

Radical Protection - PART 2

Choosing radical protection

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Preaching passage: Ephesians 6:11,13
Subject: Why we should choose radical protection
Complement: that we may be able to stand against the strategies of the devil.
Exegetical idea: We should choose radical protection so that we might be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
Preaching idea: **Choose to receive the radical protection that God alone can provide.**
Purpose: To encourage my hearers to receive the radical protection that God wants to provide in the great cosmic battle between good and evil.

I can still remember that deep raspy voice: “She opened her life to me!” Who was speaking to me? It certainly wasn’t the university student who was lying there on the floor of Steve and Laura’s family room. Who or what was controlling her? One thing was certain: I was in the midst of an intense cosmic conflict. This young lady needed deliverance and we all needed radical protection.

Immediately a passage of Scripture flashed into my mind. I’m so thankful that I have been blessed with a wonderful Christian wife who encourages me to hide God’s Word in my heart. Now the Holy Spirit was bringing that Word to my remembrance. The passage of Scripture that flashed into my mind is recorded on this scroll: Ephesians 6, beginning with verse 10: “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 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.”

In part 1 of this series on Radical Protection, we came to the realization that we are all in the midst of an intense cosmic battle between good and evil. We are involved in close quarters combat with principalities and authorities, world rulers of darkness, and spiritual forces of wickedness. Today, we will discover that God wants to provide protection for us but we have to choose to receive it.

Let’s look again at Ephesians 6:11. Having encouraged us to be strong or to be strengthened in the Lord and in the power of His might, Paul admonishes us in Ephesians 6:11, “Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles, the schemes, of the devil.” That great dragon of Revelation 12, that old serpent called the devil and Satan, wants to destroy us. The wiles or schemes of the devil are carefully designed to drag us away from God and to lead us to certain and eternal death. This same word “wiles” or “schemes” is used just one other time in the NT in Ephesians 4:14 speaking of “the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.” We are contending with cosmic forces intent on our destruction. Therefore, Paul urges us to “put on the whole armor of God that we may be able to stand.”

This term “whole armor” is just one word in Greek: panoplia, from which we get the English word panoply. A panoply is a covering, and Paul tells us that we need the panoply of God. The Greek word panoplia is made up of two words: the plural of hoplon, hopla, which means weapons, and pan which means all. Panoplia—all of the weapons.

And this panoply, this covering, is not of our own making. This is the panoply of God, the protection that finds its source in God. Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 10:3-4, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are

not carnal but might in God for pulling down strongholds.” Our panoply is the armor of God and when we are covered with the whole armor of God we are protected against the all of the wiles of the devil.

But I want you to notice a very important point at the beginning of Ephesians 6:11. This protection is not automatic. We must choose to receive this protection. Notice the verb: “Put on.” Literally, clothe yourself. Dress yourself. This armor is not simply to be looked at, thought about, admired. We need to put on the whole armor of God. This is the same verb that is used in the parable of the prodigal son where the father says in Luke 15:22 where the father says, “Bring out the best robe and put it on him.” (This same very is use in a figurative sense in Galatians 3:27 where Paul says “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”)

This verb translated “put on” is used 3 times in connection with radical protection. Here in Ephesians 6:11, where we are admonished to put on the whole armor of God, in Romans 13:12 where we are encouraged to put on the armor of light, and in 1 Thessalonians 5:8 where we are exhorted to put on the breastplate of faith and love and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

In each of these references, we have a choice to make. Radical protection is offered to us by our great and awesome God. We must choose to receive that protection. Look again at Ephesians 6:11, “Put on the whole armor, the panoply, of God.” This verb is in the imperative: a command or earnest appeal. Put on! Clothe yourself! You may remember from a previous study that the imperative can be a present imperative with the idea of continued action, keep on doing something, or an aorist imperative which can convey the idea of a new action, to do something that you have not yet done. An example of an aorist imperative is found in John 11:44 where Lazarus is raised from the dead, still wrapped in grave clothes and Jesus says,

“Loose him and let him go.” Start an action that has not yet been performed.

I believe that it is significant to note that in Ephesians 6:11, when Paul admonishes us to put on the whole armor of God, he is using an aorist imperative. You are not yet covered, you are not yet clothed with the panoply of God so put it on, clothe yourself, accept the gift of the radical protection that God offers to you. If we are involved in a great cosmic battle, contending with cosmic forces in opposition to God, why would we not put on the panoply of God? There are several possible reasons. We might not even know about the armor of God? We might not even know about the radical protection that God longs to provide. That why we’re doing this study, not just for your benefit, but for the blessing of those that you know and love. You need to share with them about the radical protection that God longs to provide for them too.

There is a second reason why we might not put on the panoply of God? We might have become careless, preoccupied with the concerns of this life. We might just assume that everything will turn out OK in the end. But that is dangerous thinking. Paul has made it very clear that we are involved in hand to hand combat with principalities, powers, world rulers of the darkness of this age and spiritual forces of wickedness that operate on a super-terrestrial level. We cannot afford to be careless. We must choose the radical protection that God longs to provide, not only for ourselves but for those that we love.

The importance of making a choice to receive radical protection from the Lord is emphasized again in Ephesians 6:13. “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.” Here another verb is used: “Take up”. This is the common verb used when a soldier takes up his weapons. Take up. Arm yourself. Take up is also an aorist imperative. There is something that you need to start doing—

take up the panoply of God. We are not called to make it or mend it, to borrow it or to buy it. The armor is from God and it is a gift of God. We are simply called to take it up.

