

07 What Can I do When I am Under Spiritual Attack?

We have now looked into the three areas from which we receive spiritual attack: (1) the world, (2) the flesh, and lastly (3) the devil/evil realm. The Bible clearly gives us tools with which to fight the onslaught of these enemies. I think analyzing the problem is the place to start.

The first thing you can do when you believe you're under spiritual attack is to assess and determine as best you can, whether you're just experiencing the results of a broken world or a real attack from spiritual forces. As we discussed, some people blame every set-back, hardship, problem, and hardship on the devil. We learned that the flesh is mentioned in the epistles fifty times whereas the devil is only mentioned ten times. Those are two of our most formidable enemies. Paul tells us that we must do battle against our own flesh (Romans 6) and against the "evil one" (Ephesians 6:10-18). Whether we're waging the war against our own flesh or against the evil realm and/or the world, the strategy of our warfare is the same. Let's turn now to Ephesians chapter 6 and read together:

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, 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. (Ephesians 6:10-12, NASB).



In these verses 10-12 Paul defines the struggle and he gives the overall battle command to be "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." Paul's first sentence reminds us that we will get nowhere unless we are strong in Him, and when we are working only in the power of HIS might. Our own power is no match for the evil realm. Our own power is no match for the crushing weight of the world. We are now well

familiar with James 4:7 which told us to submit to God and resist the devil, promising that he will flee from us when we take our Holy Spirit stand against him. Putting on the whole armor of God, is how we make that stand. That taps us into the power and might of Almighty God! Let's see how that armor is described.

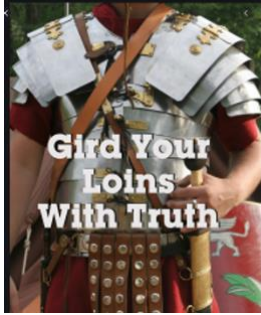
¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED

YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, ¹⁵ and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; ¹⁶in 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. ¹⁷ And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:13-17, NASB).

This gives us a beautiful description of how Paul would have viewed a Roman soldier. It was a picture that all reading the letter could readily imagine. All of the weaponry of this soldier is available to the Christian. We stand firm with the belt of truth around us. Our heart is protected by a breastplate of righteousness. We are firmly grounded and shod with the gospel of peace. A large shield of faith surrounds us, and we firmly have a helmet of salvation protecting our head and our mind. *In our hands we boldly carry God's Word which is the ONLY offensive weapon in our arsenal.* Neither our own argument, our own opinions, nor our own feelings will help us in this battle. Let's look a little closer at each of the weapons available to us.

In verse 12 we saw that the war is spiritual. It is confusing. It is hard sometimes to figure out where the attack is coming from. We can't fight it in the physical realm. We are not given tactics and strategy in the verses that follow verse 12, rather we are given weapons with which to stand. If we are faithful to use these weapons, they WILL bring us victory. The strategy we use includes what Paul calls the "tearing down of strongholds." This is metaphorical for pulling down the things that are in the way of us becoming conformed to the image of Jesus. We literally must put "under siege" things like walls and ramparts that have been built up in our lives. Think of them as very bad habits that have made their way into our psyche.

Strongholds are patterns of conduct and ways we've learned to use our flesh to meet needs that we have. It can be a sinful or just wrong thought you just can't get out of your mind. A friend of mine related to me how she learned at an early age that pouting got her things. She would pout and her mother would give her what she wanted. This may have just been annoying behavior as a toddler, but when she grew up, married, and had children this same pattern of manipulation in her marriage and family were highly destructive. Anger and such deeds of the flesh can become similar strongholds. A person might learn at an early age that an outburst of anger (getting mad) will show their displeasure with events around them, and help them get what they want. This is manipulative. It is wrong. A spouse or children have to walk on eggshells around such an explosive person. These are strongholds. Paul tells the Corinthian church, *"Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses [strongholds]" (2 Corinthians 10:3-4, NASB).*



TRUTH

Paul begins with truth. Why is this? Because Satan is the “Father of Lies” (John 8:44). God hates lies. In fact, deception is an abomination to the Lord (Proverbs 6:16-19). A “lying tongue” is one of the seven things that He hates most. So how is truth to be used? God’s Word is truth. God’s Word speaks truth as to who we are and whose we are. Satan is the accuser (Hebrew: haSatan) and a slanderer (Greek: from devil). The evil realm whispers lies to you. You must be held up by truth. Some translations say we are to have our loins girded with truth. This means that it is the TRUTHS of God with which we must protect our most inward being. Lies are such statements as: “You’re not really saved or you wouldn’t act like this.” “You’re a failure, and God doesn’t love you.” “You are so horrible, you should just give up.” “You’re not the kind of spouse you should be. And not only that, the one you’re with doesn’t love you like you deserved to be loved.” “Your life does not make a difference.” “Your failures are someone else’s fault.” “You’re tired and don’t feel well so it’s okay to treat others around you harshly.” “Life should not be hard, but should be easy.” “Other people are blessed but you are not.” “The things YOU did in your past, and the things YOU participated in are SO BAD that you will always be a nothing!” So, how are these strongholds taken down? What does God say about all of these lies?

When lies come into your mind and attack you, remember what the truth of scripture says. You can say it out loud. “Satan, I am saved. I am God’s child forever. Nothing will snatch me out of His hand” (John 10:28-29). “God’s word says that I may stumble, and I may fall, but I WILL get up again” (Proverbs 24:16). “God is not through working with me. I am a work in progress, and God will not give up on me until He is finished” (Philippians 1:6). “I am convinced that nothing will separate me from the love of God” (Romans 8:38-39).

