

“Dressing for the New Year”

Ephesians 6:10-17

January 4, 2009

- A. the book of Ephesians
 - 1. the lofty realms of God’s eternal plan for salvation and the church
 - 2. earthly problems face the Christian seeking to walk pleasing to God
- B. Dressing in strength, 6:10-11a – ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ^{11a} Put on the full armour of God, so that you will be able to stand firm ...
 - 1. proving the armour
 - 2. the eyes of faith
 - 3. clothing ourselves in Christ’s strength
- C. Dressing for the struggle, 6:11b-13 –
 - 1. The Enemy: ^{11b} ... so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.
 - 2. the enemy ... 6:11b-12
 - a. ... is personal
 - b. ... is treacherous
 - c. ... is spiritual
 - d. ... is powerful
 - e. ... is malevolent

- 3. The Entreaty: ¹³ Therefore, take up the full armour of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.
 - a. therefore
 - (A) because of the character of our enemy
 - (B) because of the power available in Christ
 - b. “taking up the panoply of God”
 - (A) its source
 - (B) the elements of armour
 - (1) belt ○ breast-plate ○ boots
 - (2) shield ○ helmet ○ sword
- D. Dressing as a Soldier, 6:13-17
 - 1. The Belt: ^{14a} Stand firm therefore, ‘having girded your loins with truth’
 - 2. The Breastplate: ^{14b} ... and ‘having put on the breastplate of righteousness’
 - 3. The Boots: ¹⁵ and having shod ‘your feet with the preparation {or, preparedness} of the gospel of peace’
 - 4. The Shield: ¹⁶ in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.
 - 5. The Helmet: ^{17a} And take ‘the helmet of salvation’
 - 6. The Sword: ^{17b} and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.
- E. Application
 - 1. ¹³ Therefore, take up the full armour of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.
 - 2. Get properly dressed for 2009!

A. Introduction

1. this book of Ephesians

- a. in its first three chapters, lifts us from this world into the spiritual realms where God sits on His throne
 - (A) disclosing to us the mystery of the church
 - (B) a truth once concealed but now revealed
 - (C) it tells of the great plan of God, formulated in eternity,
 - (D) to call out for Himself a people of His own choosing
 - (E) from those who were once dead in trespasses and sin
 - (F) by His grace, through faith in Christ's completed work
 - (G) and of this people, to form His church
 - (H) to the praise of His own glory
- b. then the book lays out God's purpose for His church
 - (A) that it be united through diverse gifts in its members
 - (B) that it be holy and pure as each part, each member, grows up into Him who is the Head of the body
 - (C) that the relationships among its members be marked by mutual submission: in general, in the family, and in the work-place
 - (D) that each member should adorn the teaching of Christ
- c. from this grand design and eloquent flight into the heights
- d. today, at the start of a new year, we are brought down to earth, face to face with this unpleasant truth:

2. in the year 2009 we are going to face difficulties

- a. not just financial difficulties brought on by the economy
- b. not just the difficulties caused by changes in our lives, in our situation, and in our families
- c. and some or all of these difficulties will come
- d. but they come because we are part of a battle
- e. we are engaged in a war
- f. and we may be called upon to serve at any time

- g. so we need to make sure that we are suitably clothed
 - (A) not simply in a school uniform, or work clothes, or for a party, or in our Sunday best; ...
 - (B) but clothed in battle dress, ready to meet the foe
- h. dressing ourselves in strength for the day of battle

B. Dressing in Strength 6:10-11a

1. ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ^{11a} Put on the full armour of God, so that you will be able to stand firm ...
 - a. we will return in a moment or two, as Paul does in a few verses, to the subject of the full armour of God
 - b. but before we do, let us consider what is necessary before we can wear that armour to advantage
 - c. You will recall that the lad David, as was preparing to go out to fight Goliath, enemy of God's people, was given armour by Saul; but having put it on, we read, 'David girded his sword over his armour and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. So David said to Saul, "I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them." And David took them off.' (1 Samuel 17:39) – David would have to mature, to grow, before he could test – try or prove – such armour
 - d. this verse tells us the prerequisite before we can test, try or prove the armour given to us by our King – we must first clothe ourselves in the strength of the Lord Jesus
2. that's a tall order for me; Max Lucado wrote the following which possibly resonates in your heart as it does in mine:
 - a. 'Faith Sees the Saviour' –{2}.
 - (A) I stand a few feet from a mirror and see the face of a man who failed, ... who failed his Maker. Again. I promised I wouldn't, but I did. I was quiet when I should have been bold. I took a seat when I should have taken a stand.
 - (B) If this were the first time, it would be different. But it isn't. How many times can one fall and expect to be caught?
 - (C) Your eyes look in the mirror and see a sinner, a failure, a promise-breaker. But by faith you look in the mirror and see a robed prodigal bearing the ring of grace on your finger and the kiss of your Father on your face ...
 - (D) Your eyes see your faults. Your faith sees your Saviour.

