

Sermon on Receive Divine Armor

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Text

Ephesians 6:10-13 ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² 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. ¹³ 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.

1 Introduction

We continue with the epistle from Paul to the churches in Ephesus and Asia Minor. Ephesians 6:10-13 describes the setup for spiritual warfare that requires the believer to be empowered through God. The believer's foe is unseen forces arrayed in the spiritual realm whose purpose is to "steal and kill and destroy" (John 10:10) and "who prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). To successfully battle this foe requires the believer to receive divine power, which is superior to Satanic power.

My teaching today is taken from my book titled, "Utter Mysteries to God." You can purchase a copy at www.amazon.com or you can email me at kakufo@verizon.net for more information or you can call our church telephone at 508-797-3163 and leave a message.

Ephesians 6:10 says, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power." This may be paraphrased as "Henceforth, be empowered in the Lord and in the power of his strength." If you want to fight on behalf of the US in Iraq, you can't just get up take a flight and go to Iraq and start fighting. You must join the US army, be trained and then be officially commissioned as a soldier for the US. In the same way, to engage in spiritual warfare, you have to enroll in the army of the Lord, be trained in spiritual warfare and be equipped with the weapons and armor for spiritual warfare.

2 Be empowered

The word translated “be strong” may also be translated as “empower” or “be fortified with power” (Barth) It is a passive tense calling on the believer to obtain a certain power. Go get some power for yourself to stand firm. You have run out of gas. Go get some power. Nobody will bring it to you. You can’t send someone to get it for you. You have to get it yourself.

2.1 Be empowered in the Lord

Barth explains the power as “a power which comes to man from outside ... rather than an increase in strength flowing from internal resources.” Empowerment implies that it is not from within but is conferred by some external agent. A soldier is empowered externally and not from within himself. That is, a person becomes a US soldier not from internal fortitude but because the US army trains and commissions the person as a soldier. In general, your empowerment comes from the authority under which you operate. Empowerment of the believer does not come from a church. Empowerment of the believer does not come from the government or from organizations. Empowerment does not come from potions and special incantations. Empowerment of the believer comes from the commander of the army of the Lord; empowerment comes from the Lord as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:7, “But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.”

2.2 Be empowered ... in the power of his strength

The source of empowerment must be able to give out power and must be authorized to give power. There are militia groups in the US but they do not have the authority to commission you to fight in Iraq. Only the US army has the authority. Today people are going to false prophets to get false commission. Yes they can give you some armor but it is not the armor of God! Without the proper source of empowerment you will fail against the enemy. We see this account in the episode of the Seven sons of Sceva recorded in Acts 19:13-16.

Acts 19:13-16 ¹³ Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." ¹⁴ Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. ¹⁵ *One day* the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" ¹⁶ Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

The power to be received resides only in the Lord. The believer is exhorted to be empowered in the Lord in a similar way to Isaiah 40:26-31 where the follower of God is exhorted that if he puts his hope (NIV) and trust in the Lord and waits (KJV) on the Lord he will gain great strength that is unparalleled by the strength of youth because the power of God's strength is demonstrated by the visible evidence of creation of which he is the author. The King James Version of Isaiah 40:31 says, "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint." (KJV Isaiah 40:31).

In effect what Paul is saying in verse 10 of our passage is this: "After all is said and done, one thing remains or here is the bottom-line: be empowered". It is not a choice the believer has. It is imperative (the Greek imperative is used as well) that the believer be empowered not through developing his own strength of mind, will or heart, but by obtaining his power from the one to whom all power belongs¹ and who has authority to give it out.

3 Pursuing Empowerment – Elisha Pursues Elijah

3.1 Elisha Pursues Elijah

Several years ago there was a popular doll called a "Cabbage Patch doll" that every girl wanted. Parents went to all kinds of extent to purchase this doll. They went from store to store looking for it; some people even traveled by plane to go to cities rumored to have it. Then they waited in long lines and paid exorbitant prices. Those who persisted in their search for the doll were rewarded with getting one. To receive power from the Lord you have to pursue power fervently. Let's look at the example of Elisha.

When Elijah was about to depart this earth, he tried to evade Elisha so as to depart in Elisha's absence. But Elisha knew what was about to happen and he wanted to receive the inheritance of Elijah's divine power. Elijah tried to lose him, but Elisha pursued with patience and perseverance. God had revealed to Elijah that he should cross over to the east side of the Jordan and there he would be raptured to heaven. Elijah thought Elisha was unaware of this revelation. So even though they were near Gilgal not far from the Jordan, to elude Elisha, Elijah told Elisha that he had to go westward away from the Jordan to Bethel to take care of some business. So he asked Elisha to stay behind in Gilgal. But Elisha refused and pressed on with

¹ Matthew 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Elijah to Bethel. When they got to Bethel, the company of prophets approached Elisha and asked him if he knew that his boss was about to be raptured. He told them to be quiet and not mention it because he was in hot pursuit of the power Elijah had.

