

A Big Decision to Make

What Will You Do About the Armor of God?

When I was a kid, knights were all the rage. I can't speak for the girls, but nearly every boy wanted to be a fierce and noble knight fighting the forces of evil. Back then, garbage cans were metal and were literally picked up by garbage men and the trash dumped into the garbage truck. What made the garbage cans such a boon for kids was that they had round, metal lids with a handle on them, making them perfect shields. With garbage can lid in hand, all you needed was a good, strong stick and you were set for sword fighting with your friends, or in my case, with my brother. I don't ever remember being hurt much in the battles, maybe because my brother was three years younger than me, but even when I fought my buddies, we were careful not to whack each other in the face. Much later it dawned on me how completely unromantic sword fighting was. Arms got cut off, faces gouged and many more who did not die from a mortal wound, were killed off by gangrene and infections that lingered. It was all great fun until there were real risks involved and terrible suffering and death were a legitimate possibility. The Bible tells us that you face mortal danger each day and the only way to stave it off is by making a big decision before you get your day going. Our big idea is a vital one to absorb. The full armor of God is crucial to your well-being.

The Bible gives us a stern warning and in fact it is a strongly worded command. **Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.** (Ephesians 6: 13 NIV) Let me translate it as it literally reads. **Because of this, take up the complete armor of God in order that you might be able to stand against in the evil day, and being fully prepared and ready, to stand.** There are several questions to ask here with this monumental command of God. First, why are you to take up the complete armor of God? It is because as the previous verse states, your battle is not against flesh and blood issues but great supernatural powers you have no ability to defend yourself on your own from harming you. It seems so absurd to the minds of those who have no real belief in a non-physical, anti-God kingdom but to ignore these forces is a terrible error on your part. It is like a house cat attacking a tiny mouse while behind it a fierce pack of wolves is ready to pounce on the unsuspecting cat. Consider the crucial lesson we learn from Job. As Job's loyal friends attacked him for somehow being responsible for the terrible suffering he was experiencing, they had no inkling that it was all due to the work of Satan. History provides a grave lesson for you. The ancient Greeks thought the cause of malaria was drinking swamp water. The Romans were convinced it was due to the bad air around stagnant bodies of water. It was not until it was discovered that malaria was spread by mosquitos that a serious defense could be launched to stop malaria from killing people. When you think your problems are due to your spouse, your co-workers, the high cost of gas or the leaders of your country, you are dead wrong. They may be bad, irresponsible and ignorant but behind all the heartache and suffering in your life is the devil and his spiritual allies of great evil.

You are actually commanded in this verse to take up the full armor of God. For the believer in Christ, this is a direct order to you. If you don't take up the full armor of God, you are in absolute rebellion against God. A second question is, "How often should you take up the full armor of God?" The form of the verb translated "take up" is aorist which means that each day you are to make this happen. This is not something you do once and the effect of your decision lasts forever. It is not like being born again or gaining eternal life. This is a daily determination on your part and any day you don't puts you at risk to the attacks of spiritual forces of evil. It is like the seatbelt rule. Just because you wore your seatbelt yesterday doesn't protect you from death or serious injury if you are in a car wreck today. Each day you put on your seatbelt to potentially save your life, each day you put on the armor of God to save your life. The first time I went to Russia, I took a cab ride from the airport to the school where I was going to teach. This was in 1999. I searched around for the seatbelt and there was none. The cab driver realized what I was doing and told me in broken English that in Russia they don't wear seatbelts. The ride was like a car chase in a Tom Cruise movie as he veered in and out of lanes, even driving on the side of the freeway to avoid traffic. Wearing a seatbelt is never optional when you drive and putting on the full armor of God never is either when you wake up in the morning.

A third question is, "How much of the armor of God is necessary?" God tells you to put on all of His armor and not leave off even a single item. NIV uses the term "full" to make this clear, the KJV translates the term "whole", meaning the entirety of the armor and I render it "complete". The armor is described bit by bit in what follows our key verse. Each part of the armor is crucial to have and put in place every single day. We will take a careful look at each piece of

armor in the weeks to come but today, you need to be clear. There is not one piece of armor to neglect or you will regret it and put yourself at risk as spiritual forces attack you.

