

Notes on Ephesians 6 : 10 – 20 ‘Be dressed for battle’

In June 1989 Billy Graham came for his last visit to London and part of the preparation for this visit Christians were encouraged to be part of ‘Christian Life And Witness’ classes, or CLAWs for short. I remember very clearly the focus of the meetings which was about our wearing the armour of God and the reality of spiritual warfare; you could say it was very 1980’s!! So, when I read the Pete Grieg book on the 24/7 prayer movement it was the first time for a while that I had come across someone writing on the topic of spiritual warfare. This is because I don’t usually read that sort of book, though I did read ‘The Fair Face of Evil’ when preparing for this series, but it has been quite a while since I read it before then. The armour of God is Jesus’ astonishing gift to all of us and we are to dust it off, clean it up, put it on, put it to use, stand together and strategize how we are to use it.

In CS Lewis’ book ‘The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe’, Father Christmas returns to Narnia because Aslan is on the move. No longer is it always winter but never Christmas he comes to give gifts to the children and to the beavers. For the children the gifts are a sword and shield to Peter, bow and arrows to Susan and a dagger and healing cordial to Lucy and they are given these because they are going to have to fight for Narnia. The armour of God is not a picture Paul has pulled out of thin air, or because he happens to be sitting next to a Roman soldier, instead it reflects the patchwork of Old Testament allusions to God as warrior which Paul knew so well. In Isaiah 59 verses 15 – 17 God is described as a warrior, in Isaiah 52 verse 7 he is the herald who announces the coming peace and in Isaiah 11 verses 4 and 5 he is the anointed King who brings peace. The armour of God is God’s own armour he uses to fulfil his plans and purposes, and we are to participate with him in this.

The point of wearing the Armour of God is to learn how to use it, not to merely describe and admire it!! The Belt stands for the truth of who Jesus is. We are to be strong and confident in knowing and loving Jesus. By knowing his truth, we can refute the lies, deceits, hypocrisy and schemes of our enemy. We are to wear the Breastplate of righteousness and know in our hearts that in Jesus the Covenant has been fulfilled. We are to rejoice in being his new creation, forgiven, having the Holy Spirit dwell in us, justified, not condemned and to live the new life given in the Spirit. We wear the hob nailed sandals, the *caligula*, of the Roman soldier to give us grip as we stand because we are sure and secure in the Gospel of Jesus. We’re given stability in life and we are to be ready to speak of the hope, the life, the freedom and the forgiveness we have in the Gospel. We hold onto the Shield of faith which we can hide behind and interlock with each other protecting ourselves from the fiery arrows of the enemy. When we use this shield we hold onto God’s promises, his faithfulness, his plans and purposes, his goodness, his kindness and his love in our lives. We wear the helmet of salvation so that we may think on and immerse ourselves in the awesome salvation we have in Jesus. Because our minds are renewed by Jesus, so we devote our whole lives to live as his disciples, love the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and rejoice in this new perspective we have on life. Finally, we’re to use the Sword of the Spirit, the *Machaira*. This short sword was designed for hand-to-hand combat to help us stand in the Spirit and speak and know the Word of God into our lives. This Word helps us

know the peace which passes all understanding and the assurance within us to refute all the enemy's lies, misinterpretations and to persuade ourselves to stand firm.

What strategies are we then to use in this spiritual battle? Are we to claim in the name of Jesus? Are we to march proclaiming the victory of Jesus? Are we to take authority over the works of the enemy? Are to exorcise? I must admit I have grave suspicions of the legitimacy of some of these strategies and I have a hunch that we are to do the following four strategies for sure. Firstly, we're to obey our Commander-in-Chief in loving God with all that we are and to love our neighbour as ourselves; we're to take up our cross and to follow him; and we're to receive power that we might be his witnesses to the very ends of the earth. Secondly, we are to know that it is Jesus who advances, who takes the ground; it is not us because he is the one who has bound the 'strong man', he is the one who has driven out the prince of world and he is the one who will demolish strongholds. Thirdly, we are, as Paul encourages us to do in verses 18 and 19, to be a people who pray. We are to pray for this town in which we live, to pray for our country, to pray for this world and when we pray, we say, 'Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' Finally, we are to serve and give our lives to Jesus as we serve him here in this church, in our families and in this community. Nigel Wright in concluding his book on facing the enemy encourages us to focus on being a believing Church; a thinking Church; a proclaiming Church; a praying Church; a loving Church; a discerning Church; an authoritative Church; a listening Church and a free Church as the many focussed way of standing in this spiritual battle.

We are in the immunisation season where we wisely choose to protect ourselves from serious illnesses and this is also why we choose to wear the Armour of God. It is the first thing you are to do every day for it not a matter of fashion statement but of life and death – for you and for us as a church – because of the conflict we're all in. We're given the armour to wear not because it is only about a matter of surviving, it is also about us thriving in Jesus. May we all thrive as we put on and wear the Armour of God, for he who is in us, is greater than he who is in the world but more about that next week.