

Who Does the Fighting?

Text: Ephesians 6:10-17

Hymn: "From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee" (LSB 607)

*Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to
withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.
Galatians 6:13*

Dr. Martin Luther writes concerning Ephesians 6:

"Paul acts like a pious and true field marshal who gives a battlefield speech to his people, who are arranged in battle formation and admonishes them to stand fast and defend themselves boldly and confidently; so, it may well be called an army speech for Christians, for he shows here that those who are baptized into Christ and would cling to Him must and should be warriors and must always be armed with their weapons and armor."

He says a lot here and seldom do we think of ourselves in that way. Do we think of ourselves as Christians armed and fighting all the time? But that's what Paul is saying. That's what Martin Luther was saying. There's quite a bit of misunderstanding about this. So we will talk about this special role of the Christian.

When we read this, we often take it to mean that it's our job to take up the armor of God and put it on and fight. Now sometimes the battle is easy and sometimes it's more difficult. Sometimes we win and sometimes we lose. But we think as Christians we are now going to take it to Satan. Hardly! That view is flawed in several ways.

First, we can't defeat Satan. "The devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). "On earth is not his equal" (LSB 656).

Second, when have we ever been known to win a spiritual battle ourselves? "Apart from me," Jesus says, "you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

And, third, our pride sets us up for a great fall. We think we can do the fighting. We think we fight for Jesus in this world. But “let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor 10:12). Strong Christians are the most spiritually vulnerable, in the same way a courageous soldier is, wandering off into dangers that he ought to keep well away from.

The other place where we get it all wrong is the identity of the enemy. We often think that the enemy is none other than our fellow human beings. Those that treat us badly. Those that treat others badly or unfairly with injustice. We look at people as the enemy, whether as individuals or as agents of institutions that do things to us that we don't like—the government or the government of some other place, this or that group of philosophers or scientists, the school, the insurance company. We view these people as the enemy. But that's not what Paul says.

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (v 12). The enemy is not our fellow human beings. People come, people go. The enemy is Satan and the demonic forces of evil. Human beings can become the victims and the tools of Satan and his evil. But he's the real enemy. Sometimes we fall into sin and evil and unknowingly become the tools of Satan, the victims of Satan to bring evil into the lives of others. But let us always remember: The real enemy is Satan. And not one another.

So, we know the enemy. We know we can't fight. What about this armor? Well, the Roman armor as we see it listed—belt, breastplate, shoes, shield, helmet—these are all defensive weapons. Each piece of the armor is a defensive weapon. There are

no offensive weapons. Even the sword that is mentioned, we're told that it's the short sword in the Roman's armor. And that was a defensive weapon. The long sword was the offensive weapon. But no offensive weapons here. Only defensive weapons.

So we're clothed in defensive weapons, and we can't fight. Who's doing the fighting? God is. God is doing the fighting for us. You remember when the children of Israel were backed up against the Red Sea? The Red Sea on one side, the Egyptian army on the other? And what did God say to his people? "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent" (Ex 14:13-14).

And what does he say to us as Christians when we are confronted with Satan and the demonic forces? "Stand firm." Stand firm in the defensive armor that He has given us, because God is going to fight for us just as He did for the children of Israel. He is doing the fighting. He sent His Son, clothed Him in the armor of God, the power of God, to defeat Satan. And that's exactly what He was doing on the Cross of Calvary. He was fighting Satan for us, in our behalf, because we couldn't defeat him. He battled Satan at the cross and He defeated him and all his evil and all his demonic forces.

And now the same armor that was given to Christ is given to us. It says, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal 3:27). The day you were baptized, you received the armor. You were clothed with the armor of God. And you stand firm in the victory of Jesus Christ.

And you benefit from His victory. The elimination of all the offensive weapons teaches us that the victory has already been achieved and that the Christian need only be defended from the last final fading assaults of an already defeated foe. We are

clothed in the power of God, the victory of Jesus Christ, the armor of God, and we stand firm because our God fought for us and will continue to fight for us and defend us until we are safely with Him.

You remember when David offered to fight Goliath? That's a good analogy of us trying to fighting Satan. In fact, as Pastor Douthwaite pointed out in a sermon several years ago, Goliath is described as clothed in "scale armor"—scales, serpent, devil. Goliath is a picture of Satan! If you'll remember, David did not use Saul's armor. It was too heavy and too unwieldy. He went out with a slingshot. But not just a slingshot. He went out with something else. He was clothed in the power of God. "The battle is the LORD's," David said, "and he will [Goliath] into our hand" (1 Sam 17:47). It is the power of God, the armor of God, that got him the victory so that he defeated Goliath. God defeated Goliath. And God will defeat Satan for us, with his armor of truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and the word of God.

We have the victory. It's been given to us. It was given to you the day you were baptized and you were clothed in the armor and the power of God. The battle is fierce and it is to the death. Someone will be slain at the end of it. But you need not tremble. A mighty fortress is our God. Stand firm. Stand firm against the assaults and the demonic forces. They are all washed up. They are flailing in the wind. The victory is already won. And it's yours.

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