As I knelt there on the family room carpet, in the midst of an intense cosmic battle, those deep raspy tones still ringing in my ears—“She opened her life to me!”, I began to pray that God would cover this young lady with the armor of God: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness. We’ll study each part of this armor in part 3 of our series. Each part of the armor is important. And as I prayed the armor of God to cover this young student, something supernatural occurred. She later testified that as she chose to receive each piece of the armor, new strength came to her. Hallelujah. Though the battle was still raging, she was finding her place under the shelter of the Almighty. Finally, she cried out to Jesus and she was set free.

She immediately gathered with some of her friends and began to give thanks and praise to God. While they were praying, she felt that evil presence come right up to her again. At first she was tempted to be afraid, but then she began to praise the name of the Lord because she realized that the evil presence could not enter her. She was clothed with the armor of God, she was covered with the panoply of God. She had chosen to receive radical protection, and the enemy could not penetrate God’s protective panoply.

Friends, I cannot overemphasize the importance of choosing to receive the radical protection that God want to provide. The battle is real. The cosmic conflict is intense. We will all have to contend with cosmic forces that are in opposition to God. We need to put on the whole armor of God. We need to take up the panoply of God. We need to choose to receive the protection that God alone can provide.

Someone might ask, “Do you have to take anything off before you put on the whole

armor of God? Do you have to put anything down before you take up the whole armor of God?” Those are important questions. What is the answer? Let’s listen to the Word of God. Paul doesn’t answer these questions in our passage in Ephesians 6. He simply says, “Put on the whole armor of God....Take up the whole armor.” But listen to Paul’s exhortation to Christians in Rome, recorded in Romans 13:11-13. “.....” So what is the answer to our question? Do we have to take anything off before we put on the armor of God? Yes. We have to put off the works of darkness. Does that mean that we have to be perfect? No. But we need to be perfectly surrendered to God. Completely yielded to Him as Lord of our lives.

This passage of Scripture in Paul’s letter to the Romans also gives us a clue as to what it looks like in the spiritual realm when a person is clothed with the armor of God. If we could see spiritual reality, we would see those who have chosen to receive the radical protection that only God can provide. They would be clothed in a robe of light, and armor of light. In our battle against the kingdom of darkness, we are not powerless. We do not need to grovel in fear. We certainly do not need to give up and yield to the enemy. We can receive radical protection from God and we can stand against the wiles, the schemes of the devil.

On a recent visit to Australia, two sisters, Norma and Marilyn, gave me this book—Broken Stick. It is the story of their family, the Ferris family, who served as missionaries in the Solomon Islands. On one occasion, their father, Norman Ferris, was asked by a chief to visit his village on the east coast of Guadalcanal, one of the Solomon Islands. Norman was happy to respond to this chief’s requests. He travelled with the chief to his village and began to teach the villages Christian songs. He also hung a picture roll on the tree and began to tell stories about Jesus.

I have no doubt that angels in heaven were rejoicing as they witnessed the scene. Men and women were receiving the truth about Jesus with joy. But Satan was angry. He had ruled this island and he wasn't going to yield his territory without a fight. Satan came to Nghata, the devil priest of that region, and gave him these instructions: "Nghata, today a White man came to Koilotumria. He is dangerous! He will bring disharmony to our people. You must take your sword. Go soon and kill him." You might be thinking, "How do you know that Satan gave those instructions to the Devil Priest?" That's a good question. This isn't a fairy tale. I'm not making it up. That Devil Priest later became a follower of Jesus and gave his testimony. But that is another part of the story!

The instructions from Satan were clear: Take your sword. Go soon and kill him. No one saw Nghata, the Devil Priest enter the village that evening. People were gathered together, learning songs about Jesus. As they sang "Jesus loves me", Nghata's heart was filled with hate and fury. With a mighty yell, Nghata grasped his sword and rushed toward the Christian missionary.

Norman Ferris didn't have time for a long prayer. He didn't have time to quote all of Ephesians 6—the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness. Norman just had a few seconds to receive the gift of radical protection. This is what he prayed: "Dear God, send your mighty arm of power." What was Norman doing? He was choosing radical protection. He was putting on the panoply. He was taking up the armor of God. That devil priest became a follower of Jesus, he was baptized, and he became a mighty worker for God. God used this former devil priest to raise up two Christian churches in his region. Today there are 16 thriving churches with more than 2000 members.

The attacks of Satan aren't always that dramatic but they are just as real. Just a few days ago I had lunch with a member of our Forest Lake Church family. He had just been offered a job making more money than he had ever made in his whole life. It sounded too good to be true. But as this church member met with the management of this company, he sensed that there were spiritual forces of wickedness at work. This was not a place where the Spirit of God was invited and welcome. Perhaps you are thinking to yourself, "Well that's an easy decision. Just turn down the job, no matter how much money is involved." And that is exactly what the member of our church family did. But then he came under intense spiritual attack. In fact, he feared that he might die. He cried out to God with tears for God to save him, to cover him, to protect him from the wiles of the devil. And God heard his cry. Two days later he was able to give his testimony of praise and thanks to God. He had experienced in his own life that God longs to provide radical protection against the attacks of the devil, but we have to choose to receive that protection.

Is there anyone here today who is experienced intense spiritual attack? Don't be careless. Don't be complacent. Choose to receive the radical protection that God alone can provide.

Prayer

(Invite anyone who needs special prayer to come forward at the close of the service)

“Nghata, today a White man came to Koilotumria. He is dangerous! He will bring disharmony to our people. You must take your sword. Go soon and kill him.”

“Dear God, send your mighty arm of power.”

“Nghata, you failed to kill the White man. But he left a boy to teach the people. Take your sword and kill him, and do not fail this time.”

“Nghata, do not touch the one whom Jesus has appointed.”

“Strong Power, help me to forsake my evil ways. I long to learn of this mighty Warrior, Jesus.”