

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGES WAGING WAR AGAINST SATAN Eph: 6 – 10 to 20

No other NT book focuses more on the cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan than Ephesians. The spiritual warfare passage is arguably the culminating zenith of the book. The defeated-but-not-yet-subdued Satan and his forces are powerful foes arrayed against Christian marriages. But God has not left his people defenceless. When we apply the spiritual armour to our marriages, we find ample defences to withstand the devil's attacks.

The opening verse commands: "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might" (v. 10) "put on the whole armour of God" The purpose and goal of taking up the divine armour is for Christian marriages to "be able to stand against the schemes of the devil" (v. 11). The plural "schemes" suggests variety of schemes against marriage and Christian families. "The armour of God, provides Christian marriages with everything necessary to resist and stand firm against satan.

➤ **First the belt of truth:**

Putting on the belt of truth means to believe and embrace the truths of Scripture. Also the belt of gospel truth is worn when Christian spouses have an open, honest, truthful relationship. Sometimes the truth will be painful to tell or difficult to receive. Truth telling is necessary, however, to have a one flesh union where husband and wife may stand naked and unashamed before each other. The alternative is to harbour lies and give opportunity to "the father of lies" (John 8:44) to exert his influence in the marriage. Truth-tellers are solid, dependable, trustworthy, commendable, and their marriages will "endure forever" (Prov 12:19).

➤ **The Breastplate of Righteousness:**

The second protection against satanic influence in marriage is to "put on the breastplate of righteousness" (Eph 6:14). Christ's imputed righteousness is at the heart of the gospel so that both spouses know that they do not have "a righteousness of [their] own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith" (Phil 3:8-9). The righteousness of Christ clothes the sinner so that spouses are confident in their standing before God. Putting on the breastplate of righteous necessarily requires putting on righteous living. Christ's righteousness creates a new self that is "created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph 4:24). This means Christian couples are maturing in Christ, speaking the truth, controlling anger, working hard, being pure in speech, forgiving one another, living lives of love and purity. Satan takes advantage of the hypocritical, unrighteous marriage.

➤ **The Shoes of the Readiness of the Gospel:**

Paul describes the third piece of God's armour as "shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace" (v. 15). The gospel is the ground and impetus for mutual forgiveness (4:32), the husband's sacrificial love, and the wife's godly submission. Satan is a murderer (John 8:28) and his desire in his war against Christian marriages is to create chaos, dissent, hatred, adultery, and divorce. He hates Christian marriages and he actively opposes it to hinder the spread of the gospel. Conflicts are inevitable when two imperfect human beings live together. Disputes and disagreements are a part of every Christian marriage but the godly couples guard their marriage from allowing anger to fester giving Satan an opportunity (Eph 4:26)

➤ **The Shield of Faith:**

Christian marriages are exhorted to take up the fourth piece of the divine armour: "In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one" (v. 16). "Faith" is both objective and subjective. Objective faith refers to the doctrines and theology that make up the Christian faith. Marital unity is maintained by embracing the "one faith"

(4:5). Putting on the shield of faith means to clothe the marriage with biblical theology so that the great truths of the Christian faith are known, believed, understood, embraced, and applied in the marriage. Satan ravages Christian marriages through false teaching.

Taking up the shield of faith also means to have a subjective Christ-directed faith. Every marriage will face times of trial, difficulty, disappointment, and sorrow. Satan will exploit these situations and attempt to persuade the spouses to doubt or mistrust Christ's care and kindness. The shield of faith gives the husband and wife a strong resolve to trust the Saviour, no matter what difficulties may come into the life of the marriage. Faith resists Satan, makes him flee (Jas 4:7), and makes the marriage strong in the Lord.

➤ **The Helmet of Salvation:**

Christian spouses are encouraged to "take the helmet of salvation" (Eph 6:17). The helmet of salvation resists Satan's schemes and fiery darts by reminding the Christian couple of four eternal truths. First, salvation means that sin is not the master of the marriage. The salvation Christ secured for Christian spouses set them free from the tyranny of sin so that sinful impulses no longer need be obeyed (Rom 6:8-14). Second, salvation encourages Christian marriages to remember that true satisfaction is found only in Christ. Third, salvation gives hope: "But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation" (1 Thess 5:18). "Hope" in Scripture refers to confident assurance and trust. Christian marriages, like all marriages in a fallen world, will suffer sickness, financial woes, disobedient children coupled with the added pressures of living in a culture bold in its hatred of Christ and his people. The hope of salvation allows the Christian marriage to rise above these pain of despair and glorify Christ (Hab 3:17-19). Fourth, salvation points the Christian couple to the glorious future awaiting them in Christ. The helmet of salvation is a vital piece of the Christian armour until Christ replaces it with a crown.

➤ **The Sword of the Word:**

The last piece of divine armour is the need for Christian marriages to take up "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (6:17). Jesus gives the greatest example of taking up the sword of the Spirit as Satan tempted him (Matt 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13). Satan tempted Jesus but Jesus refused to argue with Satan, reason with him, or consider what he said. Jesus, the perfectly holy Son of God, resisted Satan by wielding Scripture (Matt 4:4, 7, 10) so that "the devil left him" (v. 11) which he will always do when the sword is unsheathed. A Word-saturated marriage is of vital importance to combat Satan's schemes. The faithful husband and wife ought to unfurl the Word of God in all circumstances of marital life. The marriage that wields the sword of the Lord will resist satanic overtures and will be strong in the Lord.

➤ **Prayer**

Finally, the armour of the Lord is made active through prayer. The Christian couple is to pray "at all times, in the Spirit" which suggests they "will be in constant prayer in preparation for the battle as well as in the engagement itself." Christian couples pray "in the Spirit" when their requests match the desires of the Spirit, such as putting on the divine armour. Christian couples ought to pray "with all prayer and supplication" which show the vital importance of prayer. The never-ending satanic war against marriage ought to impel Christian couples to "keep alert with all perseverance" in prayer.

As the couple prays for themselves in their war against Satan, so they remind themselves to pray for other marriages to resist Satan and remain strong in the Lord.

In conclusion, Christian marriages are engaged in spiritual warfare. God, however, has provided his own mighty panoply so that Christian marriages may resist satanic onslaughts.