



Thank goodness these children put on the armor of God! Jimmy and Kate are protected with their breastplate of righteousness and Caleb is bearing his shield of faith. Caleb Mickelsen I sin the read wearing a helmet of salvation that is obviously too small for him.

One of these sets was ours that we picked up at a garage sale somewhere. All kids love armor and sword fights. Hollywood loves them also which is why every Narnia movie or Tolkien adaptation for the movie screen

takes a battle that lasts five pages in the book and turn it into half of the movie. Imagine if Hollywood was clued into this unseen battle that is being waged every minute of every day. They would certainly ruin the whole thing for sure. But frankly, I am not sure that the Hollywood writers would ruin this battle against the demonic world any more than Christians already do. I have heard this passage ruined in countless ways by preachers and Christian talking heads.

First, let's read this passage together.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 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. 13 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. 14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. 16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; 17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, 18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, 19 and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

1. Who is my enemy?

You can't a problem or treat any disease unless you first have a proper diagnosis. If my starter is dead but I put a new battery in my car, it still won't run. If I take antacid for my stomach ache but I actually have cancer, I haven't solved anything. Before we can put on the armor of God we must first have a proper understanding of the problem. Therefore, who is our enemy?

- People are not our enemy

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood. I think this is hard idea to grasp a hold of. Battles and wars are always fought against other people and other nations full of flesh and blood people. By all accounts, it would appear that other people are our enemy. Communism is obviously a Satanic idea hoisted upon hundreds of millions of people. Even though Kermit Gosnell was only convicted of three counts of murder, we know that he took the lives of thousands of helpless babies. It is easier to see that Satan was in control of this man.

It's a little easier when the issue is much larger but more difficult in simpler cases. For example, if your child is bullied at school, in what sense is this *not* a battle against flesh and blood? What about the conflict I am having with that guy at work? Do I blame him or should I blame Satan? Satan does have influence over much of the world and probably outright controls countless people. However, men and women also have free will and are responsible for their own sinful actions.

This naturally forces us to ask the question: Did the devil make me do it? Some of you are old enough to remember the Flip Wilson show. He became famous for one character who always [blamed the devil](#) for her troubles. If we wrestle against *the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places* and **not** against flesh and blood, isn't it OK to say that "the devil made me do it"? Is that what Paul is driving at here?

- Satan has schemes and strategies

We are told that the armor of God enables us to *stand against the schemes of the devil* so we need to know something about the strategy of Satan. There are three main strategies of Satan. He is the Deceiver, the Accuser and the Destroyer.

Deceiver

It's hard to say which is his chief strategy but if I had to choose, I would say it is deception. This was his strategy with Eve in the garden. The deception of Eve is powerful due to its subtlety. All that was needed was an injection of doubt. "Did God really say?"

Jesus instructed us about this strategy of Satan. *You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.* (John 8:44)

The most destructive thing about being deceived is that we don't know when we are deceived. We don't intentionally believe lies. We do not purposely build the foundation of our lives on lies. In addition to believing these lies, we also become a sort of disciple of Satan when we teach these lies to others. The best way to win any kind of skirmish on the battlefield is to be skilled at deception.



Is anyone familiar with Operation Fortitude? Fortitude was the military operation which served as a deception for the Normandy Beach landing. And it worked! Operation Fortitude was so successful that Adolf Hitler kept his panzer units away from Normandy which helped immensely with the success of the Allied invasion.

Satan's brilliant strategies make Operation Fortitude look like a backyard game of hide and seek. He employs deception at every turn and he is so effective that most of

the time we never realize that we have been deceived.

Blaise Pascal was a committed believer and master mathematician. Listen to this simple insight into human nature.

"All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. They will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves."¹

Even suicide, Pascal wrote, was a means to a happier end because the misery of depression was can be so great that only death can relieve it. This is another way that Satan deceives us. His evil schemes don't appear as evil to us, at least not at first. When we live out his evil schemes, these are the very thing which makes us happy. We are happy and content doing his will when we think we are doing our will or even God's will.

Accuser

Revelation 12:10 is the most clear verse on this strategy. *And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. In this verse, Satan is actually accusing us before God, the same way he did with Job. Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face" (Job 1:9-11).*

His accusations didn't work with Job and they don't work with us. Satan cannot make accusations before the Lord **about** us but he can make them **to** us. Of what does Satan accuse us? The list is endless and will be different for each person but there are similarities. If he can't deceive us into happily doing his will, he will accuse us of not being saved. He whisper a continual, quiet accusation—"God will never accept you. You are not good enough." You can see how deception and accusation go hand in hand. If he can't lie his way into making us happily do his will he will lie to us even when we are doing God's will. If we follow God

Destroyer

Rev. 9:11—*They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon.*

1 Peter 5:8—*Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

Satan's greater purpose is not to deceive and accuse us but to destroy us. Deception and accusation are only a means to an end. He desires to destroy and devour all whom he can. But with all of his schemes and strategies, it's important to remember that...

