purity in such a setting.

When it comes to understanding the Epistle to the Ephesians it is helpful to understand that the church at Ephesus was situated in a place that was the centre for satanic worship in the ancient world.

The great temple to Diana was located here.

In Acts 19 it records that when the Gospel came in power to this city there was much repentance from witchcraft and black magic.

It is to this church that Paul speaks much about spiritual warfare.

In order to properly study this passage in chapter 6 we need to see how it relates to the rest of the Epistle.

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Ephesians is generally regarded as being divided into two major parts.

Chapters 1-3 form the first part.

This is doctrinal and deals with our relationship to the Lord.

It is about how salvation comes to believers and the position that we enjoy with Christ as a result of that salvation.

The second part of the Epistles is chapters 4-6.

This is practical and deals with our relationship with others.

It deals primarily with how we are to behave now that we are believers.

This second section can actually be subdivided into two as well.

1. Chapters 4:1-6:9 – is about our life in the world.
2. Chapter 6:10-24 – is about our attitude and stance towards the spiritual enemies we face.

Watchman Nee has written a little book on Ephesians called, '**Sit, Walk, Stand.**'

He makes the case that these three words are the key words and ideas of the Epistle.

'**Sit**' is the key word for the first portion of the Epistle.

Ephesians 1:20

(ASV) "...which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and **made him to sit** at his right hand in the heavenly *places*..."

Ephesians 2:6

"And hath raised *us* up together, and **made us sit** together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus..."

The first word of the Christian life is not walk or stand, but rather it is 'sit.'

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Christianity begins, not with a big 'do,' but with a big 'done.'

We are invited at the very outset to sit down and enjoy what God has done for us; not to set out and attain something for ourselves.

Both walking and standing imply effort.

Sitting is an attitude of rest.

The Christian life begins by depending, not on our own doing, but upon what Christ has already done.

In the creation week of Genesis Adam was formed on the 6th day. His very first day was the 7th day – the day of rest. Before he worked with God or for God he rested in God's completed work.

We do exactly the same.

The first section of the Epistle explains who we are in Christ as the result of the riches of His grace towards us.

We must grasp this before we are ever going to walk before the world or stand against our spiritual enemies.

Sitting is followed by walking.

Sitting describes our position 'in Christ;' one of being 'seated in heavenly places.'

Walking is the practical outworking of that heavenly position here on earth.

Ephesians 4:1

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called..."

Ephesians 5:2

"And walk in love..."

Ephesians 5:8

"...walk as children of light."

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The word 'walk' is used 8 times in this section of the Epistle as Paul challenges believers, in the light of their heavenly calling and position to 'put their Christianity in shoes.'

He covers the whole field of our relational world – domestic, business, in church and as neighbours.

We aren't to do this in our own strength, but as we are filled by the Holy Spirit.

These two sections then bring us to the concluding section of the Epistle where we are exhorted to 'Stand' against the spiritual forces that are arrayed against, and are hostile towards us.

The ideas are progressive.

We must know what it is to **sit** with Christ in heavenly places [our position] and we must seek to **walk** worthy of Him before men; then and only then will be in a position to **stand** before our foe.

No Christian can hope to stand in the midst of the warfare of the ages without learning to rest in Christ's completed work and without walking in a Spirit-Filled manner in the world.

The fact that spiritual warfare comes in this last section of the Epistle isn't a coincidence, it's a natural consequence of Paul's thinking and teaching.

I'm always a bit hesitant to dive into the topic of spiritual warfare because of the extremes that surround it.

At one end of the spectrum are people who live their lives as if there is no spiritual realm at all.

They may be 'theoretical Christians,' but they live as 'practical atheists' when it comes to relating and interacting with this realm.

They read **Ephesians 6:12** as,

"For we wrestle not..."

The world mocks the realm of the demonic and characterizes Satan as a small creature with horns, a pitchfork and red tights.

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Some Christians aren't much different in their approach.

At the other end of the spectrum there are Christians who are obsessed by the demonic realm.

Every circumstance of their lives is somehow a result of demonic attack.

I think the devil is equally happy with either extreme.

The Biblical position in my opinion is that spiritual warfare is real; it is not a product of 1st century superstition nor is it an expression of 21st century fanaticism. It is an integral part of normal Christian experience.

C. S. Lewis commented,

“There is no neutral ground in the universe; every square inch, every split second is claimed by God and counter claimed by Satan.”

We are in a battle.

We face the enemy on three separate fronts.

Traditionally we have called these three fronts, 'The World, the Flesh and the Devil.'

I have talked about this before – recently in the Esther series.

The World is man in organized community, opposed to God and it seeks to conform and mould us into its own ungodly image.

The Bible says that we fight on this front by exercising our faith and resisting this conforming process.

1 John 5:4

“For whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.”

