

Canaan and the Armour of God

by John Nelson Darby

The Christian must be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, and put on the whole armour of God to withstand the wiles of the devil.

Scripture: Ephesians 6:10

Topics: "The Armor of God", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the necessity of putting on the whole armor of God to stand firm against spiritual wickedness and the wiles of the devil. He explains that while Christians are called to enjoy the privileges of their faith, they must also engage in spiritual conflict, akin to the Israelites facing the Canaanites after entering the Promised Land. The sermon outlines the components of the armor, including truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and the Word of God, highlighting the importance of being spiritually prepared and dependent on God through prayer. Darby illustrates that true victory comes from recognizing our position in Christ and actively resisting the enemy's attacks. He concludes by urging believers to maintain a constant sense of dependence on God to navigate the challenges of their faith journey.

Transcript

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore; having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds; that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." (Ephesians 6:10-20)

It might seem strange at first sight that in this epistle, where there is the fullest unfoldings of the privileges of the children of God, conflict should be brought out; but we are often not aware of the character of the

conflict from not knowing our privileges. Here it is found we are specially in conflict, and in a conflict that is neither known nor got into until we realize the privileges which this epistle specially unfolds.

In Galatians there is conflict, but it's a conflict between flesh and Spirit - the flesh lusting against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; but in Ephesians it is not flesh, but spiritual wickedness in high places. We have to overcome flesh, and there is a very close connection between these two conflicts, still they are distinct.

180 In Ephesians, it is a new creation; Christ has ascended up on high, "He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." So completely has He taken us out of the power of Satan that He can make us the vessels of His service. He has taken us out of the world, and then sent us into it, and if we thus stand associated with Christ, (which is the privilege of every Christian, though all do not realize it,) we must expect all the conflict associated with the place into which we are brought. In proportion as we realize that we are the vessels of heavenly service, we get this special character of conflict.

You cannot cross Jordan without finding the Canaanite and the Perizzite in the land. There are the trials and perils of the wilderness, which test our hearts, - all know more or less of the weary way testing our hearts and discovering what is in them, but wilderness experience is not the same as conflict in the land. When Joshua got into the place of the privileges of the people of God, he was in the place of conflict. God has set Christ as a Man in the glory, because He (as a Man) has perfectly glorified God as to sin. Christ has not only died for our sins, but we have died with Him, (dead with Christ is what Jordan is,) and we are raised up and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; thus associated, dead and risen, with Him, we are brought into the place where all the conflict is. It is most valuable and precious to get distinctly hold of this; many a Christian has not realized it; there is many a one still in Egypt, holding the value of the blood on the door-posts, but knowing nothing of the deliverance accomplished at the Red Sea. Israel had to stand still and see the salvation of God; this answers to the death and resurrection of Christ. I am out of Egypt: the judgment which fell on the Egyptians has saved me. God has raised up Christ and given Him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God. Just as every poor sinner has been driven out of the earthly paradise because sin is complete in the first Adam, so am I taken out of this world into the heavenly paradise in the Second Adam because righteousness is complete. God raising up Christ and giving Him glory proves that the question of sin has been all settled in Christ on the cross, and in virtue of this, He is sitting where He is, at the right hand of God. The passage through the wilderness is to humble and prove us; our perseverance is tested by God, leading us through the path in which Christ was found implicitly faithful. Israel went through that great and terrible wilderness where were the fiery serpents and scorpions and drought, where there was no water. God brought them water out of the rock of flint, fed them with the manna to humble them and prove them, to do them good at their latter end. They came to Jordan, they pass it, they get into the land, they eat the old corn, and the land is theirs.

