

Divine Romance - Spiritual Warfare

Week 8 – Monday

Eph. 6:13-14 – Footnotes 13¹, 14³

Now we come to the details of the armour. Verses 13 and 14 say, “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. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness.” The details of the armour begin here. First it talks about the girdle of truth and the breastplate of righteousness. The truth actually is for supporting our whole being. That is to strengthen your being. My father will turn 99 in a month. He is in the church life there in New York. His salvation is another story; I wish I had time to talk about that. He got saved when he was 69. That was a battle, but anyway the Lord won that battle. He was a carpenter for many years and very often he would wear a girdle so that he could climb up stairs and be on a ladder hammering. The girdle would strengthen his back. What is the girdle for the Christian, for the believer? Truth. What does this mean? Does this mean that we need to study the Bible so that we know the word? The word *truth* in Greek is *alitheia*. It has very many denotation in the New Testament, but we can say how to understand it here because this is in the context of Ephesians. This is not the first time this word appears; it is also in chapter 4. There you could say that truth is actually God in Christ realized by us and lived out of us. That is reality; you could translate this as reality. The triune God Himself in our experience often is conveyed to us through the Word. Yes, truth is related to the Bible, to the Word of God, but when that truth is spoken to us, it brings Christ to us. Then when we experience the reality of what we heard, that truth strengthens our being for the fight.

I don't know when you have your prayer meeting here—Tuesday. Suppose that the whole day on Tuesday you live your work day, at school or at home, with no reality, no experience of Christ, but now you come to the prayer meeting. Actually, I wonder if you even want to come to the prayer meeting, but you do come. Do you turn, do you pray? Of course, the blood cleanses, but you don't have much base for the spiritual warfare that night. To fight the spiritual warfare we need a base of reality in our living. When we experience the Lord in our living, the enemy takes note. Paul was in prison when he wrote many of his epistles, but the enemy took note of him because even there he was living out the reality of the triune God. There is a story in Acts 19:13-16 where seven sons of Sceva saw that Paul could cast out demons, so they tried to do the same thing. They came to a demon possessed person and said, “I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.” The demon said, “Jesus I know of, and with Paul I am acquainted; but who are you?” Then the demon possessed man jumped on them and overpowered them. “Jesus I know of, and with Paul I am acquainted; but who are you?” When we come to fight the spiritual warfare, the enemy should know who we are already. How does the enemy know who we are? When we live Christ. When you live Christ, the enemy knows, he recognizes Christ in you. We need the reality in our daily living.

Divine Romance - Spiritual Warfare

Week 8 – Tuesday

Eph. 6:14-15 – Footnotes 14⁴, 15¹, 15²

Then we need the breastplate of righteousness. Righteousness is in the blood of Christ. When we were saved, we were clothed with righteousness; we were clothed with Christ as our righteousness. As we go through each item of the armour, we need to realize that each item is Christ. It is not a thing, but it is our experience of Christ. Whenever you want to fight the spiritual warfare (that may sound like an intimidating phrase), whenever you consider to preach the gospel, that is part of the warfare. Whenever you consider to visit a brother or sister who hasn't been with us for some time, that recovering is part of the spiritual warfare. Whenever you consider to give a little testimony in the meeting, that is part of the spiritual warfare because that is building the church. Whenever you even consider to do any of these activities, the enemy will come to your conscience to accuse you: "Are you going to speak today? You? Didn't you do this? Didn't you say that? Didn't you have an attitude toward your spouse, toward your mother, toward your boss, or toward your coworker?" Right away it is possible that if we don't have the breastplate of righteousness we are defeated in our chair. What does this mean? This means that to fight the spiritual warfare we need to confess our sins. It is not that we need to be perfect; but we do need to be righteous. When we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). That is how we apply the breastplate of righteousness. We confess our sins, we claim the blood, and gain the righteousness that is in the blood. So when we come to a prayer meeting, in a sense it does not matter what the day was. As long as we turn and confess, we are sitting there with the breastplate of righteousness. Then we are equipped to fight the battle.

Verse 15 says, "And having shod your feet with the firm foundation of the gospel of peace." Now we come to the shoes which are related to the gospel of peace. Strictly speaking, this does not mean that we need to preach the gospel. It means that on the cross the Lord Jesus accomplished peace in two ways. According to Romans 5:1 He made peace between us and God, but in Ephesians 2 He also made peace between the Jews and the Gentiles, between men. So He made peace vertically and He made peace horizontally. That becomes the foundation for us to stand on and that is what we wear as our shoes. Over and over in this section, it does not say *fight*, it says *stand*. Our fighting in the Christian life is just to stand. After all the enemy's attacks, the church will be standing there and the battle is won. We need to stand, but to stand we cannot have sneakers on; we cannot have flip flops on. I think that many of us have spiritual flip flops. We need a firm foundation of the gospel of peace. What does that mean? That means that if you come to preach the gospel, shepherd, or recover saints, share in the meeting, pray in the prayer meeting, but there was discord between you and your spouse, you are defeated already. If there is no peace at home, if there is no peace at work as far as it depends on you, if there is no peace between you and God, and then you come to pray, the enemy will say that that is a joke. You have no foundation. We must have the peace with God and the peace with man. Then we are equipped for the fight.

