

TONY EVANS

WELL DRESSED FOR WARFARE



In an art gallery in London hangs a portrait of a chess game entitled "Checkmate." On one side of the chessboard is the devil, full of laughter. His hand is posed, ready to make the next move.

On the other side of the chessboard sits a shaking, frightened young man. Sweat drips down his forehead mixed with tears pouring from his eyes.

Hours passed as the chess champion continued to study the board from every possible angle. The sweat on the young man's face begged him to continue. Finally, as the gallery was about to close for the night, people in every part of the enormous building heard a loud scream as the chess champion yelled, "Yes! I've got it! You don't have to lose!"

What this chess champion had done was discover another move that the

"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."

One day, a chess champion from another country visited the gallery. The painting naturally caught his attention causing him to examine it for a very long time. In fact, while others had moved on throughout the gallery, the chess champion remained fixated on the game and the devil who was about to make the next move to steal this man's soul.

man could take. He had found a way not only for the young man to escape "checkmate" but to deliver "checkmate" on the devil in only a few more moves into the game.

Maybe you feel like you are in the same position today. It looks like the devil has won the chess game on your life, family,

job, health or in any other area. But what I want you to remember is that you have a Champion who will make the last move on the devil!

Through Jesus Christ, your victory over Satan has already been secured. There is no countermove that he can make to limit what Jesus has already done for you! Your task is to manifest God's victory over the devil in your life.

Jesus Christ knows the next move you need to make, and I want you to learn what that is, too. I encourage you to join me as I dig deep into Scripture and strategy in a study on Spiritual Warfare this month on the radio.

I want you to know that the devil does not have the last move. You are not fighting for victory – you are fighting from victory. The game has already been won!

Not too long ago, I had the chance to see a blockbuster film called Inception that illustrated a profound truth cinematically. In the film, the main characters had discovered a way to enter into another realm – the realm of dreams. While the dreams appeared to be as vivid and as authentic as the real world they were currently living in, the dream realm was not their reality.

Since the dream appeared to be real to all of their five senses, each character had to create an item that they would use to let them know if they were in a dream or

in reality. Without the item, the person in the dream might begin to believe that the dream was reality, and they might stay there – operating by the laws of reality within the realm of a dream.

The main character's item was a spinning top. If his top kept spinning endlessly, that meant he was in a dream. The knowledge that he was in a dream then affected the way he functioned within the dream. Essentially, he could take more risks and live differently in the dream because he knew that at any time, he could simply wake back up in reality.

While I'm not suggesting that the physical world that we live in is a dream and that physical realities do not carry with them both physical and spiritual consequences, it is important to realize that our ultimate reality takes place in the heavenly places – in the spiritual realm. Conversations, decisions, battles and the like that occur in the spiritual realm unilaterally impact what takes place in our physical lives. Unless we realize that truth, we will continue to look for physical solutions to solve spiritual problems manifesting themselves in our physical lives.

BREASTPLATE OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS



Ephesians 6:12 confirms, "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."

Everything that happens in the visible world is vitally tied to what takes place in the spiritual world. God's Word teaches that what is really going on in our lives, relationships, churches, and throughout the world is a battle that exists, for the most part, beyond what we can humanly perceive.

We are in a perpetual state of warfare - spiritual warfare. And it is extremely important that we understand the conflict that rages in the heavenly realms and its implications for our lives.