182 In the wilderness and Canaan we get two characters of Christian experience, - one, the life down here; the other, the position in the heavenlies. We are not only a testimony to the world, but also to principalities and powers in the heavenlies. - "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." He "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places;" but though that is all true as to title, as to fact, the Canaanite and the Perizzite are still in the land to dispute the possession. We have our place in the power of the Spirit of God. Christ having gone before, our place is sure to faith; but the Canaanite is not yet destroyed - Christ's enemies are not yet put under His feet, so conflict characterizes the place of the Lord's redeemed people. When Joshua got into the land, he met a man with a drawn sword. Fighting was

to characterize their possession of the land, and when Joshua asks, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" the answer was, "Nay, but as Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." They were the redeemed of the Lord - the LORD'S host, - so completely the Lord's, that He uses them as His servants in conflict to subdue His enemies.

They must be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, and they cannot fight the Lord's battles if the flesh is at work. With an Achan in the camp there can be no victory, and therefore we must be practically dead to fight successfully; not merely reckoning ourselves dead, but be always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our body.

183 Paul, as a servant, always carried with him the sense of this, not as a title merely, but "Paul" was kept completely down, always bearing about in his body the dying of Jesus; nothing of Paul appeared, it was Jesus only. As soon as they crossed the Jordan (Jordan is death and resurrection with Christ), they were circumcised - death is practically applied; and in like manner after they had crossed the Red Sea they had to drink of the bitter water - really the salt water; they had been saved by it, they must now drink it. "By these things men live, and in all these things is the life of the spirit."

As soon as we get in heavenly places we get the "old corn" - we find Christ there, we feed on Him; but we have to be circumcised, practically putting off the body of the flesh. Israel got into the land, and had to be circumcised; - their title they knew, but they had not taken the ground of being practically dead and risen (from Egypt). If a man is practically dead and risen, what has he to do with this world? A man dead, and thus taken out of the world, has to go through the world and live in it again if God so wills it. We have to run across the wilderness to glory. As one associated with the Lord, I am the witness and testimony to the world of what a heavenly Christ is. I am to be a follower of God, an imitator of God. I shall be seeking other souls to enjoy it with me. If we are endeavouring to serve the Lord, shall we not find hindrances? if seeking to maintain the Lord's people in the place of fidelity to all this, do you think Satan will let you alone? There will be the wiles of Satan to get saints into his power, and we have to withstand his stratagems, even more than his power.

184 Infidelity, superstition in its various forms, are opposed to us, consequently we need the whole armour of God the moment we come in. We shall not get through in our own strength, we need the strength of the Lord and the power of His might; we need the whole armour, not one piece must be wanting; the armour must be of God; human armour will not ward off the attacks of Satan; confidence in that armour will engage us in the combat to make us fall before an enemy stronger and more crafty than we. Let us see what this complete armour is.

"Stand, therefore; having your loins girt about with truth." This is the first thing, looking at what we call the subjective part. Our state comes first, and there is no divine activity until the heart is perfectly in order. The loins are the seat of strength when duly girt, but represent the intimate affections and movements of the heart. The figure is taken from the habits of the country where these instructions were given; they wore long garments, which hindered their working unless girded up. We get the expression in Job 38:3, - "Gird up now thy loins like a man" - that is, to see what he had to say to God. It is the power of truth applied to every thing that takes place in the heart; it is not doctrine, but truth practically applied. The Lord said, "Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy Word is truth." God has sent into the midst of the world all that can judge man according to what God is. Christ is the centre of the Word; He was the light of the world; He revealed the thoughts of many hearts. He was here as a man, and revealed what God was, and the world was judged by it. He comes and brings all that is divine and heavenly in a man (Christ) in direct contact

with all that is contrary to God in this world. Satan, as the god of this world, led man against Christ. Some fancy that he has ceased to be the god and prince of this world; but though the cross broke his title, it was not until the cross (where man openly ranged himself, under Satan, against God) that he became its prince. Truth came into the world - Christ Himself, the truth. The truth of God brought right to men's hearts discovers their thoughts and intents. Now, when I get this Word effectually applied to me, I get the girdle of truth.

185 When all that God has said in His Word, and the unseen realities He reveals, have their true force and application to my heart, my loins are girt, my garments are not dragging in the mire of this world, my thoughts are not wandering, and the condition of my heart is, so to speak, tucked up ready for service, whatever that may be. We do not get into this conflict until we get into this place. We get the conflict of the old man, but that is Egypt. In order to get the victory over Satan, and carry on the Lord's battles, I must realise my position according to the truth, just as Israel overcame by realizing the promises of God.