Divine Romance - Spiritual Warfare

Week 8 – Wednesday

Eph. 6:16 – Footnotes 16¹, 16², 16³

Rom. 10:17

Now we come to my burden. “Besides all these, having taken up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one” (v. 16). Faith is a shield. I don't know if it is popular here but in the States a lot of the teenagers and even the children know about a cartoon and movie called The Avengers. It has Captain America but there is no Captain Canada. I used to read these comic books when I was a little boy, and Captain America has a shield. Sometimes in a place like an airport you see people with the emblem of the shield. He fights with his shield. Many of us have a spiritual shield that is about the size of our hand or even smaller. We need a bigger shield of faith. I saw some documentaries that reenact battles from old times and in some places I saw that they have shields that are the full length of the person with a little slit so that you can see. They carry that, put it down, and then send arrows the other way. That is a good picture of the shield of faith. If I have a shield of faith and my brother has an even bigger shield of faith, when we stand together our faith becomes like a wall. I would like to stand behind his shield of faith. That is the body. We need a shield of faith; we need faith to increase. We need to pray, “Lord, increase my faith.” Then He will say, “Look away to the Author of faith. Just look at Me. When you look at Me, you will have more faith.”

We need to quench the flaming darts as we shared in the first message. Faith quenches the flaming darts. What are these darts? These darts in the old time were flaming arrows. They would wrap the end of the arrow with cloth, saturate it with oil, light it on fire, and then shoot it over the wall. They would send many arrows. They did not need to be precise but sooner or later something flammable will be hit if they shot enough arrows. In the old time many of the rooftops were straw so just hitting one corner of the house would set it on fire. That is how the enemy attacks us with thoughts and more thoughts. Has it never happened to you that when you are sitting in the meeting and you are thinking, “What is for lunch?” I won't ask you to raise hands if you thought that already today, but then you are thinking, “I had Chinese yesterday and the day before, maybe Italian would be good today.” You were distracted three minutes in the meeting and you think that does not mean anything. Actually, that was the enemy. Faith comes by hearing and hearing through the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). So if you were distracted for 5 minutes in the meeting, that is 5 minutes less shield.

Divine Romance - Spiritual Warfare

Week 8 – Thursday

Rev. 12:10-11 – Footnotes 10¹, 10², 11², 11³, 11⁴

You have the potential to have a bigger shield after this meeting; not because of my speaking but because we are presenting the word of God. The word brings faith. That is also why we need to read the word every day. Don't think, "Oh, I don't understand; oh it's a little stale, it's a little boring. I like it when there are the stories. Many of us are studying Leviticus in these days. We have heard many testimonies: "Genesis I can take and I can take half of Exodus, up to chapter 20. After that it is really hard. Leviticus—Ohhh, can I skip to Numbers. Aren't there stories in Numbers somewhere?" If you read Leviticus, your shield gets bigger. Read any book and your shield gets bigger. Satan attacks us with temptations, proposals, doubts, questions, and lies. Sometimes—I don't know if this ever happened to you—you would just get a thought, "Why doesn't that brother like me?" It is not that that brother does not like me. What happened? Maybe in the meeting I was standing there and he walked by another brother and greeted him. Then when I walked by, he did not say anything. I nodded to him and he didn't say anything. I was not expecting a hug; I was not expecting "Hello" but at least a little smile. It could be that just at that moment he got something in his eye and he didn't see me when I walked by. Then the next morning: "Oh Lord, I love You. Lord, You are the author of faith... That brother, I don't know what is wrong with him. I don't know why he doesn't like me. What did I ever do to him?" Is this a joke? Did this never happen to you? The enemy lies about the brothers and sisters. This morning we sang these wonderful hymns saying that we are one. We are eating; we are drinking; we are testifying of our oneness. Is this true or not? It is true! We love one another! But the enemy comes with suggestions. We need a bigger shield of faith.

What should we have faith in? I would like to give seven points. Firstly, we should have faith in God, that He is real, living, present, and He is for us. He is real; He is living; He is present; and He is for us. Because He is for us, He is available. Sometimes in my younger Christian life I would pray and I would feel like, "God, where are You?" Did you never feel this way? You feel, "Oh Lord, where are You? Two weeks ago when I called, even two days ago, when I called, it was so rich. Today, I feel like 'Where are You? I can't touch You.'" Then it is possible that right there a thought comes: "God doesn't love you. God loves him a lot. God loves that family but not my family. We suffer all the time. We can't get a break. We finish one problem and boom, another problem. Even we don't finish the second problem when third and fourth problems come." God is available. Don't trust your feelings. God is present; He is living and He is for us.

