

Timothy Ministries News & Insight

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In our strategic time, it's vital that we understand seven things about the Armor of God described in Ephesians 6.10-20:

(1) **The battle that Paul speaks of is real.** The battle involves real casualties and real victories. Paul uses material armor as a metaphor for spiritual armor, but he does not use the word *battle* as a metaphor for something else.

(2) **The darkness Paul felt was demonic (Eph 6.12).** Paul lived during a demonic backlash to the coming of Jesus and the outpouring of God's Spirit. The palpable darkness of our day may well have to do with an agitation in the spiritual realm due to the *soon return* of Jesus. The king of the demon army is "the father of lies" (John 8.44), and so it should not surprise us that the battle is a fight against false arguments and pretentious opinions (2 Corinthians 10.3-5). Satan's minions have brought about a unique situation in human history: There has always been moral darkness in the world, but for the first time, human culture is now *redefining* darkness as light.

(3) **The battle is "our battle" (Eph 6.12)** Yes, the battle is fought and won by the power of God's Spirit (cf. Zechariah 4.6), and on the basis of

Christ's redemptive work, but it is a battle for *our* hearts and minds and for the hearts and minds of our loved ones and neighbors. We are unavoidably in the midst of the battle and God has called us to join the fight.

(4) **The armor is the armor that Jesus wore.** The phrase, "the armor of God," can be understood in two ways:

- a. the armor that God produced, or
- b. the armor that God owns.

(Technically, the Greek phrase is either a genitive of source/origin or a genitive of possession/ownership.) We have often assumed that the armor of God is simply the armor that

He has produced and made available to us (option a.). However, in writing the Ephesians 6 passage, Paul quoted (or alluded to) Isaiah 11.5; 52.7; 59.17; Nahum 1.15 and the Wisdom of Solomon 5.19. All of these passages refer to the Messiah going forth to battle to bring about salvation! We must realize, therefore, that as King Saul foolishly tried to clothe young David with ineffective material armor (1Samuel 17.38-39), King Jesus wisely clothes us in the very armor He used so effectively in His earthly ministry.

(5) **Paul's message (and the primary application of Eph 6.10-20) was for the corporate body.** That the armor is the armor Jesus wore, tells us that there is an individual application of the Armor-of-God passage for each of us. Nevertheless, the corporate plural words throughout the passage (more visible in the Greek text), show that Paul urged the Ephesian church to put on the armor *corporately*. To truly understand the passage, we must ask ourselves, "What does it look like for a congregation, *as a congregation*, to put on the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and to take up the sword of the Spirit?"

Understanding the armor as the armor of Jesus will help us answer the question of corporate application. For example, we have often interpreted the shield of faith as our personal faith in Jesus for salvation. However, that is not the shield that Jesus used. The Greek word describing the shield should be translated *faithfulness* rather than *faith*. Jesus used a shield of *faithfulness* to the Father's character and agenda, such that no "flaming arrow" of accusation could stop Him. Likewise, a congregation who takes up the shield of *faithfulness* to God and to one another, will not be destroyed by slander from without nor gossip from within.

(6) **The "sword of the Spirit" (Eph 6.17) is primarily wielded by "prayer and petition" (Eph 6.18).** The grammatical structure of the underlying Greek text of these verses implies that prayer "at all times in the Spirit" is how we use the sword of God's word in the battle against false ideas and beliefs. It's important to remember that we do not use this sword to stab or cut people, but to fend off falsehoods that are zooming toward people's minds and to cut off lies that have attached to their hearts. We must do this for one another in our congregations in up-close and personal prayer.

(7) **Paul's exhortation to "Stand" (Eph 6.14) implies that we have won territory.** Hallelujah! The reason to put on the armor is hold the ground God has given us, and to not allow the enemy to push us backward. We must **stand firm** on the territory we have gained for God's kingdom in our own fellowships, in our own neighborhoods and in our own character. Amen! As congregations, let us strengthen our resolve — by the grace of God — to stand firm for the Way, the Truth and the Life in this "evil day."

❖ Roderick Graciano



Medical Evangelism Miracles In Myanmar

Timothy Ministries is honored to serve as a funding gateway for the medical evangelism missions planned and led by our dear friends, Dan and Rosanne Thompson. The Thompsons and their crack team of Christian co-workers (including fellow medical professionals and other skilled ministers) have just returned from another mission to the needy nation of Myanmar (formerly Burma). Once again, God showed His favor on this work.

Dan and Rosanne report that one planned clinic location was closed to them by the government because of military action in the area, and they were refused a permit to work in a second location. However, "we finally secured a location in Pyin Oo Lwin where the pastors have been frequently jailed and harassed because of their faith. During the first day of clinic many Buddhists prayed to receive Jesus and many healings occurred — vision restored, hearing improved, pains relieved.... Seventy-one percent of the unbelievers seen in the clinics during this trip prayed to receive Jesus. We know that getting to this location was God's plan after all. When one road is shut, God is directing to another more strategic place (Acts 16:6-10)."