LUCIFER'S PRIDEFUL REBELLION

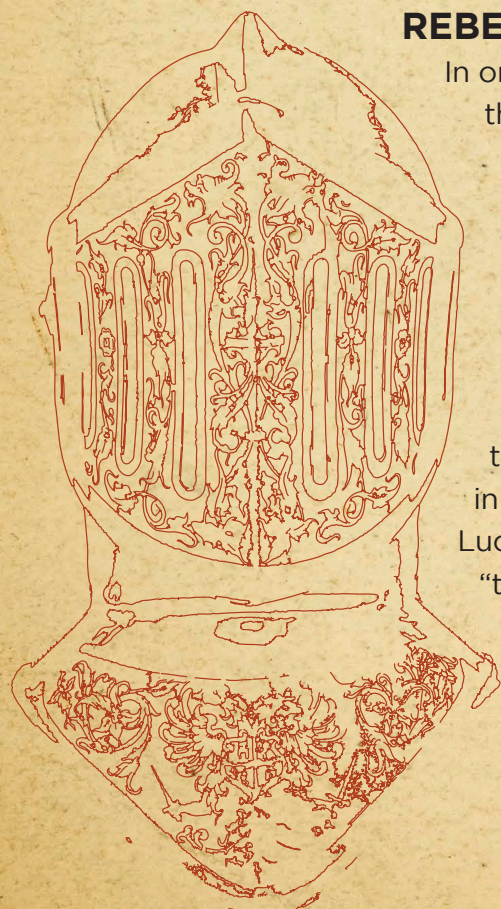
In order to understand the origins of the spiritual battle, we must go back to the point when the war between good and evil began.

We know that God created angels, and that He created one in particular named Lucifer-which means "the brilliant one" or "the shining one."

We read about Lucifer's rebellion and fall from heaven in Ezekiel 28. Though this passage is directed to the King of Tyre, it also speaks of Lucifer's demise. Ezekiel 28:14 says, "You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God." Cherubs are the angels who are allowed closest access to God, and Lucifer was anointed as the principal angel among them. Verse 15 continues, "You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you." God created Lucifer with no flaws, and he was beautifully adorned. He was a sight to behold-until wickedness and pride began to change him.

How could such a lovely being created by God have such fatal imperfections? Lucifer's problem, and ours, as well-arose with his ability to make choices. God gave Lucifer the right to love and serve Him by his own volition, not wanting His beloved creation to obey simply from blind, mechanical duty to His mandate. God wanted willing, authentic worship from His creation.

Yet, Lucifer chose not to give it. Whereas he could have made his choices out of love and respect for God, he chose instead to base his decisions upon his own arrogant self-love. "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground" (v. 17).



HELMET OF SALVATION

Pride took over Lucifer's heart, and he began to ask why he needed God if he had all this beauty and glory of his own. So Lucifer chose to rebel against Him. Isaiah 14:13-14 teaches, "You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; will raise my throne above the stars of God. I will make myself like the Most High.'"

Lucifer wanted to take the glory that rightfully belongs to God alone, but God says that He will not share His glory with anyone. So Lucifer became Satan, which means "the adversary", and he planned a rebellion. One-third of the angels bought into his lies and joined in his revolt against God.

In response, God cast Satan "to the ground" (Ezekiel 28:17). Satan and his

was created with the power to choose to love and serve God of his own volition. So was Adam. Lucifer originally oversaw all of God's angelic creation. Adam oversaw all of God's earthly creation. Lucifer had direct access to God until his rebellion. Likewise, Adam walked in the garden with God each day until his own fall. Yet, instead of seeing his likeness to Adam, Satan wanted to exert his rule over him. He wanted to steal Adam's allegiance and displace God as his master—creating his own kingdom. However, Satan was and is far outmatched by God. He is not on an equal playing field with God. God has all wisdom, knowledge, and power, and is present everywhere. Satan is limited in his power and knowledge, restricted in his reach. Satan is a created being who must ask God the Creator permission to do anything.

**"THEREFORE, TAKE UP THE FULL ARMOR
OF GOD, SO THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO
RESIST IN THE EVIL DAY."**

host were evicted from heaven and an eternal fire was prepared for them (Matthew 25:41).

