

# What to Wear to War

Angels, Demons and Other Flying Creatures – Part VI

Ephesians 6:10-14

## Introduction

I believe that one of the most misunderstood areas within the Christian community at large is the area of spiritual warfare.

On one hand are those who do not seem to understand that Christianity is conflict – that the enemy is alive and roaming about, seeking whom he may devour. Most believers do not seem overly convinced that while the advancement of the church is a promised victory, the gates of hell still attempt to prevail against it.

On the other hand are those who have come to believe that direct conflict with Satan and demon forces is at the heart of the Christian life. Confronting, binding, rebuking demons is the ticket, not only for spiritual growth, but for the declaration of the gospel. So, in order to evangelize one's town, one must first identify and bind the demon of that town.

I recently read that one church planting pastor, instead of canvassing the neighborhoods and meeting people and inviting them to church, simply took out a phone book and went street by street rebuking the controlling neighborhood spirits and asking God's Spirit to bring them to church.

I guess he was forgetting that not one verse or illustration in the Bible ever informs us that God will bring the world to church; not one verse ever tells the world to go to church. The church is told to go and reach the world.

Mark, chapter 16, verse 15, Jesus tells us to,

*... Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.*

In Acts, chapter 1, verse 8, Jesus says,

*... you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.*

*Charisma Magazine* is a flagship magazine for the charismatic community which has bought into the contemporary warfare movement hook, line, and sinker. The magazine ran an article a few years ago, about a pastor whose church would not grow. He eventually identified the demon of witchcraft who had dominion over that particular geographical area. The pastor began naming the streets around the neighborhood and then, commanded the demon to release that territory. The demon complained, but finally relented. Since then, the church has grown from seventy to one hundred fifty people.

So called spiritual warfare advocates claim that it is important to discern the nature of the ruling demons over a city. One author said, "If you know what that demon specializes in, and especially if you know his name, then our prayers will be much more effective."

Spiritual warfare experts have identified the ruling demon of Los Angeles, the home of the movie industry, as the demon of pornography. The ruling demon over New York is greed. The ruling demon over Washington DC is the demon of power. Now that we know the name, we can pray against that demonic power and God's power can be advanced.

That may sound exciting, but what does it imply about the nature of prayer and the sovereignty of

God? Is God up there saying, “I’ll release that neighborhood to your gospel efforts down there if you can just figure out what the demon’s name is. If you can’t, sorry, my hands are tied; there’s just nothing I can do.”?

There is not one verse of scripture that encourages, teaches, exhorts, or directs the New Testament believer to discover territorial demons and bind them.

The primary passage that contemporary warfare advocates say proves the need for such territorial warfare is found in Daniel, chapter 10. Turn there and look at verses 1 through 14.

*In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar; and the message was true and one of great conflict, but he understood the message and had an understanding of the vision.*

*In those days, I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks.*

*I did not eat any tasty food, nor did meat or wine enter my mouth, nor did I use any ointment at all until the entire three weeks were completed.*

*On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, while I was by the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris,*

*I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with a belt of pure gold of Uphaz.*

*His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult.*

*Now I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, while the men who were with me did not see the vision; nevertheless, a great dread fell on them, and they ran away to hide themselves.*

*So I was left alone and saw this great vision; yet no strength was left in me, for my natural color turned to a deathly pallor, and I retained no strength.*

*But I heard the sound of his words; and as soon as I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.*

*Then behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees.*

*He said to me, “O Daniel, man of high esteem, understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you.” And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling.*

*Then he said to me, “Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words.*

*“But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.*

*“Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet future.”*

It is clear from this passage that for twenty-one days, the angelic messenger who came to Daniel was detained in some sort of struggle by a demon. Another angel, Michael, was sent to help him. We are not told anything more than that.

We can summarize from this passage, several points:

- conflict between angels and demons is occurring in the heavens, not on earth;
- while a demon can hinder an angelic messenger from delivering his message, the demon eventually loses;
- this battle that was fought in the heavens, involved two angels and one demon, but *not* Daniel;
- when the angel needed help against the prince of the kingdom of Persia and God sent another angel to help, God did *not* ask Daniel to pray for more angels; He did *not* give Daniel a sense in his extremely godly prayer life that an angel needed assistance; He did *not* have Daniel identify the demon by name and bind him, so that then, and only then, He could send help;
- God did not require Daniel to be involved in any part of the solution in order to have the message delivered; in fact, Daniel did not

even know what was going on until after it was over.

All of these, in some way or another, are exactly what the warfare movement is applying from this passage.

What this passage does imply is that Satan has organized his demonic forces to influence kingdoms and nations and he attempts, at every possible point, to hinder the word of God.

Matthew, chapter 16, verse 18, implies that the gates of hell; that is, the seat of strategy and authority, attempt to prevail against or hinder the church. However, Christ has already granted not only future victory, but present victory – the church, He promised, shall not be overwhelmed.

