

The Lord's Host Ephesians 6:10-18

by John Nelson Darby

John Nelson Darby's sermon emphasizes the necessity of the armor of God for Christians to engage in spiritual conflict effectively.

Scripture: Ephesians 6:10

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

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the significance of spiritual conflict in the life of a Christian, highlighting that understanding our privileges in Christ leads us into battle against spiritual forces. He explains that while Christians are seated in heavenly places, they must don the whole armor of God to withstand the challenges posed by wicked spirits. The sermon outlines the importance of truth, righteousness, and faith as essential components of this armor, and stresses the necessity of prayer and dependence on God in the midst of conflict. Darby encourages believers to recognize their identity in Christ and to actively engage in the spiritual warfare that comes with it, reminding them that victory is found in Christ alone.

Transcript

It is a little strange that conflict has such a prominent position given to it in this epistle. We find here the fullest unfoldings of our position and we get the walk of the Christian drawn from these; but here also it is that especially we are found to be in conflict, and are called upon to take on us "the whole armour of God." Indeed such a conflict as this is never got into until we know our privileges. In Galatians we have conflict, but not the privileges of the Church; it is not the same thing as what we find here; of course the flesh is not the same thing as wicked spirits. Take the saints out of the world, make them vessels meet for the Master's service, and that is the very reason they get into the conflict. If we stand in the place of privilege - every Christian stands in it of course - but if we have got hold of this place we must get into the conflict. In fact, as the apostle says, If you cross the Jordan you must meet the Canaanite and the Perizzite. Wilderness exercise - means of discovering what is in our hearts - all of us know something of; but it is when we have got into the land that we get into the conflict.

We have "died with Him," which is just what Jordan is, and are "made to sit together in heavenly places with Christ." It is the place of every Christian, but many a one does not realize it. Many a one is thinking whether he is not yet in Egypt, and is looking at the blood. But in the Red Sea I get the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; the judgment which has fallen upon the Egyptians has saved me; I "believe in God by Him who has raised Him up from the dead and given Him glory." Just as I was driven out of an

earthly Paradise because of sin - of course by I, I mean every poor sinner in Adam - so I am raised up and put into an heavenly Paradise because of righteousness. Passing through the wilderness we have exercises of heart - we have the manna - Christ come down from heaven to feed us; we have the water from the rock - all most useful, that He may do us good in our latter end. Well, then, we come to Jordan, and then we pass death, so to say, and the land is ours - we eat the old corn of the land.

You get the two places, the wilderness and the land, all through this epistle. He sets us there in our place - of course we are here in our bodies - but, you come to the fact, the Canaanite is here. We have our place in Him, but His enemies are not yet put under His feet. The effect is to put us into conflict. You will hear people talk of Jordan being death, and Canaan being heaven; but it never strikes them when they thus talk of Canaan and death that what characterizes the land is conflict.

Now as to those who enter the land they are so completely the Lord's, that He uses them for conflict against His enemies. How can they fight the Lord's battles if they are in the flesh? So if we are to have some one successful in these battles we must have some one who is practically dead. See how the Apostle fought them; he kept all that was of Paul completely down, so that nothing of Paul appeared; he always bore about in His body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in his mortal body. A man that is dead and risen again, what has he to do with this world? Associated with the Lord in those heavenly places we are the witness and testimony of what He is there.

Now if you are seeking to maintain the saints in this place, do you think Satan will let you alone? So we get this instruction about putting on the whole armour of God; the moment we get into this place He says to us, You will not get through this in the flesh; you will have to put on the whole armour of God, for you "wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly 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."

In looking at these parts of the armour we may notice that we get first the subjective parts; that is to say, our state comes first, and then comes the activity. There is no divine activity until God has been divinely active with us. The loins must be girded up; the power of truth applied to everything in the heart. God has sent into the midst of this world all the thoughts that can bless man. Christ was the Light of the world, and he brought out everything that was in it. He comes and brings all that is divine and heavenly in a man right into contact with all that is wrong in man. Some people think now that the world is a very fine thing! People fancy that in the cross Satan has been done away with! Why he was never called the prince of this world until after the cross. The truth came into the world, that is Christ Himself, the Truth of God now revealed in the Testament, is brought right into men's hearts. Well, when it is effectually applied I get the girdle of truth about my loins - my heart well tucked up. In this kind of conflict in order to be able to meet Satan, the first thing of all is, that my heart be entirely subject to a heavenly word. He has brought this heavenly truth to bear upon me, it says, Is this heavenly in your heart? I get in this revelation of Christ, my loins girt about with truth; I get my heart into a strengthened, steadfast state; and • whenever I get into this state there is conflict. But the soul goes naturally on; the man's condition is the effect of truth; the affections are right; the heart is in the truth.