- Satan is not all powerful

All of the misunderstandings about spiritual warfare fit into two basic categories—assigning Satan either too much or too little power. Christians assign Satan too much power when they think that there is a "demon behind every bush." Some people believe that every time they get sick or every time something bad happens to them it is because a demon is attacking them. Now it may be the case that a demon has caused your sickness but that can only happen if God has allowed it to happen. Job suffered mightily at the hands of Satan but the evil one was not permitted to go one inch beyond what God sovereignly permitted.

If God has allowed a sickness, how should we proceed? Should we cast out the demon of strep throat? Should we pray against the demon of migraines? If God has permitted it, why in the world would I talk to Satan about it? All spiritual warfare should begin with James 4:7—*Submit*

yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. “Resisting the devil” is not possible unless one is first submitted to God. Spiritual warfare does not begin with Satan but with God. As we will see later, the process of putting on the full armor of God is a process of submitting ourselves to God. As you will see, putting on the armor of God is nothing mysterious or out of the ordinary. As I said last week, your degree of success in this battle is directly proportional to the amount of time you spend reading, meditating and applying the word of God. Next Sunday we will see how this works out in our daily lives.

- But he is the ruler of this world

Satan is not all powerful but he is the ruler of this world. The opposite error is to think too little of the demonic realm and do little to nothing as a result. Paul will not allow such a position. *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 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.*

Does that sound like Paul took the wicked and powerful armies of Satan for granted? There are flaming arrows in this fight. In the days before ICBM’s—Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles—arrows were the longest range weapons available to man. An arrow can be shot quite far but the essence of this spiritual battle is what Paul calls “wrestling.” *We wrestle not against flesh and blood.* The word for “wrestle” describes a hand to hand combat.

The reformer, Martin Luther, captured the nature of our enemy in his classic hymn, *A Mighty Fortress is Our God.*

For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great
And armed with cruel hate
On earth is not his equal

He is the prince of the power of the air, as Ephesians² states. He is never to be taken lightly or dismissed as having little effect. Our second main point seems almost redundant by now.

2. Why do I need the armor of God?

If you have been paying attention up until this point—and I know you all have—you should know why we need to be daily wearing the armor of God. But let me spell out some reasons.

- The armor of God is indispensable to the Christian life

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.

Can you fight this battle without the armor of God? Like all of the Christian life, there is a beautiful co-laboring between the Lord and us. He enters into our struggle and fights for us but only when we invite him to do so. Can God fight this spiritual battle without you? I would never say that he can’t, but I can say that he usually doesn’t. It’s not like driving a car without a seatbelt or riding a motorcycle without a helmet. Even though the possibility of death, disfigurement and disability are much more likely without these safety measures, you might get

away without these protective measures your entire life. But without the armor of God, you cannot stand up to the attacks of the evil realm. You absolutely must have the armor of God.

But what if I fail to put it on? What then? Will Satan be able to devour and destroy me? If I am saved, I won't perish, but I will be forever part of the walking wounded. No one can completely avoid the flaming arrows of the devil. But even then, for the godly person, there is always a way of rescue.

In my devotions this week I read from Psalm 32 and was reminded of a key attribute of a godly person. See if you can pick it out.

For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;

my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah

I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity;

I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,"

and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah

Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.

A godly person is one who confesses their sin. A godly person cries out to the Lord and says, "I've been hit!" a godly person is not without sin but I sin the habit of confessing sin. This is a powerful antidote to spiritual attacks.

John Newton, former slave trader, knew a thing or two about being attacked by the enemy. In an ironic twist, he himself became a slave for a brief time in western Africa. His personal suffering helped him become a pastor with the true heart of a shepherd. Listen to this personal letter he wrote to one of his church members who was struggling.

His power likewise, in maintaining his own work notwithstanding our infirmities, temptations, and enemies, is hereby displayed in the clearest light; his strength is manifested in our weakness.

Satan likewise is more remarkably disappointed and put to shame, when he finds bounds set to his rage and policy, beyond which he cannot pass; and that those in whom he finds so much to work upon, and over whom he so often prevails for a season, escape at last out of his hands. He casts them down, but they are raised again; he wounds them, but they are healed; he obtains his desire to sift them as wheat, but the prayer of their great Advocate prevails for the maintenance of their faith.

In the battle against the powers of darkness, know for certain that we have confession and the eternal Advocate fighting for our faith.

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¹ PENSÉES ("THOUGHTS") by Blaise Pascal, SECTION VII: MORALITY AND DOCTRINE 1660, translated by W. F. Trotter.

² *You once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience — among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh (Ephesians 2:2-3).*