

THOUGHTS ON EPHESIANS 6:12.

A. The text:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

B. In this verse, Paul described the spiritual enemy. He had already mentioned the "devil"; but Satan has many allies, "the spiritual hosts of wickedness." It is a fact beyond denial that the ancient pagan world was organized along patterns of evil. Satan had organized it. Furthermore, evil is still organized; and organization presupposes an organizer (JBC).

C. For we wrestle (struggle).

There is undoubtedly here an allusion to the ancient games of Greece, a part of the exercises in which consisted in wrestling (1Cor. 9:25-27).

Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. **26** Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; **27** but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

The Greek word used here denotes a "wrestling;" and then a struggle, fight, combat. Here it refers to the struggle or combat which the Christian has to maintain - the Christian warfare (ABarnes).

D. Not against flesh and blood.

Not with people (Gal. 1:6-9).

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; **7** which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. **8** But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! **9** As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

The apostle does not mean to say that Christians had no enemies among men that opposed them, for they were exposed often to fiery persecution; nor that they had nothing to contend with in the carnal and corrupt propensities of their nature, which was true of them then as it is now; but that their main controversy was with the invisible spirits of wickedness that sought to destroy them. They were the source and origin of all their spiritual conflicts, and with them the warfare was to be maintained (ABarnes).

Our fight is not really with human beings. They are only the tools. The real battle is with spiritual forces of wickedness (PPett).

E. Against the rulers and powers

There are various dominions of evil, that is, certain classifications of it. Paul's use of some of these words here appears to be figurative; nevertheless, there were and are genuine realities behind them. (JBC).

F. Against the world forces of darkness.

The rulers that preside over the regions of ignorance and sin with which the earth abounds (Eph. 2:2). *in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.*

"Darkness" is an emblem of ignorance, misery, and sin; and no description could be more accurate than that of representing these malignant spirits as ruling over a dark world (ABarnes).

Yet the apostle says that it was on that kingdom they were to make war. Against that, the kingdom of the Redeemer was to be set up; and that was to be overcome by the spiritual weapons which he specifies. When he speaks of the Christian warfare here, he refers to the contest with the powers of this dark kingdom. He regards every Christian as a soldier to wage war on it in whatever way he could, and wherever he could attack it. The contest therefore was not primarily with people. It

is a warfare on a large scale with the entire kingdom of darkness over the world. Yet in maintaining the warfare, the struggle will be with such portions of that kingdom as we come in contact with and will actually relate:

1. With the evil passions of others - their pride, ambition, and spirit of revenge - which are also a part of that kingdom.
2. With the evil customs, laws, opinions, employments, pleasures of the world - which are also a part of that dark kingdom.
3. With error, superstition, false doctrine - which are also a part of that kingdom.
4. With the wickedness of the pagan world - the sins of benighted nations - also a part of that kingdom. Wherever we come in contact with evil - whether in our own hearts or elsewhere - there we are to make war.
5. To our own sinful propensities - which are a part of the kingdom of darkness (*ABarnes*).

G. [‘Against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places.’](#)

While we were under the power of darkness (Col. 1:13) we were left untroubled, except to be drawn in into his schemes (Eph. 2:2), but now we have entered the heavenly places with Christ, the spiritual realm, and live in the light, we are subject to the attacks of spiritual forces of wickedness under the Prince of the power of the air (the prince of a kingdom not of this world and yet with no right in the heavenly sphere) (*PPett*).

[For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,](#)

H. [In the heavenly places](#)

Or “in celestial or heavenly places.” The same phrase occurs in Eph. 1:3; 1:20; 2:6; 3:10, where it is translated, “in heavenly places.”

[\(Eph 1:3\) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,](#)

[\(Eph 1:20\) which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,](#)

[\(Eph. 2:6\) and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,](#)

[\(Eph 3:10\) so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.](#)

It is against such spirits, and all their malignant influences, that Christians are called to contend. In whatever way their power is put forth - whether in the prevalence of vice and error; of superstition and magic arts; of infidelity, atheism, or antinomianism; of evil customs and laws; of pernicious fashions and opinions, or in the corruptions of our own hearts, we are to make war on all these forms of evil, and never to yield in the conflict (*ABarnes*).

- I. Summary: So what we are to face is frightening. But God has provided the means by which we can go forward without fear, the armor of God. As we go forward in His mighty strength, His mighty armor will provide all the protection that we need (*PPett*).

A BRIEF LOOK AT EPHESIANS 6:14-17.

THE ARMOR OF GOD

A. See Ephesians 6:14-17.

Stand firm therefore, **HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH**, and **HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, 15** and having shod **YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; 16** in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*. **17** And take **THE HELMET OF SALVATION**, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

B. Six pieces of armor:

1. [The girdle of truth.](#)

The belt that enabled the soldier to carry all their needed equipment in combat conditions.

The girdle of truth protects us from Satan's lies.

2. [The breastplate of righteousness.](#)

The breastplate was a protective "second skin" designed to protect the torso of the soldier.

The breastplate is the righteousness of God that covers and protects us.

3. [The shoes of peace.](#)

The shoes gave the soldier better traction and protected their feet from injury.

The shoes of peace are a solid foundation of trust in God.

4. [The shield of faith.](#)

The shield was covered in metal and thick leather to block incoming projectiles.

The shield of faith is the key to all spiritual armor. Faith shields us from the darts of Satan.

5. [The helmet of salvation.](#)

The helmet is the main source of protection for the soldier's head, a priority target.

The helmet of salvation protects the believer's mind from Satan's attacks.

6. [The sword of the Spirit.](#)

The sword was the soldier's precision-oriented offensive weapon designed for close combat.

