

SCHEMES AND STRATEGIES

WILLIS 11/6/11

Ep6:10-18

I have entitled what I want to share this morning “Schemes and Strategies.” Our focus is the last and final passage of the Book of Ephesians where Paul closes out his thoughts on the subjects of spiritual warfare and putting on the armor of God.

- **Whether we see it or not...able to discern it or not, we live in the midst of a war.**
- No, it's not a war of flesh and blood, ours is a spiritual battle that takes place in the realm of the unseen where the enemies we contend with are principalities and powers of spiritual darkness.

Often our greatest need is like that of the servant of the prophet Elisha who only saw what he could see with his natural eyes. So when he saw the city surrounded by the armies of Aram he cried out to Elisha, “What shall we do?”

- Elisha said, **“Fear not, those who are for us are more than those who are against us.”**
- Elisha then asked the Lord to open the servant's eyes to see the realm of the unseen. When the Lord did the servant saw the armies of the Lord had outnumbered the armies of Aram.
- **Victory in spiritual war begins with the ability to see the unseen and discern the reality of spiritual war.** You cannot fight an enemy you do not see or think does not exist. So when in conflict, the Lord opens our eyes to see the conflict behind the conflict.
- Once our eyes are opened to the unseen we are able to see the issues we so often focus on are not the real issue. Our spouse is not the issue, our children are not the issue, our circumstance is not the issue...
- **Our real issue is with the principalities and powers stirring up our spouse, provoking our children and manipulating our circumstances.**

So Paul begins the passage exhorting us to “Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might...” This is the “Being endued with power” that Jesus spoke of in Acts 1. This is the “Dunamis” power of God as in dynamite. It is borrowed power.

- **The power of His might is power imparted through devotion. It is the power given through abiding. It is the resulting power of God working on behalf of those who wait. (Is64:4)**

In v.11 Paul instructs us to “put on the full armor of God that we might be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.”

It is evident in Paul’s writings that fear was not the primary basis of his concern. Reading both Ep6 and 2Cor10 we see what Paul was concerned about most was deception. **In Ep6 and 2Cor10 we see deception was the primary focus of Paul’s concern...not fear.**

- This word “Schemes” in v.11 is the Greek word “Methodeia” from which we get our English word “Method.” The schemes of the devil are the methods he employs to subtly deceive the saints and systematically condition us toward his deception.
- **The schemes are deployed through thoughts that aren’t taken captive, offenses that aren’t quickly resolved or doubts that aren’t Biblically silenced.**
- These unanswered schemes leave us susceptible to deception and most often unaware of the deception...which is precisely why we need the covering and concealment of the Body of Christ rather than exposure of going it alone.

I asked Chuck Crouch a Navy Seal to talk to me about the importance of body armor. He said some very interesting things about armor but what he said about concealment and covering I found even more apropos.

- He said **in war there are 2 main defenses concealment and covering. Concealment being camouflage, netting or bush. Covering being foxholes or a cement wall.** Chuck said (what I found most interesting) “When there is no covering or concealment then armor is needed.” Of course armor hinders agility and rapid movement.
- He then asked a very important question, “What makes a better soldier, one who can get out of the way before they get shot or one who if they can’t get out of the way can survive getting shot? The answer of course is both but better if no one gets shot.
- **Never underestimate the importance of covering or concealment when it comes to spiritual war.** Covering being our relationship to authority and submission; concealment being those dispositions that keep us immune like humility, repentance, brokenness and dependency.

In v.12 Paul says our struggle is not with flesh and blood but against rulers, powers, world forces of this darkness and spiritual forces. It is a spiritual hierarchy of demonic forces where the entire universe is a cosmic battleground of good vs. evil.

- Once again Paul is opening our eyes to the unseen forces of the spiritual dimension. **Spirit is what distinguishes man from animal. Spirit is that primary touch point of God and man.**
- Man is capable of limited understanding of God through the mind but he can only touch and interact with God through the spirit. Consequently the spirit realm is also the chosen realm of demonic attack. That is precisely why we need the full armor of God.
- Our fight is with the unseen hierarchy of spiritual forces that manipulate situation and circumstance causing us to focus on the result not the cause. So awareness enables us to focus on the issue behind the issue so we change the source not manage the symptoms.

So in v.13 Paul instructs us to take up the full armor of God. In doing so there are 3 things that are essential:

- 1. Put on the Armor: v.13 Specific action is required. In times of war there is no room for passivity, apathy of indifference.** We are to put on truth, righteousness, the Gospel of peace, the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit.
 - **Please note there is no armor provided for the backside. Believers never run from battle we only run into battle.**
 - The Word is the only offensive weapon all others are defensive weapons to resist.
 - Paul also instructs us to pray. **Prayer is not just a weapon of war; prayer is the practice of war.** The prayer that does war most effectively is prayer that is constant, intense, persevering and unselfish.
- 2. Take Thoughts Captive: 2Cor10:3-6 The mind is the arena of battle.** Thoughts of doubt, thoughts of compromise, thoughts of satisfaction, limitation, redefinition...they are all the manner in which the enemy does His warring.
 - “Did God really say”...it’s the war of doubt. “It’s no big deal God knows your heart”...it’s the war of compromise. “Don’t get too radical no one will be able to relate”...it’s the war of limitation. “You must find your own way”...it’s the war of redefinition.

- We have been given divinely empowered weapons like the Word, prayer, concealment and covering...so we don't have to resort to man's way of vengeance, manipulation or deception.

3. Having Done All to Stand...Stand Firm v.14 Don't be lulled into civilian ways. Discern the war and fight the good fight of faith. Deception is the nature of the war; never let your guard down...always keep your discernment on.

- Paul's warning is because of the relentlessness of the enemy. If he can't stop us in the acquisition of truth he will wait until we possess it and become familiar with it, then perhaps we might give it away.
- So Paul says once you have done everything to stand...stand or your biggest fight will be after you have won the fight...just when you think all fighting is over. So keep your discernment on and never return to the ways of the civilian.

Paul said all he said while in prison in Rome chained to a Roman guard. Seeing what he saw every moment of the day Paul allowed what he saw in the natural to be what he needed to do in the spiritual.

- **The armor of God is prayed on. The armor of God is to be left on. This is not a brief skirmish we encounter, this is all out war.** It is a war Christ has won; nevertheless it is a war we must fight.
- So fight the good fight of faith. Stay concealed when you can...under cover at all times. Put on the full armor of God and remember...it is better to give than it is to receive.