

# Dressed Up to Kneel Down

Angels, Demons and Other Flying Creatures – Part VII

Ephesians 6:14-18

## Introduction

In the first century, when the apostle Paul lived and preached, the belief in the demonic world was rampant among the Jews. It was largely superstitious and fearful. They believed the air was thickly populated by demons and the demons could even enter a person through eating or drinking.

The Egyptians, prior to Paul's day, had already adopted the view that the human body was made of thirty-six parts and a demon could enter and control any one of those parts. They believed that all illnesses were caused by demons. They were constantly configuring incantations to exorcise the demon of deafness, the demon of dumbness, the demon of paralysis, the demons of all sorts of internal aches and pains. They also believed a demon could take away a person's sanity. They developed the extensive medical practice (or malpractice, to be more accurate), of drilling holes in peoples' skulls. I remember watching a documentary in which skulls, dating back to the time of Christ, were discovered that had holes in them. The ancient world believed that in order to get rid of some demons, you needed to bore a hole in someone's skull.

Even the pagan world intuitively knows of and believes in an unseen world. Tribesmen along the Amazon River today, worship evil spirits.

The Bible pulls back the curtain and reveals that unseen world.

Thus far in our study, we have seen glimpses in the Bible of tens of millions of angels worshipping around the throne of God. We have learned that a believer does not have just one angel at work on his

behalf, but the entire host of angelic beings at the beck and call of God for the believer's well being.

We have seen the highest cherub become the fallen angel of light who leads millions of angels to rebel against God and defect from heaven. We have read of Satan's proud intelligence and corrupted beauty.

Is the believer helpless? Is it up to us to listen for the shadows of demon wings? Are we to discover some secret incantation to keep them and their curses from our lives?

We have learned that the believer is safe in Christ. Satan cannot have the soul of a believer; he cannot inhabit a believer; he cannot curse or inhabit objects that bring curses against a believer, for believers are the sanctuary of God.

However, we have been warned. Satan has his schemes and snares by which he and his demons attempt to distract the church and discredit the believer.

The world, the flesh, and the devil are the trinity of evil that wars against the trinity of our holy God. They cannot have our soul, as believers, but they can have our testimony. They will gladly have our purity; they will delight in the loss of our integrity and the collapse of our intimacy. They will welcome our half-hearted worship and service toward the God they hate.

What is the believer to do? Has God left us in the open? Are we sitting ducks? God's Spirit inhabits us, but is there something for us to do, or do we stand idly by and hope for the best?

Ephesians, chapter 6, answers those questions by commanding the believer to dress in special clothing that will protect our minds, our hearts, our testimony, and our effective walk with Christ against the lures of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

## Dressing for Spiritual Success

In Ephesians, chapter 6, we are told to dress as Christian warriors.

### The belt of truth

We are to begin dressing, verse 14a tells us, by strapping on the belt of truth,

***Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, . . .***

The tense of the verb means *you strap it on and you leave it on.*

So, the Christian warrior submits to and looks to the authority of scripture.

On the face of the pulpit of our church are the Latin words, “sola scriptura,” which was the battle cry of the sixteenth century as reformers Calvin, Luther, and Zwingli attempted to reform the corrupted Roman church. “Sola scriptura” became a distinctive of theirs and means “the scriptures alone”. “Sola scriptura” means that the scriptures alone determined doctrine and lifestyle – not church councils or church fathers or church customs. It is the God inspired word that should form the basis for faith and practice.

It was a result of the Reformation that the altar was put to the side and the pulpit placed in the center. It would be the declaration and explanation of the scriptures that would find center stage.

Every Sunday when I mount this platform, I remind myself that what I have to say is meaningless – what God has to say means everything. One of the reasons I have committed my life to teaching through the Bible is that when I explain what the Bible says, I am, in fact, merely delivering what God has already said. It is the word of God which is alive and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12).

I agree with the words of the reformer Martin Luther, who said, over four hundred fifty years ago, “The Bible is like a lion, you don’t need to defend it, you just need to let it loose.”

My passion, from this pulpit, is to let it loose.

The Christian and the Christian church that holds to “sola scriptura” has strapped around its waist, the

belt of truth. Without it, that believer and that church is open and vulnerable to the deceitful doctrines of demons and the snares of Satan.

### The breastplate of righteousness

Paul goes on in verse 14 of Ephesians, chapter 6, to tell the believer to,

***. . . put on the breastplate of righteousness,***

This righteousness is first of all, a gift from God through Christ. We call that the imputed righteousness of Christ that a believer receives at the moment of salvation.