186 First thing of all, my heart must be completely tested and subjected to a heavenly word. The Lord said, "No man hath ascended up to heaven." Christ brings this heavenly truth before us and says, Does what is in your heart correspond with this? When this Word becomes a positive delight to us, we get the taste and appreciation of heavenly things - the things that are lovely and of good report - which He has brought to us. I get on the one hand judgment of all flesh in me, and on the other the blessedness of what Christ is. Wherever the loins are girt about with truth there will be confidence of heart, and the soul will be steadfast, there will be no turning back in the conflict to judge ourselves, our souls, so to speak, will be naturally with God, there will be occupation of heart with Christ, and there will be the Holy Ghost taking of the things which are Christ's and showing them to us.

The result of this girding of the loins is, that a man's condition is the effect of truth. It was Christ's condition; He was the truth, and my condition will be like Christ's in proportion as the truth is in effect on my heart, - the affections and heart right, I pass through the world in spirit with Him. "Stand, therefore; having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness." All this, mark, is practical righteousness with God; we do not want armour with God, we want it against Satan.

187 If I am an inconsistent man, going to serve God without the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left - without practical godliness, Satan will be sure to bring it up. In preaching, for instance, if your walk is not consistent, the world will say you are no better than they, and Satan will then have power against you. If you are walking according to Christ because your heart is according to Christ, you have the breastplate of righteousness; but unless a man has a good conscience, he will be a coward, and afraid of being detected. With a good conscience, we can go on boldly; the condition of the soul where Christ is revealed is truth, and the walk of the man is all right - there is nothing for Satan to lay hold of. The loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, I have then to see that my feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. I pass through the world with my feet shod. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace." In this path there is no selfishness; selfishness is for maintaining its rights, but that is not having my feet shod with peace. Self is subdued if I am following Christ. "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." Learning of Christ, he carries peace with him, the soul is at peace with God, the conscience at rest, his feet are shod with peace, and he carries through the world the Spirit and character of Christ.

188 He has on the breastplate of righteousness. What was the path of the blessed Lord? There was nothing in question as to His state. He went untouched with all that man could bring against Him; His feet

were shod. So with him who follows Christ, he can bring out the Spirit and character of Christ wherever he goes. It may raise hatred, as it did with Christ; His perfect love brought out the hatred of man; but a subdued, godly, upright man will be a peaceful man in passing through the world, and although man may not speak peaceably to him, as much as lieth in him, he is to live peaceably with all men. Thus we get it in both aspects, - the path is characterized by the spirit of grace and peace, and there is righteousness and truth. The state of the heart first right, loins girt with truth, righteousness for a breastplate, and feet shod with peace, the soul subjectively right, I can then take up the shield of faith. Subjectively right, I have not to think of myself. A man walking with nothing on his conscience is free; if not walking right, he will be occupied with himself. The mere existence of an evil nature does not suppose a bad conscience, but yielding to it does. We are not told to confess sin, but sins; it is easy to confess sin - easy to say, "I am a poor sinful creature," but that generally is to excuse sins. I have failed to keep the flesh down. Of course I can never say I have no sin, but if I am not bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, practically dead, the flesh will surely play me false. We want these three first elements of the armour, and then we have not to think about ourselves. Practically in the light, as He is in the light, the heart right, I then get the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. This shield supposes I can look up with entire blessed confidence in God. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty; He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust; His truth shall be Thy shield and buckler; thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day."