(E) Your eyes see your guilt. Your faith sees his blood.

b. you see, when I try to be a strong Christian, I fail

(A) I've tried it many times; and I found it to be the case

(B) I start the day with good intentions, and retire at night with regrets for things thought, said and done

(C) in the words of that hymn sung by Bev Shea

I fall so short, oh! so many times

and evil thoughts come into my mind ...—{3}.

(D) do you, too, want to be a soldier of the cross, but also find yourself faint in the day of battle?

3. so, how can we clothe ourselves in the strength of Jesus Christ?

a. On the eve of the first Good Friday, Jesus said this to his disciples and to us: 'I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.' (John 15:5)

b. you cannot begin to talk about being a soldier of the cross, of being engaged in the battle for good against evil, until you have first come into an abiding union with Jesus Christ

c. by the grace of God, that union can be known through faith, through trusting in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, where He was crucified to bear my sins and yours

(A) when faith sees your Saviour and not ourselves

(B) when faith sees His blood and not our guilt & failing

d. then we will be able to exclaim, 'I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.' (Galatians 2:20), and,

e. 'I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.' (Philippians 4:13)

f. and what a strength this is! It is to be clothed 'in the vigour derived from His strength' (Charles Hodge, Ephesians)

g. it is the promise of Isaiah 40:29-31: ²⁹ He gives strength to the weary, And to him who lacks might He increases power. ³⁰ Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, ³¹ Yet those who wait for the Lord Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.'; it is the strength of which Paul could say

- h. ⁹ And He {Jesus} has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."
... ^{10b} for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.' (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)
- i. thus we can sing a testimony, in Charles Wesley's words,

Strong in the strength which God supplies
Through His eternal Son;
Strong in the Lord of hosts
And in His mighty power,
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts
Is more than conqueror. —{4}.

4. with Christ's strength we turn now to ...

C. Dressing for the Struggle 6:11b-13

1. The Enemy: ^{11b} ... so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

- a. and there is an enemy; this is not simply a battle between our old and our new nature; but against an enemy
 - (A) this enemy is personal
 - (B) this enemy is treacherous
 - (C) this enemy is spiritual
 - (D) this enemy is powerful
 - (E) this enemy is malevolent
- b. this enemy is personal – each of the ways in which he is named tells us of his personal nature and character
 - (A) he is the 'Devil' – the one who slanders God's people
 - (B) he is the Accuser of the brethren
 - (C) he is Satan, the adversary, like a roaring lion
 - (D) he is Lucifer, son of morning, once a perfect being in Eden, and who, it is indicated in Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14, sought to make himself like Almighty God himself

- (E) he is that old Serpent, bringing mankind's fall in Eden
 - (F) he is the Tempter attacking Jesus in the wilderness
 - (G) he is the Prince of the power of the air, leading his followers in corrupting the people of earth
- c. this enemy is treacherous
- (A) here we are told of his 'schemes;' the Greek word is 'methodeias' and is also translated 'wiles, stratagems'
 - (B) he is tricky and untrustworthy, the Father of Lies
 - (C) in the garden of Eden, he questioned God's truthfulness
 - (D) in the wilderness, he quoted the Scriptures
 - (E) and his servants, who are many, are treacherous too: 'No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.' (2 Corinthians 11:14)
 - (F) his greatest deceit is to make us think that he does not exist, that he is not actively engaged against us
- d. this enemy is spiritual; this treacherous, personal enemy
- (A) engages us in a struggle: a one-on-one, face-to-face, personal combat, trying to wrestle us into a fall
 - (B) but he is not human, 'not ... flesh and blood'
 - (C) treacherously, he seeks to engage us in an unfair fight – where we cannot see him but he enters our minds
 - (D) he is spiritual – moving in the spiritual, heavenly realm through this material universe: in Job as he attends the council of God, he says he has come 'From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it' (Job 1:7b)
- e. this enemy is powerful
- (A) in his own person, for Jude 1:9 tells us that 'Michael the archangel,' one of the great among God's heavenly host, 'did not dare pronounce against him {that, is Satan} a railing judgement'
 - (B) and he is not alone among our spiritual enemies: the book of Revelation seems to indicate that a third of the angels followed Satan in his rebellion against God
 - (C) and these fallen angels, known in Scripture as demons, a Greek word 'god, goddess, power,' have their roles listed here in terms all speaking of their power, though the actual differentiation among them is uncertain,