Paul wrote in Philippians, chapter 3, verses 8 and 9,

***More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,***

The Roman soldier had a breastplate that covered the part of his body from the base of his neck to his upper thighs. It was often made of heavy strips of linen and had pieces of metal or bone sewn or hooked to the linen strips. The wealthier, higher ranking soldier would have a breastplate made of molded metal. In addition to other vital organs, the breastplate covered and protected the heart.

The believer’s heart is covered then, as it were, by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Our hearts, though deceitful and wicked, have been covered by the blood of Christ.

Now follow this – we are to fight the enemy, not only on the eternal basis of perfected righteousness, but on the daily basis of practical righteousness through obedience. Perfected righteousness comes through Christ; practical righteousness comes through obedience to Christ.

In other words, as one man wrote, as it relates to the breastplate of righteousness, “Spiritual warfare is [literally] an inner struggle [of the heart] for personal holiness.”<sup>i</sup>

Solomon wrote, in Proverbs, chapter 4, verse 23,

***Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.***

Do you want to know what true spiritual warfare is? It is not binding a demon. It is resisting temptation. That is the battle!

When Jesus Christ began His ministry, He did not go out into the wilderness and bind the territorial demon of Jerusalem; He did not rebuke Satan by the authority of His name, He went out into the wilderness and resisted temptation.

Paul wrote in Romans, chapter 13, verses 12 through 14,

*The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.*

How do you defend yourself in this spiritual warfare? How do you protect yourself? Not by identifying and rebuking demons, but by holy living – shunning evil, refusing to justify sin, refusing to explain away sexual immorality.

Do you want to enter the battle? Then commit to living a life of holiness and you will see what spiritual warfare is all about!

### **The shoes of good news**

For those of you who will pursue holy living, Paul goes on in verse 15 of Ephesians, chapter 6, to say you need a good pair of shoes. He writes,

*and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;*

The word “preparation” is the Greek word “etoimasia,” which means, “readiness or firmness”.

In other words, “Have your feet laced up with the firm, solid truth of the gospel of peace.”

The Roman soldier’s shoes were important – they were considered part of the armor. They were necessary for at least two things.

- First, shoes were necessary for balance; for providing a solid footing.

In the same way, the gospel balances us firmly upon the foundation of truth.

Someone asked a question that I thought was very perceptive. He asked, “Since we’re supposed to test the spirits, and since Satan is a deceiving angel of

light, how will we tell a false teacher or false spirit if they look and sound like the truth?”

The truth of the matter is, with any doctrine of demons or false teachers, eventually they stray from the gospel – they add something to it or take something away from it. They cannot bear the thought that the gospel is Christ crucified, buried, and resurrected.

There are religions that want to keep Christ on the cross. There are religions that like to keep Christ in Mary’s lap as a little baby boy. There are religions that make Christ equal with other prophets who came and went. However, the gospel has Christ no longer on the cross; no longer a little baby, but equal with God, sovereign over all things, majestic, and enthroned in His glorified state.

Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers, in I Corinthians, chapter 15, verse 1,

*Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand,*

The gospel is a pair of shoes that gives you balance as you stand on the truth.

- Secondly, the shoes are necessary, not only for balance, but for progress.

The Romans had embedded in their leather soles, knobs of metal which acted like cleats. They could charge a hill or keep their footing on uneven terrain; they could advance forward against enemy attacks during hand to hand combat.

The soldier did not need cleats if he was retreating. He needed them because he was climbing, advancing – he needed traction. This is like a football player out on the gridiron; cleats help him move the ball downfield against opposing forces.

In case you have never noticed, you do not need cleats if you are sitting in the stands. No one wears cleats in the bleachers. I have seen fans wear football helmets; pay one hundred fifty bucks for a jersey; paint their faces with team colors, but no matter how fanatical or bizarre, I have never seen any fan wearing cleats in the stands – not even once!

You do not wear cleats in the stands; only the players on the field wear them. The field is where the action is; it is where the contest is being waged and the players are the ones who need the proper shoes for balance and progress.

For the believer in the battle, gospel shoes are an imperative.

## The shield of faith

Paul next draws our attention to one of the most fascinating pieces of armor the Romans used in battle. Paul refers to the shield of faith in verse 16 of Ephesians, chapter 6,

*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.*

This explicitly states that Satan is an aggressor. He fires flaming arrows, which could be translated, “fiery darts” or “blazing missiles”.

