

EPHESIANS: GOD'S GLORY IN THE CHURCH (study 9)

A Soldier's Spiritual Suit

There is nothing that is more urgently important for all who claim the name of Christian, than to grasp and to understand the teaching of this particular section of Scripture. – D.M. Lloyd-Jones The Christian Soldier, p. 11

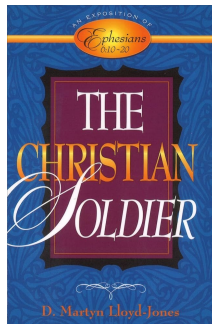
Study 9a: WHAT are WE WEARING to the WAR? (6:10-13)

6:10-11 Is the Lord's strength and power an automatic possession of Christians? (Joshua 1:1-9)

He, therefore, who rushes into this conflict without thinking of Christ, without putting his trust in him, and without continually looking to him for strength ... deriving all life and vigour from him, is demented ... He has not strength even to reach the field. ... Instead of relying on the arms which God has provided, men have always been disposed to trust to those which they provide for themselves or which have been prescribed by others. Seclusion from the world (i.e. flight rather than conflict), ascetic and ritual observances, invocation of saints and angels, and especially, celibacy, voluntary poverty, and monastic obedience, constitute the panoply which false religion has substituted for the armour of God. [Hodge 374,375]

6:12 Why cannot we take lightly our spiritual need? (cf. Luke 14:25-35)

... there will be no cessation of hostilities, not even a temporary truce or cease-fire, until the end of our life or of history when the peace of heaven is attained ... the better manuscripts have an expression which should be translated not "finally", introducing the conclusion, but "henceforward" meaning "for the remaining time". If this is correct, then the apostle is indicating that the whole of the interim period between the Lord's two comings is to be characterized by conflict. The peace which God has made through Christ's cross is to be experienced only in the midst of a **relentless struggle against evil**. And for this the strength of the Lord and the armour of God are **indispensable**. [Stott 262, emphasis added]



6:13 How may we be deceived by past and present victories? (cf. Job 1-3 -- Job was "righteous" (1:8), but was he ready?)

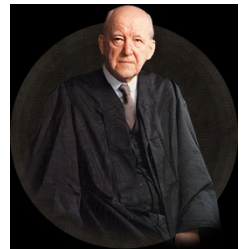
The positive exercise of Christian graces tends to weaken the force of temptation.

"The positive exercise of Christian graces tends to weaken the force of temptation. A mind occupied with these has no room for it." – Alexander Maclaren

A mind occupied with these has no room for it. Higher tastes are developed which makes the poison sweetness of evil unsavoury, and just as the Israelites hungered for the strong, coarse-smelling leeks and garlic of Egypt, and therefore loathed "this light bread," so they whose palates have been accustomed to manna will have little taste for leeks and garlic. The mental and spiritual activity involved in the habitual exercise of Christian virtues will go far to make the soul unassailable by evil. A man, busily occupied, as the Apostle would have us to be, may be tempted by the devil, though less frequently the more he is thus occupied; but one who has no such occupations and interests tempts the devil ... It is possible to become so accustomed to the calm delights of goodness, that it would need a moral miracle to make a man fall into sin. [Maclaren 340]

Beware psychological solutions for spiritual problems

Christianity is not a form of psychology. You do not just walk along the road saying, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might", using it as some kind of incantation ... That is not Christianity at all! It is true of the cults, of course; it is the psychological method. You repeat the phrases such as, "Every day, and in every way, I am getting better and better." ... Up to a point it works, but only up to a point. But in any case, as I say, it is not the Christian message. So often we are in danger of abusing the Scriptures in this way. We use them as mere phrases in that manner, or light heartedly we sing our hymns, and we feel better for the time being. But the question is, How do we stand up to temptations ...? When you turn Scripture into a drug, into something which gives you a temporary relief without your knowing why or how, the effect does not last. It gives a temporary feeling of exhilaration, but fails you when you are in the struggle and in the heat of the battle. [D.M. Lloyd-Jones 14,15]



Study 9b: ARE YOU COMPLETELY PROTECTED? (6:14-16)

6:14,15 Who will STAND in the war, and what is our secret of balance, stability and mobility? (Rev. 6:12-17)

Let not any one imagine that he is prepared to withstand the assaults of the powers of darkness, if his mind is stored with his own theories or with the speculations of other men. Nothing but the truth of God clearly understood and cordially embraced will enable him to keep his feet for a moment ... Truth alone, as abiding in the mind in the form of divine knowledge, can give strength or confidence even in the ordinary conflicts of the Christian life, much more in any really "evil day." [Hodge 383]

... mark this, unless you as a Christian keep a good conscience in regard to practical living, you will never be able to defeat your foe. When the devil comes against you and you know there is some hidden sin in your life, you will go down, you will not be able to stand against him. How many a one has failed when Satan made a tremendous assault upon him, and people said, "Wasn't it sad? -- such a failure and coming so suddenly." But it was not suddenly, for there had been an undermining going on weeks and months and perhaps years, little unrighteousnesses indulged in here and there, unholy thoughts, wicked things going on that were not dealt with in the presence of God; and when the foe came there was an exposed breast because righteousness had not been put on as the breastplate. [Ironside 322]

It is the counsel of despair to tell a man to put on that breastplate, and to leave him in doubt where he is to find it, or whether he has to hammer it together by his own

efforts before he can put it on. There is no more profitable expenditure of breath than the cry to men, Be good! Be good! Moral teaching without Gospel preaching is little better than a waste of breath. [Maclaren 352]