There is a fourth question. "How seriously should we take this command?" The text is most fascinating here. You are ordered to take up the full armor of God in order that **you might be able to stand against in the day of evil...** There is no mention what or who you are to stand against. You are simply to stand against without putting any focus on who your enemy or attacker is. That is a very strange way of trying to convince us to take up the full armor of God...not listing the enemy, not identifying the attacker. Of course the previous verses tell us clearly that we fight a spiritual battle that is very real, and the true attackers can't be seen or touched by our physical senses. But God at this very critical moment, does not reiterate who the enemy is but just why you should make sure you get on your full armor of God. The evil day is coming. When? He does not say. But if? There is no if. It is going to be there, if it isn't already. It is the evil day that must concern you most, not the one or ones who bring it about. Consider an example from ancient history during the time of the conquest of the Promised Land. Achan was a non-descript Jew among the millions being led by God. He was a part of the attack on Jericho, the very first battle in the land God was giving Israel. The Lord had commanded that nothing in the city of Jericho would go to any of the Israelites. Everything was to be turned over to God. But for some reason, Achan decided he would take possession of some of the treasure in the city. In his own words, this is what Achan did. **When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath.**" (Joshua 7: 21 NIV) For his crime, Achan was ordered to be executed. That was his day of evil and Achan was not prepared to do battle with the greed that came over him.

A similar example may help. Among the disciples chosen was Judas Iscariot. When God called him, it is nearly inconceivable that he joined the band because he simply wanted to find a way to turn Jesus over to be executed. He had to have become one of the twelve because he saw something in Jesus worth following. But then the day of evil came and Judas was not prepared for it. We don't know why he soured on the Lord, perhaps it is for reasons similar to those today who once had an affinity for Christianity but then turned away. Whatever happened, the Bible makes it clear that a supernatural destructive force collapsed Judas's faith and even his sanity. **Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus.** (Luke 22: 3-4 NIV) An often forgotten aspect to Judas's betrayal of Jesus is that whatever led him to first go follow Jesus never fully left him. Scripture makes that clear. **When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood."** (Matthew 27: 3-4 NIV) Immediately after, he went and committed suicide because of what he had done. **So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.** (Matthew 27: 5 NIV)

Neither Judas nor Achan were prepared for the day of evil and it destroyed them. The day of evil is the moment in time when you come against the forces of Satan and the cleverly planned schemes they work against you and your faith. Rarely is it as dramatic as what Achan and Judas faced but the day of evil is powerful and devastating, humiliating and devised to bring you down. Consider Aaron and the golden calf debacle. Aaron was left in charge of Israel by Moses for just a short amount of time, forty days to be exact. The day of evil for Aaron came when the leaders among the nation went to Aaron asking him to make a god for them to worship. Despite the vast number of supernatural experiences they all had with the actual LORD, they wanted something tangible to worship and help them because with Moses up on the mountain for over a month, it perhaps seemed they were at risk from danger and needed a touchable and viewable god to protect them. Aaron had the opportunity on that one day to reject their request and point them to faith in the God they already had met. Instead, Aaron had no defense against Satan's scheme, and he told them to bring him gold so he could make an idol. The day lives in infamy, and it did great harm to the people of Israel as well as to Aaron. Is the lack of spiritual power that led to the people demanding an idol the reason why they balked not much later at going into the Promised Land? You have an amazing opportunity to live with great faith in God and do mighty things for His Kingdom. No one is built like you and made to accomplish the noble deeds of spiritual valor God has planned for you to do. Never damage by any means the anointing God has on you by neglecting to be properly prepared when the day of evil comes. Greatness is lost to many who ought to be God's most powerful people of influence and workers of good in the world. The big idea is of tremendous importance to you. The full armor of God is crucial to your well-being. Make sure you never lose what God can and will do for you and through you if you are properly prepared for each day by having the full armor of God in place.