" And having on the breast-plate of righteousness." Beloved friends, all this is practical. It is not righteousness with God. I do not want armour against God. But if I am going to preach Christ, and one can say of me, Why, here is a man preaching who is worse than his neighbours, Satan will take hold of it

immediately. We must have on the breast-plate of righteousness, the soul and walk all right.

Next, my feet are to be "shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace." Selfishness will always be a contending thing; it says, I must maintain my rights. But the Christian carries peace, because he has peace within; he carries through the world the spirit and character of Christ. He had his loins girt about with truth, of course, perfectly; He had on the breast-plate of righteousness perfectly; so He could walk through this world, through every thing, passing on in perfect peace. A man can thus walk untouched through everything that they can bring against him; his feet are shod.

Now that I have got all subjectively right, as they say, I can take up "the shield of faith." The existence of a sinful nature does not give a bad conscience, but it is when we yield to it that we get a bad conscience, and that is why we are told to confess our sins, not our sin. When the heart is right in the first three pieces we can take up the shield of faith. When we "walk in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." There is blessed confidence in God. Satan may do what he can; he may lurk in secret places, - he cannot break through my shield of faith. He has done his best to seduce, his worst to dismay: a Man in His standing for us has completely overcome him. Therefore it is, "resist the devil, and he will flee from you," not overcome him; if he is once honestly resisted he has met Christ in us, and at once he runs away; he never can get through confidence in God; the shield of faith is up, and he can do nothing.

So, beloved friends, you find it is the defensive armour that comes first, and the state of the soul. Many a one has got into activity without knowing himself; but with this "helmet of salvation" on he can hold his head up, he knows that salvation is his, and that on to the glory is his portion. He is a man in Christ, - all that is a settled thing, - and now he takes "the sword of the Spirit," he can set about the fight. The first great thing, if we are to be active in the service of the Lord, is that we are to be perfectly right "with the Lord. The apostle was always self-judging. It is the man who has the secret of the Lord in power in his own soul who can go out in service. He will not be amazed and distracted with half-a-dozen thoughts. - he has the secret of the Lord.

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." These two have been always running through together, ever since the time of Mary. She sat at Jesus' feet and heard His words, - the word of God and prayer. The moment I get to apprehend that the conflict is against Satan and the wiles of Satan, I find that half the battle has to be carried on with God. Look at the Lord Himself. We find Him in Gethsemane earnestly praying, earnestly praying; and then, when it came, He was perfectly calm; whilst Peter, who was sleeping, cursed and swore he did not know Him, the Lord witnessed a good confession. This earnestness and supplication is from being in God's interests in the world. People have a fancy that an apostle would go sailing over everything. When Paul was at Corinth he was there "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling."

The blessed Lord went down to where we were, - made sin for ourselves in the lower parts of the earth, - all Satan's power against him; then when He ascended up on high He led captivity captive. He takes us so entirely out of the hands of the enemy that He sets us in a place where we have the same interests as Christ, - the same interests as Christ, - a most blessed place, if we only have the power to hold it. But the more you are in the fore-front of the battle, the more you are exposed to the fiery darts; if anyone lags behind he will keep out of it. There is no place calls for more dependence on Christ than when we are in the fore-front of the battle. This leads us to this constant, unceasing dependence, when the apostle leaves figure altogether; it is "praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto

with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Now let me ask you this, Do you find you can intercede much for all saints? I find nothing tests the state of my own soul more than this. Of course, I can pray for myself; if not I shall have a fall. But am I so walking in fellowship with God that I can be in continued intercession for all saints? If I get into God's presence and find myself not right in the light, of course I begin to think about myself, and rightly too, and there is an end to intercession.

Well, beloved, it is so far this armour of God that I am to keep on while I am here; when I have passed the Jordan, and the reproach of this world is rolled away, I can be in the Lord's host. It is the wiles of Satan that we have to fear; it is not learning, - it is not human wisdom. Satan is a great deal more clever than that; he will let a person be as orthodox as you like, but the moment redemption is believed in, the power of superstition is gone. When redemption is really known, all the ritualists in the world will not touch me. People often say, How can such learned and wise men as these give in to Ritualism, infidelity, and such like things? Why, they forget that Satan is behind it all. Men speak of the incarnation, - of the person of the Lord very beautifully; but it is never redemption, - never that Christ has gone before God and settled the question of sin for me. Hold fast, - beloved friends, - fast hold of that precious truth that Christ has done the work, Infidelity comes and says, Where is the proof of it? I say, I know Him; I have got Him in my heart; that will not do! But the moment we get out of the conscious presence of God we are in danger.

The Lord keep us in this consciousness until the day that He shall come and take us to Himself, that where He is there we may be also.

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