

Chapter Seven

Man - As God Sees Him

Man, through the Fall, has inherited a problem. Though unconscious of the fact, he is operating off-center; his life is revolving around the wrong center. To put it another way, he is like a motor operating without a flywheel--all jumps and jerks, with no steadying force to smooth out his operation. Only when Jesus Christ is allowed to enter his life is there any real possibility of his being restored to the normal operating level on which God originally designed man to function. *Man* was designed to operate from the spiritual dynamic of the *living God at work in his human spirit*.

Natural Man

But Adam's repudiation of God's rule in his life left him, and the rest of mankind which followed in his train, operating on a *soulish* level of life, living confidently, or despairingly, in the flesh. So man in his natural state, without God in his life, functions out of the resources of a *distorted mind*, since he does not see things from God's perspective, and a *perverse will* (since he imagines himself to be the captain of his own soul), responding to the whims of his *subjective emotions* since he reasons that if it "feels good" it must be all right.

We see this documented in the Scripture in such passages as these:

...the natural [literally, *soulish*] man receives not the things of the spirit of God; for they are folly to him...(1 Cor. 2:14, literal rendering).

But we impart [through the word of the cross] a secret and hidden wisdom of God..."What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived [that which is not perceived by the unaided human senses], what God has prepared for those who love him," God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God (1 Cor. 2:7 and 9-10).

Notice, "What God has prepared...God has revealed through the Spirit."

Number One Need

It is imperative, therefore, that we introduce those we are endeavoring to help to the saving grace of Jesus Christ. The counselor must do the work of an evangelist, helping his counselee understand what it means to receive Christ and to begin to enjoy the benefit of his indwelling presence through the Spirit. We need to learn to do this in life-related terms, though, so we don't sound like we are just reciting a lot of pious platitudes.

I well remember talking to a young businessman whose life was a shambles. To him the appeal of the gospel needed to be expressed like this: "It appears to me, from what you've told me, that your whole life needs to be under new management." And he agreed. So I simply explained that if he were willing to receive Christ, that *He* would undertake to be the new management, because he is Lord! When he understood the simple proposition that the Lord Jesus was knocking at his door and waiting to be asked into his life, he responded with, "Welcome home, Lord!"

When Christ comes in, he brings with him the whole Godhead. for the Scripture teaches that the Spirit of Christ dwells in every believer and that the Father moves in along with the Son. We see this in Romans and in John:

... Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if *Christ is in you* ...your spirits are alive...If the *Spirit of him* who raised Jesus from the dead *dwells in you*, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you (Rom. 8:9-11, *italics mine*).

This Scripture makes it clear that "the Spirit of Christ" in you is synonymous with "Christ in you."

And in our Lord's own words, "...If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and *we will* come to him and make our home with him" (John 14:23, *italics mine*). Amazing truth! But reasonable enough when we remember that the three Persons of the Godhead are still *one* God. And if there is the remotest possibility of our gaining all that God is, living in us to transform our situation from a mere existence to *really living*' then we should be quick to respond to such an attractive offer and eager to share this good news. When the gospel is put in all the attractiveness it holds in reality, the response is often, "Sure, I want to receive Christ. Who wouldn't?"

You may be thinking at this point, "How come there are so many mixed-up Christians, if the Spirit of Christ, and all the Godhead, lives in us?" The answer is that receiving Christ is only the *beginning* of a new life, and many Christians have yet to learn, consistently, to *let him be Lord*. In the process of learning we need to know how to deal with our two most formidable enemies: the flesh and the devil. Without understanding that our Lord has provided effective ways to combat these forces, we would all be continually mixed up. The flesh is the enemy within us, while the devil attacks us from the outside. The tactics of our warfare, then, must be specifically related to the enemy. In this chapter we will seek to make clear the means of combating the devil, and in the next chapter we will deal with the devil's masterpiece of subversion--the flesh.

Public Enemy Number 1

That old serpent, the devil, deserves the unenviable rating of Public Enemy Number 1. He is called "the accuser of the brethren," and his varied titles run from "The Destroyer" to "The Lord of the Flies." He is the "god of the garbage dump," for all his efforts seem to be directed at putting God down by showing how effectually he can mess up people. We need to know how to cope with man's ancient enemy, for he is a formidable (but defeated) foe.

In these days of the more obvious and overt activities of Satan, we must be sure we know how he can be thwarted. The word of God instructs us to "resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). This is an amazing word: The Devil will run away! We are to resist, not in our own strength, but in the power of our risen Lord, who has already defeated this implacable foe--the enemy of our souls:

And you, who were dead...God made alive together with him...having canceled the bond which stood against us...nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it [that is, in the cross] (Col. 2:13-15, preferred rendering).

My fellow pastor, Ray Stedman, has expounded Ephesians 6, containing the major passage of this subject most effectively in his book entitled *Spiritual Warfare*, having discovered the key to its application: "*Putting on the armor of God* is simply *putting on Christ*, as our sure defense against defeat." An outline of his more comprehensive treatment follows:

Strategy of Defense

"...be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:10-11). (Read Eph. 6:10-17 to see the whole picture.)

A. PUTTING ON YOUR ARMOR (Putting on CHRIST)

1. The Armor You Have Already ("You in Me...") (John 14:20b)

The girdle of Truth (Eph. 6:14). This is the place to begin. In Christ you have found the key to life, ultimate reality. He *is* the truth--and has told it to us as it really is!

The breastplate of Righteousness (Eph. 6:14). Christ is the ground of our acceptance before God (2 Cor 5:21). We are "accepted in the Beloved" without qualification or reservation! This guards our hearts--our emotional life.

Shoes--the Good News of Peace (Eph. 6:15). Your feet shod with the readiness produced by the gospel of peace. Peace in the heart makes us ready for the battle, and "He is our peace" (Eph. 2:14).

2. The Armor You Must Take Up ("I IN YOU...") (Jn. 14:20b).

(To be used every time we're attacked)

The shield of Faith (Eph. 6:16). This is believing and acting upon the truth as it is in Jesus. *Faith* always anchors to facts. This is God's ABM system to stop the enemy's guided missiles!

The Helmet of Salvation (Eph. 6:17). Here is protection for the head--and with it the mind-- the ability to think and reason. Salvation here is referring to the Lord's ability to rescue us from our current problems as well as his ultimate appearing to set things right as in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 and Romans 8:22-25. Our minds are to be protected by the truth that God *hasn't* lost control of things, and what is happening right NOW is in his plan--to culminate in the full expression of his salvation.

The Sword of the Spirit--The Word of God (Eph. 6:17). This is applying a specific promise or "saying" of God to our own experience, meeting the enemy attack with the specific truth the Spirit of God wants to use to rout him. This is both an offensive and defensive weapon.

Note, with this we come full circle. Our armor is complete, as it anchors back into the truth. Jesus said, "I AM THE TRUTH (John 14:6). We start with the truth and end with the truth--surrounded and protected in Christ who is the truth.

B. THE FINAL WORD: PRAY

"Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance..." (Eph 6: 1 8a).

Prayer, the ultimate expression of our dependence, is the final word that ties our strategy of defense all together. In our prayer, we need to be "making supplication for all the saints..." (Eph. 6:186). In the realm of spiritual warfare, perhaps more than any other, it becomes evident that we need to pray for each other, often corporately, for though the devil is a defeated enemy, he is a terrible foe, fighting a last-ditch battle. We need to take our Lord's prayer often upon our lips, "Father...I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one" (John 1 7:1 5). In other words, we are praying, "Don't remove them from the place of danger, just keep them from the enemy's power in the midst of it."

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