- (1) they are 'rulers' or 'principalities' – having charge of certain satanic activities
- (2) they are 'powers' or 'authorities' – controlling certain areas – probably such as the Princes of Persia and of Greece spoken of in Daniel
- (3) they are 'world forces' or 'world-rulers' – perhaps having a wider control in the 'domain of darkness'
- (4) but, we find these 'spiritual forces in the heavenlies' ever described in the terms of the power they wield

(D) so we do not speak lightly, this morning, of the enemy

f. this enemy is malevolent

(A) his domain is the domain of 'darkness'

(B) his work force is the force of 'wickedness'

(C) all his titles demonstrate his hateful attitude to those who are the people of God – 'Accuser of the brethren' as illustrated by the history of Job, but not simply an accuser in that case but taking evil action against Job

(D) so, as you 'walk with the Lord in the light of His word,' as with Peter, Satan will seek to sift you like wheat; hence

(E) 'Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.' (1 Peter 5:8)

2. The Entreaty: ¹³ Therefore, take up the full armour of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

a. therefore – because of

(A) the enemy that each of us who know Christ is facing

(B) because of the power available in Jesus Christ

(C) then be entreated to 'take up the full armour of God'

(D) for there is an evil day that will come

(1) not only at that time in the future as the great final battle takes place at the second coming of Jesus

(2) but that day, maybe tomorrow, maybe next week, when you will face a special onslaught by Satan

(3) or, as the Psalmist describes it, 'How blessed is he who considers the helpless; The Lord will deliver him in a day of trouble.' (Psalms 41:1)

3. So, then, put on God's panoply

- a. 'panoplia' – that's the word translated 'full armour'
- b. and while every piece of the armour listed is important
- c. the emphasis here is not on 'full' or 'every'
- d. but on the fact that it is the armour of God
- e. God is the source of this armour
- f. God is the provider of this armour
- g. it is the provider, not the wearer, that makes this armour effective so that you will be able to stand and resist
- h. it is the source, nor the bearer, that assures us of victory, that 'having done everything' we shall 'stand firm'
- i. and, because the source of this armour is God, I am led to conclude that the virtues described – truth, righteousness, preparedness, faith, salvation, word – are those provided by God and found in Christ, and not those which we can accomplish except insofar as this is done by the Holy Spirit because we have been made a new creation in Christ

4. Paul is chained to a Roman soldier in his house arrest in Rome

- a. where did you get your breastplate? – from my centurion
- b. did you have to make your sword? – no; it was provided
- c. where did you get the rest of your equipment? – provided
- d. how do you get dressed in it all? – I lay it all out in place; then I gather up my tunic with my belt, slip on my breast-plate and fasten its pins, lash on my boots, take hold of my shield and lower its strap over my head, then I get helped on with my helmet and finally I take my sword.
- e. this is what is meant by take up one's armour, taking that which was provided for battle and dressing oneself with it

D. Dressing as a Soldier 6:13-17

1. The Belt – ^{14a} Stand firm therefore, 'having girded your loins with truth', ...

a. this is the peak of the football season and I must confess that I have taken out a few minutes this week to watch part of some of the bowl games. I saw one tackle, known as a horse-collar, which was made and is illegal because of the danger of injury that it causes. It is when a defensive player grabs the collar of the sweater and padding at the back to haul down the ball-carrier. Football uniforms are usually tightly fitting, leaving little to grab, giving freedom for running.

b. the belt or girdle of the soldier was foundational

(A) it gathered up his tunic so an enemy cannot grab it and 'horse-collar' him; he is left free for action

(B) to it fastened of the breast-plate and sword

(C) like the belt wrapped around the weight-lifters in the Olympic and other games, it braces the soldier so that he can exert his full force in the struggle

c. this belt is truth

(A) not the truth of revelation which is covered later

(B) but truth accepted, truth appropriated, truth that is used to bind the other parts of armour to our being

(C) it is the truth that discovers to us our sin, our need of the Saviour, and the way to salvation through Christ