So, do you get the idea? We can quote these TRUTHS to ourselves when lies are shot at us like fiery darts from our past or our present. We can remind ourselves and tell ourselves what God says about what we’re feeling. The TRUTH is the belt that holds up the armor. The truth is a major defense against lies. The truth is essential to protect our innermost beings.



BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The breastplate shielded the warrior’s heart, lungs, and other vital organs. One arrow here or one stab of sword there and the warrior would lay dead on the field. Someone once told me that there is power in holiness. I believe this. This is not because of works of righteousness that we might do, but because when we are living a holy life, we are living a Holy Spirit filled life. The Bible tells us, “*Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world*” (1 John 4:4b). To avail yourself of that Holy Spirit power, you must be submitted over to Him. This breastplate guards our hearts against the accusations and slander of Satan. It gives us security in our relationship with God.

At salvation, a “breastplate” was issued to each of us. It was designed by God to protect our heart and soul from evil and deception. Our own righteous acts are no match for Satan’s attacks, but on each of our chests is a breastplate of righteousness. We are instructed to “put on” this armor, which implies that we do not automatically have it on all of the time. Putting on the breastplate requires a decision on our part. To put on the breastplate of righteousness, we must first have the belt of truth firmly in place. Because, without Biblical truth, our righteousness will be based on our own attempts to impress ourselves, others, and God. Regardless of our past we are covered in His righteousness. So, PUT IT ON.

Jesus tells us in the sermon on the mount, *“But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.”* (Matthew 6:33, BSB). So, we seek God’s righteousness by first coming to Jesus. Then we make Him our dwelling place (Psalm 91:1). We should delight ourselves in His ways and desire for His ways to become our ways (Psalm 37:4). When God shows us areas that need to be given over to righteousness, we must yield to the Holy Spirit and let Him do a work in our lives. When we leave areas guarded by our own flesh, we leave cracks in our armor that lead to vulnerability to Satan’s attacks. The enemy can get in and do us in!

Righteousness is Holy Spirit motivated intentional living by God’s ways. When we put on God’s righteousness and leave self behind, we think, speak, act, walk, and live in a way that is pleasing to God. There is power in that kind of living. As we walk in the spirit, our lives become conformed to the image of Christ. One of the ways we can make sure that the breastplate stays on our chests is by taking care to not let the world crowd out our intimate walk with Jesus. When the breastplate stays on us, there is power in our lives. Without the breastplate, we become powerless.

We need our breastplate of righteousness in place in order to gain the victory we discussed in 2 Corinthians 10:5: *“We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”* When we quickly reject ideas that are contrary to God and godliness, and instead *“keep our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith”* (Hebrews 12:2), we keep our breastplate securely fastened.



BEING READY SHOD WITH THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

Verse 15 speaks of the preparation of the feet for spiritual conflict. In warfare, sometimes the enemy places dangerous obstacles in the path of advancing soldiers. Those of us who are old enough heard about the horrors in the Vietnam War of minefields and booby traps. Entire roads and fields were planted with bombs to blow off the

legs of American soldiers. The booby traps included pieces of bamboo that were left sticking up with poison on them or infectious diseases. These were so sharp they would go into the footwear of soldiers and when their feet were compromised, they were done in combat.

The idea of the preparation of the gospel of peace as footwear suggests what we need to advance into Satan's territory, aware that there will be traps, with the message of grace so essential to winning souls to Christ. Satan has many obstacles placed in the path to halt the progress of the gospel.

As we walk onto the spiritual battlefield I recall that verse that says, ¹⁶ *"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. (Matthew 10:16, NASB)*. We are told as much as we can to be at peace with all men (Romans 12:18). Being "at peace with all men" never means we compromise the true gospel. We never accept or go after a false gospel. The gospel of peace is simply that Jesus forgives and gives eternal life to any who believe in Him (John 3:16).

The word *readiness* implies constant vigilance. Peter tells us to be "sober and alert." The warrior who intends the outcome to be victory must be prepared. I think of footwear a lot these days. You have to put on the right shoe depending on what you're doing, where you're going etc. Roman soldiers worked in a lot of rocky terrain. To have their feet firmly planted, Roman soldiers would stud their footwear with nails and spikes. These were like cleats on soccer shoes. If the soldier lost his footing, and fell down, it was over. The enemy would step in and give a blow to the head or the heart. Remaining standing was crucial. When we're shod with the gospel of peace, we live with a peaceful understanding that we are ready for any attack that Satan musters against us.

These "peace shoes" that God supplies His warriors have several purposes. They give us grounding in our faith and in Jesus. When Satan attacks with a flaming missile of doubt, such as "If God really loved you, He wouldn't have let this happen," we dig our peace shoes into the grounding of God's Word and reply, *"And we know that God causes all things work together for the good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."* (Romans 8:28, NASB). When the evil one stabs you from behind and says, "Remember what you did?" We dig our footwear in deeper and respond, *"It is written: 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'"* (1 John 1:9, NKJV).

These shoes are not just for standing our ground, but they are also for moving forward. Scripture tells us to leave the past in the past, and move forward. As we move forward, we should always be prepared to give an answer to anyone who asks about the reason we have hope (1 Peter 3:15). Also, when we have "studied to show ourselves approved unto God" (2 Timothy 2:15), we are ready to stand firm against Satan and whatever he brings against us. Next Wednesday, we'll continue looking at the full armor of God. Until then.....STAND FIRM!

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.