Divine Romance - Spiritual Warfare

Week 8 – Friday

Rom. 8:35-39 – Footnote 39¹

Secondly, we must have faith in God's heart. God's heart is always good toward us. Dear saints, God has no intention to punish us, to injure us, or to cause us harm. I know that sometimes it is not easy to see this because all of us sooner or later suffer loss in different ways: physically, even of loved ones, and sometimes of loved ones prematurely. I know young people who have lost their parents. I know parents who have lost their children. At that juncture there is a temptation to blame God. We need to have faith in God's heart. We don't have time to read the verses but I think that you are familiar with Romans chapter 8: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or anguish or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword?" (v. 35). Paul says that not even death nor life can separate us from God's love. There is a temptation when we experience death of those close to us, especially when it seems so premature. When someone is elderly and passes away we experience the loss but it doesn't sting the way it does when it seems premature. But we need faith in God's heart.

We need faith in God's faithfulness. God is faithful. He is faithful in us; He is faithful to the church; and He is faithful to His word, and He will accomplish every word that He has spoken.

We also need to have faith in God's word. We should take every word of the Bible as God's promise. In Matthew 16 the Lord declared, "I will build My church and the gates of Hades will not prevail..." In my history there were a number of times when I looked around and felt like the gates of Hades were prevailing. Did you ever experience that? I know that in my experience there were a few places where I asked, "Lord, what about this? You said that the gates of Hades won't prevail." What will you believe at that time? Will you believe what you see or will you believe God's word?

We need to have faith in God's ability. Ephesians 3, verse 20 says that God is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think. Who wrote that? Paul. Where did he write that from? A prison in a chain. He was writing while chained to a guard and still he wrote, "Saints in Ephesus, He is able to do superabundantly." Did you ever feel, "Lord, I know that You are able to do, but why don't You do anything for me?" One song we teach the children goes, "He is able, He is able; I know my Lord is able to carry me through." Even my grandchildren know this song, but I don't know if you have ever felt, "Lord, You are able but why don't You do anything? Why have you not done anything for 10 years?" Paul was not stumbled by God. In the prison he said, "Lord, You are able to do superabundantly above all that I ask or think."

Do you know why he could say this? Because Paul also had faith in God's will. We should have faith in God's will. God's will assigns certain situations to us in which He will gain His purpose, and the sweet dispensing can go deeper and richer. All of us know and have experienced that in times of ease in our Christian life, we tend not to be as desperate for the Lord. When there are times of turmoil somehow the Lord is able to go deeper and the dispensing is sweeter.

Divine Romance - Spiritual Warfare

Week 8 – Saturday

Eph. 6:17-19 – Footnotes 18¹, 18², 18³, 18⁴, 18⁵, 18⁶

So, what have covered? We need to have faith in God, in God's heart, in God's faithfulness, in God's Word, in God's ability, in God's will, and the final point—in God's sovereignty. We need to have faith in God's sovereignty. All things work together for good. I know that sooner or later that will be tested in us. I hope that in our experience our faith is healthy to the point that we could say, “Lord, You could never be wrong. I am this situation. We are in this situation and we know that You know. You could never be wrong. I still love You and I still trust You.” Oh, that we would all have the shield of faith.

The next item is the helmet of salvation. You always need something on your head to fight a battle. The two most critical areas that you need to protect are your heart and your head. You need a big shield of faith and behind the shield is a breastplate—double protection for your heart. Then on top you need a helmet, salvation. Why? Because the enemy injects fear, he injects threats, worries, anxieties, and other weakening thoughts. Have you never compared yourself to another sister or brother in the church? That thought of comparison is the enemy's injection. The Bible tells us not to compare ourselves. Each one is a necessary member of the Body of Christ; each one has their portion (1 Cor. 12). We need a helmet of salvation; we need to enjoy the Lord. He saves us from our thoughts. Then the attack of the enemy has no effect on us.

Then we have the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God. Actually we need the word to be the Spirit to become the sword. This does not mean that the Spirit takes the Bible, the word of God, as the sword. This means that the sword is the Spirit as the word. When we enjoy the word of God in a living way, the word becomes the sword, not to attack people but to actually to cut off the inner enemy. The biggest enemy that the Body of Christ has is the self. In the church life, the self is a big enemy. We may have the outward enemy but we also have the inward adversary. His name is pride; his name is lust. We have inner enemies that if we are not careful will really affect our Christian life. Another one is jealousy. As we are in the word and the word becomes living as the Spirit to us, the Lord cuts away and cuts to pieces all the inner enemies. We need the living word of God.

The final point is prayer. Prayer is the way to apply all the previous items. That is why it says, “And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God, By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints, And for me, that utterance may be given to me...” (vv. 17-19a). We need to pray to apply every one of these items of the armour. Then we need to pray for all the saints. Then we need to pray for all the Lord's servants that the word could continue to go out.

The conclusion to all of this is verses 23 and 24: “Peace to the brothers and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptibility.” We need faith and love for the spiritual warfare. I hope and pray that through this brief word all of us would be strengthened in our faith and the result would be more love for the Lord. I hope that we would be strengthened to be the bride and to be the corporate warrior to fulfill God's purpose.