189 God is above Satan. Satan may shoot his arrows, but they cannot break through the shield of faith. In Christ, the victory has been won in man and for man. Satan did his worst against Christ, first, to seduce and afterward to deter Him, but he was completely overcome. All the power of Satan is broken and gone. Christ has gone through death and annulled him who has the power of death. Christ has not only put away our sins, but as a man standing for us, He has completely overcome the devil. We are not told to overcome, but to "resist" the devil, and he will flee from us. If resisted, he meets Christ in us and runs away. Human nature cannot resist, it will acquiesce. It is not a question of power on our part, but of simple faithfulness and looking to Christ; it is not that we are strong, but strength is made perfect in weakness. What was ever so weak as Christ - Christ crucified through weakness? but then the weakness of God is stronger than men, and the foolishness of God is wiser than men. Nothing could be more weak and foolish in man's eyes than the cross, but we know, nevertheless, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Whenever we are content to own ourselves weak, there is the strength that enables us to overcome. Satan is very subtle. If Satan deals with man (apart from God), it is all over with him. How is it possible that wise and learned men of this world give way to such follies as ritualism and the like? Satan, more clever than they, is behind it all, and laughs to see them trusting their own wisdom. The simple soul that has his heart right cannot go wrong. Satan has no kind of power while the soul is walking in obedience, that is the secret of it all. If walking inconsistently, the shield of faith will be down, and I shall be open to all the fiery darts. There should be that blessed confidence in God which reckons on Christ having completely overcome the world and the devil, and that all the power of evil now in the world will soon be put down. We are to be exercised in the conflict; the Lord has said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

190 We have as yet no activities brought out, - so far, it is defensive. The defensive armour comes first. We are slow to understand this, and we often get into activities when we ought to be quiet. The shield is defensive. Satan is active. The Lord may bless and help us, in His grace, but there is many a one got into activities without knowing themselves. The helmet of salvation is still defensive; we have the conscious,

blessed, and full certainty of being in heavenly places in Christ - the soul walking in the full confidence that I have Christ there, who has delivered me out of the power of the devil. Christ has fought my battle and overcome. I can hold my head up, because I have got salvation. The blessed certainty that I am in Christ and Christ is for me is my helmet. I can now be active. Having judged the flesh, godly in walk, peaceful in my path through the world, with confidence in God, and salvation assured, I can take up the sword of the Spirit, - I can fight, sheltered in the inner man, and shielded from all attacks from without. I take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. We do not always look to see that it is so - that there's nothing between God and our souls, so that He is practically with us in the conflict. Are we walking in the practical sense of God being with us? If there is an Achan in the camp, as there was with Israel, God will not go up. It is of all-importance we should be clear as to this. Paul kept under his body, and brought it into subjection. If we are to be active in the service of the Lord, we must go out from the presence of the Lord according to what His presence gives. Paul said, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and men." Always self-judgment, always keeping close to God, and then you can go out in service to others; not always, perhaps, in public ministry, but in the path of every-day life.

192 You will have the secret of the Lord with you, the consciousness of God with you, clearness of judgment, and not distracted or dismayed by half a dozen thoughts. You have the secret of the Lord; going on quietly, it may be, but going on with God. Then comes, no matter how active I may be, the inward preparation, - "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." We have had the inward affections and the sword of the Spirit, but now it is entire dependence - the Word of God and prayer. These two things are found running together through Scripture: the Word of God and prayer. Mary sat at the Lord's feet and heard His word. The Lord said, "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." In the next verses, the Lord teaches His disciples to pray. When the apostles chose deacons, the reason assigned is, that they might give themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word. When there is to be service carried on against the wiles of the devil, half the battle is to be fought out in God's presence beforehand in prayer. When the prince of this world came to the Lord in the garden of Gethsemane, he found Him agonizing in prayer. Peter slept while the Lord prayed: the result was, that Peter denied Him, but the blessed Lord witnessed a good confession.

Nothing can, nor ever will, take the place of that earnestness in prayer: if we are to have God with us, we must pray. It is marked by perfect calmness. If we have God with us, we must be with God, who is sovereign in love and goodness, and has associated us with His own interests. Does not my heart yearn after the conversion of poor sinners? do I not pray that hearts may know more of Christ? that saints may walk more faithfully? God desires this, and He has given us a path in the world associated with His interests. There is to be perseverance and supplication for all saints. If I see a soul in danger of going astray, I go with all perseverance and supplication to God about him: my heart is in it.