Paul, in this verse, is referring to a common practice during his day. When an army came against a city in ancient days, they would tip their arrows in pitch, light them, and then, shoot them over the city walls. As soon as those arrows would hit the rooftops of buildings, the pitch would splatter and small fires would be started.

There were two kinds of shields in the Roman army. One was a small round shield, which was worn on the arm of a soldier in hand to hand combat.

There was another kind of shield, called a “thureos” in the Greek, which was four feet tall and two feet wide. It was called “the wall”. That is the word Paul used in this verse. This shield was not for hand to hand combat. It was a shield that the Roman soldier used for three different things. Let me give them to you.

- First, the shield protected the soldier.

When the Roman soldiers were advancing, there were times that the flaming arrows came with such great thickness that they would plant their shields into the ground, get behind them, and wait until the attack was over.

In the same way, in the believer’s life, there are times when all we can do is plant the shield of faith and hide behind it – faith in God’s person, His promises, His providence.

- Secondly, the shield not only protected the soldier, it united the soldiers.

The shield literally unified the army. The Roman army had an interesting concept and it is one of the reasons they were so victorious. The edges of the shields were beveled so that they could be locked into place. You could actually have a row of men with shields that made up a wall of metal, advancing against an army.

- Thirdly, the shield not only protected the soldier and united the soldiers, it reflected the sun.

The shield was basically made out of a large plank of wood. It would be overlaid with strips of leather that had been soaked in water. Thus, if an flaming arrow hit it, the water would extinguish the missile. Then, in the center of the shield, a round piece of brass would be attached. Before going into battle, the soldier would polish that brass so that it shone with the brilliance of a mirror. As he walked into battle, the brass piece would reflect the light of the sun into the eyes of their enemies and distract them.

How wonderful that with this shield of faith, we reflect the light of God’s Son, who is the Light of the world, into the world around us; into the eyes, so to speak, of our enemy.

## The helmet of salvation

Paul continues, in verse 17a of Ephesians, chapter 6, and says,

*And take the helmet of salvation, . . .*

Now, this does not refer to being saved. Paul is not saying that after you put on the shoes, after you put on the belt, after you put on the breastplate, now get saved. That cannot be what he is talking about. You would not have that armor if you were not saved. In fact, you would not be in the army as a soldier of Christ if you were not saved.

A soldier’s helmet protected his head – his mind; his thoughts.

Salvation is that propositional truth that we believe. There are three parts to salvation:

- There is a past salvation; a past work, which we call justification. That has been accomplished.

You were saved when you invited Christ; when you received that gift of eternal life; when He called you to Himself. You were saved and you never need to doubt it. It is accomplished and finished.

- There is a present work of salvation, which we call sanctification. That is continuous.

Let me say this, for every ten people who doubt the past work, whether or not they really are saved, there are a thousand believers who doubt the fact that God is working continuously in their lives right now.

- There is also a future salvation, which we call glorification. That is guaranteed.

This is the three-fold work of salvation. Put this truth on to protect your mind.

### **The sword of the Spirit**

Finally, Paul says, in verse 17b, to,

***. . . take . . . the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.***

The text tells us that we have an offensive weapon. It is not our cleverness; it is not our methods; it is not our incantations, bindings, or rebukes. It is the word of God.

When Jesus Christ went into the wilderness to be tempted, He did not cast anyone down or bind the devil. He was tempted three times and all three times, the first words out of His mouth were, "It is written." He encountered the enemy and used the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Now, the Roman sword was two feet long. It was sharpened on both sides and pointed at the end. The writer of Hebrews refers to this when he says, in chapter 4, verse 12, that,

***. . . the word of God is . . . sharper than any two-edged sword . . .***

That writer was thinking of the atomic bomb of ancient warfare. That was the most powerful thing he could think of. He said God's word is "sharper than any two-edged sword".

The sword is not only the only piece of armor that is offensive, but it is the only piece of armor that comes in contact with the enemy. Remember, it is the only thing capable of advancing against the enemy. And Paul says,

***. . . the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.***

Do you remember when Jesus Christ was tempted? He responded three ways by saying what?

***It is written . . . (Matthew 4)***

When my sons were around six years old, we were at the airport picking up my mother-in-law, who was coming to spend the holidays with us. As we were waiting, soldiers, dressed in fatigues, disembarked from the same plane that she was on. They were an incredible sight, wearing their full uniforms and their boots, with their guns strapped to their sides. These men filed past us, as we were standing right by the door, and my boys were awestruck. The boys stood there watching the soldiers, and one them said, "Dad, there's those army men."