Daniel, chapter 10, is not a manual for the New Testament believer to begin having prayer walks, binding territorial demons, praying down more angels, or casting demons from inanimate objects.

Nowhere in God's word does it say that we are to command demons to give up territory before we can influence neighborhoods, cities, and nations. Nowhere in the Bible does it teach that we are to name demons and bind them in order for the gospel message to go forward.

Many people, I believe, would rather believe that we are to do those things than to go about the rigors and difficulties of evangelism and discipleship. It is easier to pray for thirty minutes against the demons than it is to study three hours to teach a Sunday school class. It sounds a lot more exciting to walk around the neighborhood casting down the demon of your subdivision than it is to run a vacation Bible school in your back yard.

Our obedience is to the clear command of Christ, which is not to go and rebuke demons, but to go and make disciples.

It would be much simpler to pray against the territorial demon of our town and the surrounding towns and then, sit back and await the flood of blessing, power, and fruit. It is another thing altogether to agonize and work in the harvest field week in and week out, where there is a perpetual shortage of laborers.

Christ, however, has told us, not to pray for more angels and fewer demons, but to pray for more laborers in the harvest field who will invest in the lifelong passion of spiritual reproduction. And while we are at it, our eyes are upon Jesus Christ, who is the author and finisher of our faith.

Could it be that since the enemy of the church knows he cannot destroy us, he spends his time attempting to distract us from our true mission?

Kent Hughes, the pastor of Wheaton College Church, told the story of a couple he knew who had started a Bible study. The Bible study soon filled their living room with businessmen and women, a couple of doctors, and other professionals. Entire families were being impacted and the Bible study was flourishing.

However, the group began a study on demons, Satan, and the occult. Soon, it so grasped their imagination that they became preoccupied with it. They began to distort scripture and read authors who wrote of the very misapplications I have been referring to in our study.

One night, during their Bible study, they dismantled the chandelier in the dining room where they were studying, convinced it was inhabited by a demon. They then took individual pieces of that chandelier to different parts of the city and buried them. The height of embarrassment, Pastor Hughes wrote, was when the children of the host family were seen running down the street shouting, "The devil is after us! The devil is after us! . . ." Some neighborhood adults went to the home, wondering what was going on, and found the women in the backyard hacking a rosewood chest with an ax because it too, was possessed.

Now let me say one more thing as I finish my introduction. Living the Christian life victoriously is not for a few experts; it is not a mystery; it is not obtained by figuring out demonic personalities and incantations for binding the devil. Victory is not for the lucky Christians who happen to learn how to break through the bondage with seven steps.

It may sound far too simplistic, and it will not sell many books, but the Bible says, according to the book of James, in chapter 4, verse 7,

***Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.***

There are no incantations, no seven steps, no special prayers, no memorized rebukes or bindings, and no dismantled chandeliers and hacked up chests. The word "resist" is a Greek word that simply means, "take a stand against".

How in the world do you resist? I am glad you finally asked.

In the book of Ephesians, the Spirit of God through the apostle Paul tells us how to submit to

God and how to stand against the devil. Let us take a look at what the Bible says.

## The Test of True Strength

Look at Ephesians, chapter 6, verses 10 and 11, where Paul tells us how to be strong against the devil.

***Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.***

Notice that Paul does not say, “Finally, be strong in your own sense of confidence and in the strength of your own spiritual power.”

It is easy to think, “I’ve memorized a chapter of the Bible. I get up early to pray. I’ve mastered the basics of Christianity. I’m ready for anything.”

In I Corinthians, chapter 10, verse 12, Paul writes,

***. . . let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.***

Someone might say, “But wait a second, in Ephesians, chapter 6, we’re told to stand firm, but in I Corinthians, chapter 10, we’re told that when we stand, we are in trouble. I don’t understand the difference!”

The difference is that the believer in I Corinthians is standing in his pride and self-sufficiency, while the believer in Ephesians is standing in the power and sufficiency of Christ. One believer is proud of his own spiritual standing and strength, while the other is humbled by his dependence upon the Savior’s strength.

The difference between the two believers is remarkable. One believes that his need of Christ’s strength is partial and temporary; the other believes his need of Christ’s strength is permanent and total.

God said through his prophet Jeremiah, in chapter 9, verse 23,

***. . . Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches;***

These are the three things that create a sense of self sufficiency – intellectual acumen, physical health, and wealth. Continue to verse 24.

***but, let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; . . .***

## The Arena of True Struggle

Ephesians, chapter 6, verse 12, informs us of the arena of our struggle.

***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.***

What Paul does in this verse is absolutely stunning. He informed the Ephesians that every day they sought to do the will of God, live faithfully to Christ, and resist temptation, they were actually engaged in much more. They were engaged in more than a temptation; more than the mundane trials of life; they, as believers, were involved in advancing victoriously against the powers and personalities of hell.