6:16 How large is your shield? (Matt. 17:14-20)

A hand that clings to a rock while a swollen flood rushes past needs to perpetually be tightening its grip, else the man will be swept away; and the present salvation, and, still more, the hope of a future salvation, are not ours on any other terms than a continual repetition of the initial act by which we first received them ... If our present experience yields no sign of growing conformity to the image of our Saviour, there is only too abundant reason for doubting whether we have experienced a past salvation or have any right to anticipate a perfect future salvation. [Maclaren 372]

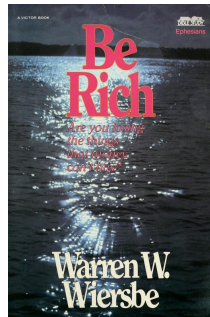
Study 9c: TAKING TERRITORY from the ENEMY (6:17-24)

6:17 When the believer (or church) is in retreat, what is inevitably the major problem? (Isa. 11:4; 49:2; Hos. 6:5)

That which adorns and protects the Christian, which enables him to hold up his head with confidence and joy, is the fact that he is saved. [Hodge 387,388]

So many Christians today are giving in to their feelings. They say, "I don't feel like praying or reading God's Word today." But this is when we need most to pray and read God's Word. Others say, "I don't feel like going to church." But these are the times when we need to be with God's people. [Wiersbe 76]

Our Lord promised to give to his disciples a word and wisdom which all their adversaries should not be able to gainsay or resist ... [the Word of God] puts to flight all the powers of darkness. The Christian finds this to be true in his individual experience. It dissipates his doubts; it drives away his fears; it delivers him from the power of Satan. It is also the experience of the church collective. All her triumphs over sin and error have been effected by the word of God. So long as she uses this and relies on it alone, she goes on conquering; but when any thing else, be it reason, science, tradition, or the commandments of men, is allowed to take its place or share its office, then the church, or the Christian, is at the mercy of the adversary. [Hodge 389]



6:18 What is another cause of feebleness in the church? (Gal. 5:16; Eph. 2:2,10; 4:1,17; 5:2,8,15)

It is not enough for the Christian soldier to know the Enemy and to put on the equipment. Complete knowledge of the Enemy and the best equipment in the world are worthless unless the soldier possesses the energy necessary to face the Enemy and to use the equipment. [Wiersbe 88]

6:19,20 A lesson: What DOESN'T Paul request prayer for?

Restraining prayer, we cease to fight; Prayer keeps the Christian's armor bright; And Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees. -- William Cowper, [in Wiersbe 89]

6:21,22 Considering the later history of Ephesus, how is Paul's encouragement ironic? (Rev.2:1-7)

The temptations Jesus faced and conquered were much more severe than the one

Adam succumbed to. For example, Adam was tempted in a beautiful garden, while the Lord Jesus Christ, the second Adam, was tempted in a barren wilderness. The first Adam had every kind of food at his fingertips, yet he deliberately chose to eat the one fruit that God had forbidden. On the other hand, the second Adam had not eaten in 40 days. While the first Adam failed to resist a small temptation, plunging the entire human race into sin and death, the last Adam succeeded in living a sinless life ... [Wiersbe 101]

No shortcuts to true spirituality

There is no doubt but that the most unhappy and discouraged Christians today are those who do not exercise their senses with respect to this Word of God. We cannot live on snippets in the spiritual realm. We have to get down to these profound truths of the Scripture; we have to make time to read them and to read books about them.

The trouble today, as it has been for so many years, is that Christian people have not been reading their Scriptures, not troubling to understand them ... But our forefathers, who worked much harder, and for much longer hours, and for much smaller wages, found the time. Those men used to read their Scriptures and study them. They generally bought a Bible which had a commentary at the bottom of each page, and they studied it and spent time with it. They also read other books which helped them to understand the Scriptures ... That was the secret of the Protestant martyrs. It was the secret likewise of the Covenanters in Scotland in the seventeenth century ... they ceased to be babes and became mighty, strong men ... We do not sit back and "just look to Jesus" to do it all for us. That is a false doctrine: I do not hesitate to use such a term ... It will not happen to us automatically; there are no short-cuts in the Christian life ... The Christian Church today is tending to live in the realm of first principles only. People seem to think that nothing matters but evangelism, and so the Church herself becomes weaker instead of stronger. The way to evangelize, ultimately, is to build up the Church. If every member of the Christian Church were adult, were strong, were able to take strong meat, and to teach others, you would find that the world would be evangelized in a way we have never known. It is you and I who are to do this. We are not to sit back in crowds and let one or two do everything. We are all meant to be teachers, every one of us ... [Lloyd-Jones 89,90]

"We are all meant to be teachers, every one of us ..."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barclay, William *Ephesians (Daily Study Bible)*
Calvin, John *Commentary on Ephesians*
Chafer, Lewis Sperry *The Ephesian Letter: Doctrinally Considered*
Dale, R.W. *The Epistle to the Ephesians: Its Doctrine and Ethics*
Hodge, Charles *Commentary on Ephesians*
Ironside, Harry *In the Heavens*
Lloyd-Jones, D. Martyn *The Christian Soldier*
Maclaren, Alexander *Expositions: Ephesians*
Moule, Handley *Ephesian Studies*
Rainsford, Marcus *The Mystery of His Will*
Robinson, J. Armitage *St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*
Stott, John R.W. *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*
Wiersbe, Warren *Be Rich (Ephesians)*