



THE ARMOR: YES. ALL OF IT!

By Carl Carmody
Editor Challenge

Over the next few months, I want to look at Ephesians 6, *The armor of God*. We live in a time of moral and ethical relativism; a time when any absolutes are considered intolerant and outmoded because we live in an enlightened age. Even more sinister is the reversal of what is good and what is evil. Isaiah 5:20-21, clearly addresses this issue, *"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!"*

So how does a Christian manage to survive and keep a vital relationship with the Lord, in an environment that is less than conducive to spiritual growth?

In the book of Ephesians, Paul covers a whole gamut of issues relating to our Christian walk. The subject matter starts with our blessings in Christ. In fact, the phrase 'in Christ' is a constantly recurring expression. So walking consistently in Christ Jesus is the key to surviving in an ever-increasing secular environment.

Paul then talks about peace in Christ, walking in the Spirit, equipping of the saints, sound doctrine, marriage and family. I think it highly significant that Paul leaves it to the final chapter to indicate how we can achieve all the things he has so passionately pointed to.

First, we must see that we can resist the world only in Christ. The world is the system of values, actions and attitudes that so aggressively opposes our Christian walk. It is amazing how some people are incredibly disciplined in their religion, but no matter how disciplined they are it is never enough to overcome the world. 1 John 5v4-5, says, *"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God".*

So, only a Christian can resist the world, but even then it is a matter of faith as we trust God to live His life in and through us. We have to resist in the power of God. I can assure you that if you attempt to be strong for the Lord in your own strength, you are setting yourself up for frustration and disappointment. The next thing we must understand is that this armor is most effective when we put it all on. If we choose to put on some parts only, then we leave ourselves open to the attacks of Satan. We also do what Paul warns us not to do in Ephesians 4v27, *"nor give place to the devil".*

The word PLACE means to give Satan an opportunity or occasion to attack us. It has military implications in terms of allowing the enemy a foothold from which to launch an attack. Obviously if we sin we need to sort it out quickly to avoid being exposed to further attacks.

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We need to see that we have an enemy. Because we can't see his physical presence some Christians have come to the conclusion that there is no literal devil. They fail to see that our battle in the Christian life is in the spiritual realm. A Christian quipped once that he couldn't understand what all this talk about the devil and his scheme meant. He declared that he had never had any trouble and was mystified why anyone else was having a problem. A wise response was 'Try turning around and heading in the opposite direction, and I can assure you it won't be long before you meet him.' I think that sums it up well because the spiritual Christians are the ones most aware of Satan's spiritual opposition.

Have you ever wondered why Satan's tactics of church division and disharmony have been so successful? The main reason may be that many churches and Christians have failed to identify who is behind the problem in the first place. They have failed to recognize that as a church and as individual Christians we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers that, unlike the Christian church at times, are absolutely united in their efforts to destroy the church.

We must see that these principalities and powers are way beyond our ability to deal with. We have tried to gain the victory over Satan and his forces in the flesh, and have unfortunately become victims rather than conquerors. This is why Paul twice emphasizes that we must put on the whole armor of God so that we can stand against him in Christ. Romans 8v31, "*If God is for us, who can be against us.*" 1 Cor. 15:57-58, "*But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*"