193 The very same word used of the Lord in Gethsemane is used of Epaphras, who laboured fervently in prayer. It is conflict of heart. He craves the blessing of God with all his heart - craving for it earnestly, and entering into it because it is in the interests of God in the world. This has to be carried on in opposition to Satan, who will bring all his craft and power against us. We have consequently to be with God. What a blessed thing to know that I get power and wisdom from God, grace and wisdom in practice! If I use a sword, I must get wisdom for it. What a place of blessing it would be if we were all practically with God!

For our own souls it is so helpful, because prayer is the expression of entire dependence, but at the same time, confidence in God. A person like Paul, in weakness and trembling, fightings without and fears within, going about getting victories! He says to the Corinthians, "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling." It is always good to be conscious of weakness provided there is faith in God. Constant dependence is the constant expression of faith in God; the soul goes to God with God's affairs; we realize how much they are our own. The blessed Lord has gone down into the dust of death. Satan's power was exercised to the fullest, but it was all broken. He comes up again and sits at the right hand of God, takes His people, whom He has completely delivered from the hand of Satan, and uses them for conflict against him - the instruments of His service in the world. A wondrously blessed place if we only knew how to hold it, - blessed to be made the Lord's host against Satan. The more you are in the forefront of the battle, the more you will be exposed to the fiery darts. The more you bear testimony to God's thoughts, God's mind, the place the saints have in God's mind, the more you will be the object of Satan's attacks. You will necessarily be exposed to more snares and dangers than those who lag behind, and there is no place where dependence is more needed and felt.

194 There is more strength provided for those in the forefront to bear witness to Christ's title against Satan, and Satan will never let it pass without opposition. When I have all the armour on, and come to wield the sword, I am not to be thinking of the armour, but of God and His purposes, "watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Oh how little we know of this! Supposing we pass through a day, was all that happened turned into prayer? If I am walking maintaining Christ's cause, it all turns to prayer. It is a wondrous test of the state of our souls. Do you find you can intercede much for others? Do you find earnestness in intercession for all saints? Is my heart so in the interests of Christ that I can have a lasting and continual interest for others? If my heart is in a bad state, and the presence of God is revealed to me, I think of myself - I am not free to intercede for others. "And for me also," says the apostle, "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, . . . as I ought to speak." How is it with us, beloved friends? It is an amazing blessing to be doing this, but we cannot if our own souls are not right - if I am not in the presence of God. As far only as I keep on this armour, I am useful: all is founded on being in a settled place before God. The blood on the door-post, the Red Sea crossed, Jordan passed, circumcised, and the reproach of Egypt rolled away, - then comes conflict in the land: all is founded on redemption.

195 Be assured we shall meet the wiles of Satan. Our own state and conscience are easily detected if our hearts are simple in the truth. It is not that we are to be learning Satan's wiles, but if our hearts are simple, we shall be more than a match for him. Satan is a good deal cleverer than we are, and wherever redemption is not fully known, there Satan plays his tricks. The moment that redemption is really believed in, all the systems of superstition, so prevalent in the world, are gone. You may have old things lingering, but you will never find a person under the power of superstition who has the consciousness in himself that Christ has died and suffered for him. We see wise and learned men going away to ritualism, and the devil behind it all, but the moment redemption is really known, the devil's power is gone. The system of ritualism proceeds on the footing that Christ can have to say to man in the flesh that he is not lost and dead in his sins, and consequently a complete and accomplished redemption is denied. The moment I have my soul established in Christ, this snare of the devil will not prevail. A man may know the truth of the incarnation, and may speak more beautifully of the person of the Lord than even Christians, but all the time ignorant of redemption. I have the witness of Christ in me; I know Christ. They may try to persuade me that Christ is such and such, but I know Him; I have got Him; He is dwelling in my heart, so that I am not to be turned by such follies as ritualism and the like. The Lord keep us in a constant sense of dependence, in a sense of

what He is, dependent on Him every moment, that we may never get out of the presence of God, for when we are out of His presence there is danger.

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