

## The Christian Armed for Battle

One of the ways the Christian life is discussed in the New Testament is under the concept of spiritual warfare. Satan and his wicked agents are presented as our unseen but very real enemy. He attacks believers especially in the areas of the mind. But God has made provision for his people's protection. Paul exhorts us to take up the armor of God and to stand against the devil.

Listen to Paul's exhortation in Ephesians chapter 6 beginning at verse 10.

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you may take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 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. Stand firm then with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all of this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:10ff NIV)*

Now there are six pieces to the armor God has given to the believer- Five are defensive in nature and one is both defensive and offensive. They are primarily for our use in spiritual warfare waged by our enemy against us. He desires to hinder our spiritual growth, mute our witness to Christ and cause us to sin. He wants to dishonor our Lord Jesus by causing us to stumble.

John Bunyan in his classic tale of the Christian life, *Pilgrim's Progress*, describes the suiting up of Pilgrim by the sisters at the palace Beautiful. "Then they fitted Christian out with the armor which their Lord provided for the use of travelers, that they should be

ready for any assaults along the way, and that they should stand their ground, when things were at their worse, and having done all to stand. First, the helmet and breastplate, that could save his life. Then the faithful shield, to fend off the fiery darts of the wicked. Then the trusty sword, that could cut through anything. Finally, his feet were shod with shoes that would never wear out. For he was setting out, they said, not against human foes, but against the wiles of the Devil. Thus, fully armed did Christian hurry to the gate.

As Bunyan relates the story, since Pilgrim also known as Christian, did not immediately face a foe and things seemed calm he felt content. He was in a solitary place called the Valley of Humiliation. Surely, he thought, the worst was behind him. But suddenly a darkness fell across the sun and Christian felt a sense of unease. He roused himself and saw a towering figure stalking towards him. It was the Foul Fiend called Apollyon.

The name Apollyon is closely tied to Satan or the Devil. The name appears in Revelation 9:11. *They (an army of demons) had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek is Apollyon (that is, Destroyer).* Although sometimes used as a synonym for the Devil, he is more likely to be a chief demon. In this verse both his Hebrew and Greek names are given. In Hebrew, the name "Abaddon" means "place of destruction"; the Greek title "Apollyon" literally means "The Destroyer." He should probably be identified as one of Satan's chief *rulers, authorities* and *powers* mentioned in Ephesians 6:12.

How does he primarily attack the Christian? His major field of battle is against the mind of the Christian, where he seeks to destroy us through fostering thoughts of fear, doubt, confusion and accusations.

Bunyan continues his narration of his dream. The Foul Fiend appeared to be nine feet high and as he came closer, the more hideous he grew. "He had scales like a fish and they are his pride. He had wings like a dragon, and feet like a bear, and out of his belly came fire and smoke."

As happens in dreams, Christian recognized the Fiend at once and knew his name. It was Apollyon. Terrified, he debated in his mind whether to go back or to stay firm. Then

considering that he had no armor on his back and to turn his back to the monster would give him advantage, he resolved to stay firm. The Fiend had now drawn very close. He looked upon Christian with a disdainful countenance and thus began to question him:

**Where have you come from?**

*I've come from the city of destruction which is the place of all evil.*

**But this I perceive that you are one of my subjects, said Apollyon. For I am the Prince of that city and all that country is mine. Why then are you running away from your Prince?**

*I was indeed born in your dominion, admitted Christian. But I've given my allegiance to another who is the King of Princes. How can I now with fairness go back on this?*

**You did the same to me, and yet I am willing to pass it over, replied Apollyon.**

*What I promised was in my infancy, said Christian. Besides to tell you the truth, I like his service better than yours.*

Now comes the voice of accusation from the Devil, aimed at the heart of Christian, as he recounts to him his recent failures on the journey.

**You have already been unfaithful to him, exclaimed Apollyon. You fell in the Slough of Despond. You slept and let fall your parchment. And in all you say and do, you are inwardly desirous of vain-glory.**

*Too well I know it, relied Christian. Yet the King whom I serve is merciful and ready to forgive.*

**I am the enemy of this King, said Apollyon. I hate his person, his laws, and his people. Moreover, there is no prince who will lightly lose his subjects, neither will I lose you. Give him the slip, and work for me again, and your wages shall be doubled.**

*I know your wages, you Destroying Apollyon. They are not such as a man can live on. They are the wages of death.*

Then Apollyon broke into a grievous rage:

**What you say is true. Therefore, prepare yourself to die!**

Christian responded: *Apollyon, beware what you are doing,. For I am on the King's Highway- the way of Holiness. Therefore, take heed of yourself.*

Then Apollyon blocked the path of Christian by straddling across the highway. He taunted Christian. **I am empty of fear in this matter. I swear by my Infernal Den that you shall go no further. Here will I spill your soul.**

At this Apollyon threw a flaming dart directly at Christian's breast. Christian lifted the Shield of Faith that was in his hand and deflected it. Then the fight was on! Christian drew his sword, but Apollyon swiftly hurled a burst of darts that hit Christian on the head and hands and feet. His armor kept Christian from mortal wounds, and he fought furiously for half a day. At times he retreated but would sum up his courage and resist bravely. When Christian was almost exhausted and weakened from his many wounds, Apollyon recognized an opportunity and pressed closely on him. Now they were wrestling, and Christian was thrown to the ground. As a result, his sword flew out of his hand. Apollyon gleefully exclaimed, *I am sure of you now* and he was moving to inflict a mortal wound. Christian felt a sense of despair but as God would have it, at that moment Christian was enabled to stretch out his hand and grip his sword. He cried out to the Enemy: "Do not rejoice over me, for though I fall I shall rise again." At this he plunged his sword into the Dragon. Apollyon withdrew as if he had received a fatal blow. As Christian readied his hand to inflict another stab, Apollyon spread his wings and flew away.

Then Christian saw a hand appear which gave him some leaves from the Tree of Life that immediately healed his wounds. After receiving refreshment, he resumed his journey.

In Bunyan's allegory, a story that is illustrative of spiritual truth, we get a glimpse of the raging spiritual battle directed against the Christian by Satan and his evil associates. Their goal is destruction of the Christian's effectiveness and testimony. How can the Christian fight and win in this spiritual conflict? It is by taking up the full armor that God provides. It is by looking to Jesus and employing the sword of the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit. The battle is fierce, but God equips his Christian soldiers with the armor that leads to victory!

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