GOD'S UNFOLDING PLAN

In addition to this eternal damnation, God decided to unfold a plan that would demonstrate to the entire angelic realm that He was to be revered—not rebelled against. In creating Adam, God paralleled the situation He had with Lucifer. Lucifer

GOD'S ULTIMATE AUTHORITY

This prompts another question. If God is greater than Satan, why does He allow Satan to do as he does? He could defeat Satan easily—and He will eventually. Yet, God is so great that He can even use Satan's rebellion to bring greater glory to Himself. God decided that rather than simply eliminating Satan, He would demonstrate that He is powerful enough to defeat any foe. God allowed

sin to enter the world that we might know His great grace, and that we might understand His hatred of sin and rebellion. God wanted to demonstrate that love must be balanced with justice. He loves us deeply, yet He is holy and can't skip over sin. So in order to express His love, He developed a plan of grace to deal with our sin. He provided salvation for His people through His perfect Son, Jesus Christ.

God shows us that there is no life, meaning, or hope apart from Him. Many people try to find meaning in the things of this world, and the Devil deceives many with his false promises. But compared to Satan's empty words, God's Word of love and hope ring true—providing real meaning to our lives.

God allows Satan to stay in the world because He wants us to give our service out of love, not out of fear. By allowing people to have free will, God gave us the choice either to trust, obey, and be saved, or to find our own way, which leads only to destruction (Proverbs 14:12).

Jesus Christ has already defeated sin and death through His crucifixion and resurrection.

And someday,
the spiritual
warfare we
experience
will climax
with God's

complete triumph over Satan. If we are in Him, we have been guaranteed the victory as well.

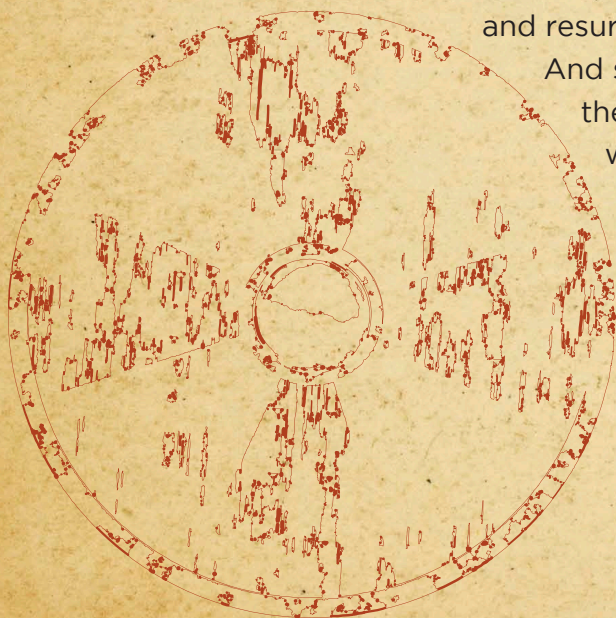
While we wait for the day when He returns and this spiritual conflict is finally concluded, we must set ourselves to serve Him with our lives. We should put our trust fully in the One who has already claimed the victory, the One who uses everything, even those who rebel against Him, to accomplish His good and perfect will.

Suiting Up

My wife, Lois, and I celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary not too long ago. Forty years of sharing a life together through both good and challenging times is worth honoring in a special way. I wanted to take Lois to just the right place where we could spend some quality time together and where she would feel the depth of how much she means to me.

Knowing my wife, I sought to pick someplace peaceful where we could relax and enjoy each other's company away from the demands of everyday life and ministry. So I took Lois to a resort getaway with a view of the ocean. We had a wonderful time remembering what God has done in and through our marriage.

Now, before we went on our trip, we had to do something. We had to pack. We couldn't just show up at the airport with what we had on and expect it to last us



SHIELD OF
FAITH

the several days we had planned to be there. Instead, we filled suitcases with clothes and belongings to take with us.

Looking at the weather forecast, we knew that we would be experiencing pleasant weather so we decided to pack comfortable clothes that were either dressy – for an intimate night of dining, or casual – for when we wanted to relax outside together during the day. What we didn't pack in our suitcases were our coats, boots, mittens and scarves. Neither did I pack any long-sleeve shirts or thick, wool socks.

In other words, what we packed in our suitcases to spend a few days at an oceanside resort in the summer was entirely different than what we would have packed if we were going to my parent's home for a family vacation in Baltimore at Christmas. Where we are going – or where you are going, should determine what you bring.