(D) and, said Jesus, 'and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.' (John 8:32)

2. The Breastplate – ^{14b} ... and 'having put on the breastplate of righteousness',

a. as you see, the breast-plate covered the wearer back and front from his neck to his thighs

b. it protected the most vital of our organs, which if wounded put you completely out of the battle if not to death

c. this breast-plate, says Paul, is righteousness

d. not my moral righteousness, not your righteousness; these wouldn't protect us from a flea, let alone our enemy

e. this is the righteousness which is found in Jesus Christ, 'He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.' (2 Corinthians 5:21)

f. no weapon of hell can pierce this breast-plate given of God

3. The Boots – ¹⁵ and having shod 'your feet with the preparation {or, preparedness} of the gospel of peace';
 - a. Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great, to name just two, were general who knew and pursued the advantage that is given to an army who can move quickly over rough terrain
 - b. the soldier's boot prepares him for battle, being solid, and in those times, studded to give good traction in walking
 - c. in our battle, our preparedness comes in a two-fold way
 - d. from the gospel; the good news of salvation
 - e. first, as soldiers, because of the gospel, we have peace with God, we know how we stand with Him – no one can do his or her best when filled with doubts about themselves
 - (A) but we know our Leader personally; intimately
 - (B) and are convinced of His justness and faithfulness
 - (C) so we know we are walking on a solid way
 - f. second, we know that the message that we bear, the gospel of peace, is the message that brings a person to God
 - (A) it is a message transforming earthly enemies to friends
 - (B) it is the only message of hope and worthy of our giving our lives on its behalf, if necessary
 - (C) it prepares our hearts and minds for the conflict

4. The Shield – ¹⁶ in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.
 - a. the shield was large and oblong, shaped like a door (the two are similar words in Greek), about 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ m. long and $\frac{3}{4}$ m. wide – protecting the whole body
 - b. it is a particularly apt armour for the Christian warrior who may be fighting alone or alongside others, because this shield could be placed side by side with those of fellow-soldiers to present a solid wall, much like the shields that riot police use today
 - c. it was multi-layered wood, covered with leather and/or linen, bound with metal, stopping flaming arrows where the flame died out without harming the bearer.
 - d. in 48 B.C. when Pompey defeated Caesar 'After the siege of Dyrachium, Sceva counted no less than 220 darts sticking into his shield.'^{5}.

- e. so with the flaming arrows of Satan and demons hurled at us bearing doubts, evil thoughts, dire temptations
- f. faith – not on account of faithfulness nor resolution on our part but on account of the power of the object of our faith – such trust will turn aside all such arrows of the Devil

5. The Helmet

- a. ^{17a} **And take 'the helmet of salvation',**
- b. not the elaborate helmet with flaming crest of the cavalry but the simple, leather cap, thickened and reinforced to withstand blows, deliberate or inadvertent, wrapped about the head, with flaps folding down under the breastplate
- c. so is the believer's mind, his spiritual sight and hearing, protected by the fact of salvation from the Tempter's onslaught – warding off every blow with the response: "... I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him ..." (2 Timothy 1:12 AV)

6. The Sword

- a. ^{17b} **and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**
- b. and, finally, the only part of the armour that can be used for both attack and defence, the sword, God's word
- c. '**word**', here, is not a part of a sentence, but an utterance
- d. because of this, various interpretations have been made
 - (A) e.g., limiting it to the sayings of Jesus, or, the gospel
 - (B) words given by the Spirit to render a defence
- e. but easiest and most straightforward is usually the best, the word of God is particularized in the Scriptures, the Bible, the written word, which is reinforced by Jesus' words at his time of temptation: '**But He answered and said, "It is written, 'man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"**' (Matthew 4:4)

E. Conclusion

1. for 2009, then, get properly dressed:

- a. Know the freedom-giving truth, depend upon the righteousness of Christ, be ready by the gospel, set the eye of faith on Christ, may salvation protect your thinking, and learn to handle the word of God.
- b. I leave you then, Paul's entreaty, verse ¹³ [Therefore, take up the full armour of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.](#)

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Various other English versions of the Holy Bible may be used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in {braces}. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

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2. 'Faith Sees the Savior' by Max Lucado – Kerux illustration #27778
3. 'God Is So Good' as sung by George Beverley Shea (other information not known)
4. 'Soldiers of Christ, Arise' by Charles Wesley (1707-1788)
5. Expositor's Bible Commentary, A. Skevington Woods, *in loc*