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The Flesh is an enemy we are all too familiar with and needs little or no introduction to us.

We are to fight on this front in an entirely different manner to the way we relate to the world.

We are to flee; to put distance between us and the powerful inclinations of our flesh.

2 Timothy 2:22

“Flee also youthful lusts...”

1 Corinthians 6:18

“Flee fornication...”

1 Peter 2:11

“...keep away from the desires of your corrupt nature.”

When it comes to the Devil we are to stand and fight as we will see in this series of messages.

If we confuse these fronts and tactics we will doom ourselves to confusion and failure.

Imagine during WWII a scenario that goes like this –

A Submarine surfaces in Wellington Harbour and fires some shells from its deck onto Parliament buildings.

It then dives and waits quietly for a response.

The NZ defense department rushes around, assuming it has been a land attack and gathers up a whole lot of suspects to find who has laid the bomb.

It is a complete misunderstanding of where the attack has come from and as a result the response is completely wrong and therefore unsuccessful.

If it had actually come from a long range aircraft that had dropped a bomb, it would be of no good to launch a destroyer and start dropping depth charges in the harbour in the hope of hitting the submarine that has been thought to have caused the attack.

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Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones once commented,

“A man who does not understand the nature of the problem he is confronting is a man doomed to failure.”

Let me briefly introduce the subject of spiritual warfare as Paul presents it to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 6:10-18.

“Finally, my brothers, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the world's rulers, of the darkness of this age, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Therefore take to yourselves the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Therefore stand, having your loins girded about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, take the shield of faith, with which you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching to this very thing with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”

Verse 10 begins,

“Finally, my brothers, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.”

This isn't exhorting us to self effort.

The verb is in the passive voice and it really should read,

“Be strengthened...” or **“receive strength...”**

The idea is of being clothed with a strength that is supplied by another.

The strength comes from our being **‘in the Lord,’** and it is the **‘power of His might,’** not our own that is in view here.

Paul has already talked about this earlier in the Epistle.

The phrase, **‘the power of His might’** is only used twice in the New Testament, here and earlier in the Epistle in chapter **1:19.**

Let me read this earlier passage and make a couple of comments and then we are done as far as an introduction to the topic goes.

Ephesians 1:15-23

“Therefore I also, hearing of your faith in the Lord Jesus and love to all the saints, not cease giving thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus

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Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us, the ones believing according to the working of His mighty strength which He worked in Christ in raising Him from the dead, and He seated Him at His right hand in the heavenlies, far above all principality and authority and power and dominion, and every name being named, not only in this world, but also in the coming age. And He has put all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

Paul is trying to get the Ephesians to understand the power that is working on their behalf.

In **verse 19** he ‘rapes and pillages’ the language to try and express God’s power.

He uses 6 different words for power in this one verse.

1. **‘Exceeding’** – ‘huperballon’ – ‘to throw beyond the normal mark.’ This is a power that is beyond measure, more than enough, of surpassing measure, a power that is sufficient.
2. **‘Greatness’** – ‘megethos’ – this word conveys the idea of size and intensity. This is a power that is magnificent.
3. **‘Power’** – ‘dunamis’ – a word that conveys the ability or capability to perform anything. This is a power that is latent and inherent. It is the power of dynamite ready to be unleashed at the appropriate moment.
4. **‘Working’** – ‘energeia’ – This is power in exercise, in operation. This is power patent – conspicuous, obvious.
5. **‘Mighty’** – ‘kratos’ -- this word means ‘manifested strength.’
6. **‘Power’** – ‘ischuos’ – this is the word used to describe ability, force or strength.

Paul has started to pile up words on top of one another to try and convey God’s power and yet you still feel his frustration at not quite saying it as he wants to.

He can’t leave the subject incomplete so he gives three measures of this power that is available to us.

1. **It is measured by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.**

1:20 “Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead...”

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It is the same power that raised a dead man.

This power that humanity knows nothing of. We can harness the power of water, wind and even of an atom but we can't even conceive of a power that is able to bring a person back from the dead.

2. It is measured by the exaltation of Jesus to the throne of God.

1:20 "...and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."

God's power raised Jesus beyond death, but also beyond dominion.

He is set in a place of sovereignty. All things are beneath him.

"Everything that can be given a name' in this age and in the next is under His rule; things in heaven, on the earth and under the earth, all have been made subject to Him by God's power.

3. Measured by the supervision of Jesus Christ.

1:22 "...has put all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church..."

He is over all things.

Colossians 1:17

"And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

CEV "...and by him everything is held together."

Hebrews 1:3 speaks of Him,

"...upholding all things by the word of His power."

The power of God has lifted Jesus beyond death, beyond dominion, beyond displacement.

This is the same power that we are to be clothed with as we stand in this world against spiritual powers.

They have tasted it already and have been completely undone by it.

We fight. Not for victory but from a place victory.