Prior to going anywhere, for example, you will typically assess the occasion to determine what attire is appropriate for where you are headed. If it is a formal event, you will put on a formal outfit. Ladies, you will most likely spend extra time choosing just the right pair of shoes. Men, you may even reach for your cufflinks. But if you are going to spend an evening at a ballpark, you will probably leave your formal clothes hanging in the closet. Most people wouldn't wear shorts

to a wedding, or suits to an outdoor barbeque because the attire does not fit the occasion.

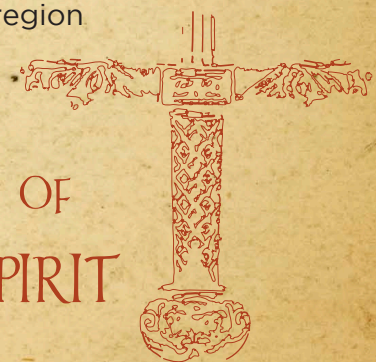
The Apostle Paul spoke to the church at Ephesus, as well as to Christians everywhere, about what we are to wear. He said,

"Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all of the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take up the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Within these verses, Paul has given clear instructions about a specific wardrobe which is necessary for us to not only wear, but to also have packed and ready for us to pick-up and put on if we are going to have victory in spiritual warfare. It can be compared to a travel guide that is given when you are going somewhere that you have never gone before.

For example, when a person signs up to go on a safari in some remote region

SWORD OF
THE SPIRIT



of the world, there is usually a place where that person can go online and find a travel guide that will give them the details of all of the recommended articles of clothing and items to bring with us. In the same way, in Ephesians chapter six, Paul has given us our travel guide so that we will know what to suit up in and take with us as we conduct ourselves in spiritual warfare.

Friend, in order to be well-dressed for warfare, you need to have six things:

- belt of truth
- breastplate of righteousness
- shoes of peace
- shield of faith
- helmet of salvation
- sword of the Spirit

Stand firm in that which God has given you, and you will see His victory manifested in your own life. He has already given you everything that you need to do so each and every day – through putting on the armor of God. And just like you wouldn't get partially dressed when you woke up this morning before you headed out the door, God doesn't want you to get partially dressed, either, when it comes to war.

Each of the six pieces of armor that Paul referenced is divided into one of two categories. The first category includes the first three pieces of the armor and begins with the word "having," taken from the verb "to be." This means that the first three pieces of the armor are pieces that you should wear all of the time. You should never take them off. They are like a uniform that a baseball player puts on when he goes out to play ball.

The last three pieces of the armor are given to you to pick up as the situation demands. We are told to "take" them up. This is like that same baseball player either grabbing his glove or his bat, depending on what is going on in the game.

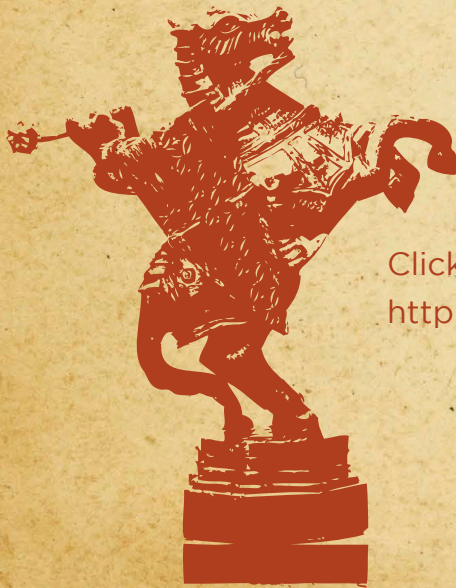
God has, through the armor, supplied everything that you and I need to live a life of complete victory in spiritual warfare. It is our job, through faith, to use each piece of what He has given us. God is not going to dress us, but He has given us what we need to be armed for victory.

It's time to suit up and be well-dressed for warfare.



View a video devotional by Tony Evans on spiritual warfare

Click **HERE** or type in the url below to find spiritual warfare resources:
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