The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God, one of our offensive weapons.

COMMENTARY ON 1JOHN 2:16

INTRODUCTION.

- A. The text:
For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.
- B. *For all that is in the world ... is not of the Father ...*
This has the effect of explaining what John meant by his use of "world" in 1Jn. 2:16. It is that aspect of it which is "not in the Father." It is therefore incorrect to accept "world" in these verses as meaning God's glorious natural creation, described by the Father himself as "good" (see Gen. 1).
- C. Jesus said the world loves its own (Jn. 15:19); Paul said, "*Be not conformed to this world*" (Rom. 12:2); and John declared that, "*The whole world lies in the power of the evil one*" (1Jn. 5:19). In the light of these and many other passages in the New Testament, it is clear that John was here speaking of that phase of the world of people which is antagonistic to God (Col. 2:8). (JBC)

I. THE LUST OF THE FLESH.

- A. For all that is in the world - All that it can boast of, all that it can promise, is only sensual, transient gratification, and even this promise it cannot fulfill; so that its warmest votaries can complain loudest of their disappointment (AClarke).
- B. Sensual and impure desires which seek their gratification in women, strong drink, delicious viands (foods), and the like (AClarke). Wrong desires of the heart, the appetite of indulging all things that excite and inflame sensual pleasures (MHenry). See Rom 6:12; 13:14; 1Pet. 1:14.
(Rom 6:12) Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,
(Rom 13:14) But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.
(1Pet 1:14) As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance,
- C. The word "lust" is used here in the general sense of desire, or that which is the object of desire - not in the narrow sense in which it is now commonly used to denote libidinous passion (Jas. 1:14).
But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.
The phrase, "the lust of the flesh," here denotes that which pampers the appetites, or all that is connected with the indulgence of the mere animal propensities. A large part of the world lives for little more than this. This is the lowest form of worldly indulgence; those which are immediately specified being of a higher order, though still merely worldly (ABarnes).
- D. All temptations which have their roots in appetites and needs of the body are included in this; but the appetites of the body are not in themselves sinful. Therefore, "flesh" is used here in "the ethical sense, meaning the old nature of man, or his capacity to do that which is displeasing to God" (JBC).

II. THE LUST OF THE EYES.

- A. Inordinate desires after finery of every kind, gaudy dress, splendid houses, superb furniture, expensive equipage, trappings, and decorations of all sorts (AClarke). Covetousness (MHenry).
- B. That which is designed merely to gratify the sight. This would include, of course, costly clothes, jewels, gorgeous furniture, splendid palaces, pleasure-grounds, etc. The object is to refer to the frivolous vanities of this world, the thing on which the eye delights to rest where there is no higher object of life. It does not, of course, mean that the eye is never to be gratified, or that we can find as much pleasure in an ugly as in a handsome object, or that it is sinful to find pleasure in beholding objects of real beauty - for the world, as formed by its Creator, is full of such things, and he could not but have intended that pleasure should enter the soul through the eye, or that the beauties which he has shed so lavishly over his works should contribute to the happiness of his creatures; but the apostle refers to this when it is the great and leading object of life - when it is sought without any connection with religion or reference to the world to come (ABarnes).

- C. The eyes have been called the gateway to the soul, hence the point of entry for many temptations. 'in John's day, the impure and brutal spectacles of the theater and the arena would have supplied abundant illustrations of these.' It is no less true of our own times (*JBC*).
- D. See Mt. 5:27-28; 1Th. 4:5; Ti. 3:3.
 (**Mt 5:27-28**) "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; 28 but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (**1Th. 4:5**) not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; (**Titus 3:3**) For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.

III. THE PRIDE OF LIFE.

- A. Hunting after honors, titles, and pedigrees; boasting of ancestry, family connections, great offices, honorable acquaintance, and the like (*AClarke*). Thirsting after honor and applause (*MHenry*).
- B. The word here used means, properly, ostentation or boasting, and then arrogance or pride. - (Robinson). It refers to whatever there is that tends to promote pride, or that is an index of pride, such as the ostentatious display of dress, equipage, furniture, etc. (*ABarnes*).
- C. The central lust of the ego itself is indicated by this. The utterly selfish instinct in all human life that insists upon achieving the fulfillment of the person itself, the inherent passion of the soul to do its own will, fulfill its own desires, glorify its own ego, and to occupy the inner control-center of life - that is the pride of life. Salvation in Christ requires that this be denied. Macknight's comment on this was: (*JBC*)
 John means all things pertaining to this life, of which men of the world boast, and by which their pride is gratified: such as titles, offices, lands, noble birth, honorable relations, and the rest, whose efficacy to puff up men with pride and to make them insolent, is not of God.
- D. See 1Tim. 3:6; 2Pet. 3:3; Jude 1:16,18.
 (**1Tim 3:6**) and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.
 (**2Pet. 3:3**) Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts,
 (**Jude 1:16**) These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their *own* lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of *gaining an* advantage.

CONCLUSION

The things mentioned by John in this verse have come to be called "the three avenues of temptation." For ages, students of the New Testament have seen in this triad suggestions of:

- A. The triple temptation of Eve (Gen. 3:1-6):
 - 1. The fruit was good to eat. (flesh)
 - 2. Beautiful to see. (eyes)
 - 3. Would make one as God, knowing good and evil. (vain glory)
- B. And the triple temptation of Christ (Mt. 4:1-11):
 - 1. He was hungry. (flesh)
 - 2. Satan showed him all the kingdoms of the world. (eyes)
 - 3. The vainglorious triumph of leaping from the parapet of the temple unharmed. (vain glory).