Having failed to elude Elisha, Elijah came out with another plan. He faked another business trip to Jericho, which was now eastward toward the Jordan River but south of their original location in Gilgal. He asked Elisha to stay behind in Bethel. Elisha, once again, refused to stay behind and pressed on with Elijah to Jericho. Now Jericho was close to the Jordan and Elijah decided it was time to cross over to the east side of the Jordan. The Bible does not say this, but I believe that Elijah probably tried to ask Elisha to stay behind in Jericho while he went to take care of some business at the banks of the Jordan in his last ditch effort to elude Elisha. But Elisha was as determined as ever to receive the divine power that was on Elijah, so he stuck with Elijah. When he got to the west bank of the Jordan River, Elijah probably tried to convince Elisha to return as both of them faced the river with no boat to cross. But Elisha persisted and Elijah now had no choice but to go for his rapture appointment.

At the west bank of the Jordan, Elijah performed his last miracle as he used his cloak to part the Jordan River. Elisha followed Elijah through the parted river to the east bank of the river. At that point Elijah knew he had to say something to Elisha about the impending rapture. So “Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?’ ‘Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,’ Elisha replied. ‘You have asked a difficult thing,’ Elijah said, ‘yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise not’” (2 Kings 2:9-10). Elisha’s persistence, patience and perseverance earned him a double portion of the empowerment that was on Elijah.

3.2 My pursuit of empowerment through Holy Ghost Baptism

To receive spiritual empowerment, you must go to the original source—God. You must wait on the Lord in pursuit of the power with persistence, patience and perseverance and you must cross your Jordan River (a seemingly impossible obstacle). When I was seeking the Holy Spirit baptism I attended prayer meetings during which others were Holy Spirit baptized, but I did not receive the baptism. I began to have an inferiority complex about my spirituality. I did not let that cripple me but instead I began to examine myself and my relationship with God. I found out that I still had certain intellectual doubts about God and the Bible even though I believed in God. Then I met a minister and an elder of the church who challenged me to study the Bible.

I accepted the advice of these mature Christians and I decided it was time to find out for myself what was in the Bible. With my analytical skills acquired from studying Computer Science I was ready to dissect this Bible stuff. But I remembered that I disliked reading that Shakespearean-like impossible-to-understand “thee/thou” English. Then, I found out that there were Bible versions that are written in today’s English. Oh, so Christianity is not about thee/thou holiness? I bought a copy of the New International Version of the Bible. The English was clear!!! I started reading it voraciously. I began to understand what this Christian thing was all about. I started peeling off the misinformation I had acquired over the years through popular culture ideas and expressions about Christianity. I made a new discovery! I discovered that being Christian is about having a relationship with the God who created heaven and earth. So I said to myself, *if I can see and touch this God, that will be incredible!*

So, I started praying conversationally with God asking him to reveal himself to me. I had several dreams in which God was talking to me, showing me his glory, and showing me his beautiful creation in the world. As I understood more from reading the Bible I started making requests of God and began to get responses. Wow! I was carrying on a relationship with God. It was no longer a fairy tale. It was no longer a figment of someone’s imagination. It was real. I began to feel that my life had an anchor in something solid; life was more meaningful. Not long after that I received the Holy Spirit baptism.

3.3 Jacob’s pursuit of empowerment in his encounter with the Angel

My quest for the Holy Spirit baptism required commitment, persistence, patience and perseverance. This reminds me of the struggle between Jacob and the angel of God. Jacob contended with God when he wrestled with the angel of God and kept at it until he had received his blessing, which blessing included empowerment from God. Jacob’s struggle for empowerment was an all-night event and showed his keen desire to obtain that empowerment. He did not give up nor put a time limit on receiving what he was looking for but kept incessantly at it saying, “I will not let you go unless you bless me” (Genesis 32:26). The author of Hebrews tells us in Hebrews 11:6 that “without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” Jacob was rewarded for his faith with God’s blessing after earnestly seeking it all night. Learning from Jacob’s experience, we next examine how to ask for the Holy Spirit empowerment with the zeal, persistence and expectation that Jacob exhibited in this encounter.

4 Conclusion

Beloved, we have learnt from this passage that just as a US soldier's armor and empowerment comes from the US army so you also, as a believer, have to receive your spiritual armor and spiritual empowerment from God's army led by God Most High. You need this divine armor and empowerment to wage successful spiritual warfare. Just by being a believer pits you against the forces of Satan as Paul explains in our passage. To win against Satan you have to receive divine armor and divine empowerment. To receive the divine armor and empowerment requires you to pursue it with perseverance and persistence.