One of the soldiers stopped, looked down at him, and said, "Boy, we're not army, we're marines."

I was tempted to say, "I don't know whose kid this is . . . Go find your parents, son."

These men were prepared for battle, but imagine this scenario with me. These soldiers are fighting a war and they have the best tanks, the fastest planes, and the finest weapons. There is only one problem, however, nothing is loaded! There are no bullets and no bombs. They are just a defensive force. Now, no matter how capable, the best defensive force will eventually break down, unless there is advancement; unless there is ground gained.

The same is true of the Christian army. Paul is implying that the army of Jesus Christ is advancing; gaining ground. We have an offensive strategy and weapon. What is it? It is,

***. . . the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.***

### **Dressed Up to Kneel Down . . . and Pray**

Now, having covered all of this ground with the believer, Paul says that we are, in effect, all dressed up for war. So, what do we do?

Let us notice verse 18 of Ephesians, chapter 6.

***With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,***

Imagine a soldier getting all dressed up in his armor and then, he gets out on the battlefield and kneels down to pray.

Why should we pray?

- First, because we are getting all dressed up to fight things we cannot see by ourselves.
- Secondly, because we are getting all dressed up to fight things we cannot defeat by ourselves.

Paul says, it is possible to fight the battle without the right armor. In fact, it is possible to be a believer and not have the full armor of God. He says to the believer, "Take it up! Put it on!"

However, it is as if Paul tells us, "On your mark, get set, kneel – get all dressed up to pray!"

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to say something to every Christian, and it is something that is backed by this text – the battle is won or lost in private, before it is ever fought in public.

No Christian is exempt from danger – temptation is the enemy of every one of us.

It is possible to face Satan and his attacks ill-equipped, and not be able to resist. God intends the sword to swing and the church to advance. It will only be done by people who will put on the armor and then, do it by means of prayer.

Gary Richmond tells a story, in one of his books, of a young zookeeper named Julie. The zoo had purchased a baby raccoon and it was among Julie's duties to care for him. Playful, cuddly, puppy-like in its antics, it soon won Julie's heart, as well as the hearts of everyone else in that division. Julie could often be seen doing her duties with her cute little raccoon perched on her shoulder. She even named him Bandit.

Gary's experience, however, caused him to worry for Julie. He told her that raccoons go through a glandular change at about twenty-four months of age. After that, they will often, inexplicably, viciously attack their owners. A thirty pound raccoon can do the same kind of damage as a large dog. Over and over again, Gary warned his young friend about her growing pet. She would always listen politely as he explained the coming danger.

Richmond wrote, "I will never forget her answer; it was always the same, 'It will be different for me,' she would say with a smile, as she added, 'Bandit wouldn't hurt me. He just wouldn't.'"

Then Richmond wrote, "Three months after my last warning, Julie underwent plastic surgery for severe facial lacerations sustained when her adult raccoon attacked her for no apparent reason. Bandit was released into the wild."

Sin, too often, comes dressed in an adorable guise. And as we play with it, how easy it is to say, "It will be different for me."

When the Lord taught His disciples to pray, that prayer included the words,

*... Deliver us from evil ... (Matthew 6:13)*

In other words, "Lord, I can handle anything but temptation, and I will admit that. I will get into trouble if left to myself – I'll adopt some sin and say it really won't hurt me; I'll justify compromise and say it's all right for me. Lord, I am admitting that I can't take care of myself. Please protect me from the tempter."

The church at large has gone off on a journey into warfare that lacks biblical justification. They are binding, rebuking, laying hold of, and sending to the abyss all sorts of demonic beings. That only reveals their lack of spiritual understanding, according to Jude, verse 10, and II Peter, chapter 2, verse 12.

And what has happened to the church? The church is more immoral, indistinctive, confused, and ineffective than ever before. The church has become distracted by the enemy.

Ladies and gentlemen, true spiritual warfare is that daily battle for purity, integrity, compassion, holiness, spiritual fruit, character, and love. You are going to fight it every day and every hour of the day.

So, get dressed and kneel down to pray for God's spirit to completely dominate your thinking and your actions; to pray that His word will fill you and flow through you.

That is living with your armor on. That is what James meant when he said, in chapter 4, verse 7,

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

So strap on your armor and do not forget to pray.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 7/22/2001 by Stephen Davey.

© Copyright 2001 Stephen Davey

All rights reserved.

---

<sup>i</sup> John MacArthur Jr., How to Meet the Enemy (Chariot Victor Publishing, 1992), p. 95.