Paul raised the Christian life to a much higher level. One author wrote,

*Have you resisted the temptation to be rude toward a colleague? Have you fought off the desire to react with anger against someone who cut you off on the freeway? Have you turned away from a magazine that might have drawn you into lust? Have you restrained your lips from uttering profanity? In doing so, you have struck a blow against the angels of hell in this constant daily battle.<sup>i</sup>*

Ladies and gentlemen, unless you live with this mentality of war, you are missing out on the drama of life! There is a war going on and you are to relate your life and the events of life to it.

If you have not gotten to the point where you view life as one divine appointment after another, no matter how trivial or mundane, you are in the process of missing out on the taste of victory.

## The Equipment of True Success

Paul goes on in verse 13 of Ephesians, chapter 6, to command the Christian,

***Therefore, take up the full armor of God . . .***

He is literally saying, “Put it on!”

By the way, the tense of the verb indicates that you are to put it on once and for all. In other words, this is not a softball uniform; this is not your tennis outfit; this is not a hockey uniform.

Perhaps you have gone to see the Hurricanes play hockey. One of our church members is a great defenseman for the Hurricanes. My family has gone several times to see him play. In fact, because we have part of our church out there on the ice, as far as I am concerned, going to a hockey game is part of the

ministry. We are rooting for one of God's children – especially when they were in the playoffs against a team named the Devils. This is a holy war. The Hurricanes will be glad to know that in the Bible, the devils eventually lose everything.

After you play that athletic contest, you take off your uniform. But you do not take off this uniform. Paul says, “Put it on and leave it on – permanently.”

Now Paul gets specific about the pieces of armor, as he continues in Ephesians, chapter 6, verses 14 through 17.

### **The belt of truth**

The first thing Paul tells the believer is to strap on is the belt of truth.

Now, you need to get away from the picture in your mind of a sash or a belt like one we might wear today. This belt was actually a leather apron that was strapped at the waist and went down to just below the thighs. It was the foundational piece of armor. In fact, the breastplate attached to it and the sword hung from it.

We have discovered already that the battleground of the enemy relates to the issue of truth.

Satan is called the “father of lies” in John, chapter 8, verse 44.

Paul refers to the deceptive doctrines of demons in I Timothy.

Satan counterfeits the truth with his own followers. In Revelation, chapter 2, verse 9, we are told about the synagogue of Satan. Satan has his own ministers; he has his own false gospel.

All the way back in the garden of Eden, Satan whispered his gospel into the ear of Eve, “If you disobey God and eat that fruit, you will become one of the gods.”

Eve bought it!

In a generation where the truth is set aside for whatever you feel you would like to believe, and in the church where doctrine is set aside in favor of experience, how important is the truth of God's word?

Listen to the Jesus Christ praying, as recorded in John, chapter 17, verse 17,

***[Father] Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.***

Listen to the apostle John as he writes in his second letter, chapter 1, verses 1 through 3,

***The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth, for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us, forever: Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.***

Now many biblical scholars believe that Paul is not only talking about objective truth – the word of God, but subjective truth as well – the integrity and honesty that should be a central part of the believer's life.

In an age where nearly 80% of people recently polled admitted to some form of dishonesty, listen as the apostle John goes on to write in the next verse of II John,

***I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth . . .***

In his third letter, John writes again, in verses 3 and 4,

***For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth. I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.***

The believer who truly understands that life is war and the enemy is alive, holds to the objective truth of God's word and walks in honesty and integrity.

I have read that in Paul's day, the finest pottery was thin. It had a clear color and brought in a very high price. Fine pottery was very fragile, both before and after firing, and this expensive pottery would often crack in the oven. Cracked pottery should have been thrown away, but there were dishonest dealers who were in the habit of filling in the cracks with a hard pearly wax that would blend in with the color of the pottery. This made the cracks practically disappear, and in the shops, customers would not know – unless they took the pottery outside and held it up to the light. In that case, the cracks would show up darker. Honest dealers often advertised their pottery with a sign that said “sine cera,” which meant “without wax”.<sup>ii</sup>

The words “sine cera,” or “sincere,” became a synonym for honesty and integrity, even to this day.

Paul says, if you want to win the battle; if you want to stand against the enemy, make sure you strap on the truth of the word and then, live it out in truthfulness, honesty, and sincerity.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is no excuse for lying or cheating or fudging or deceiving. There is no such thing as a “little white lie” – if it is a lie, it is sin and you are missing the central piece of your armor. You are a casualty, not a victor.

In your community, on your campus, in your business you should be known as a person who tells the truth. If you are not, do us all a favor and do not tell anyone where you go to church.

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<sup>i</sup> Duane A. Garregg, Angels and the New Spirituality (Nashville, TN, Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1995), p. 228.

<sup>ii</sup> John MacArthur, How to Meet the Enemy (Chariot Victor Publishing, 1992), p. 85.