

Standing Against the Devil

“Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11).

My wife and I grew up in Friendship Baptist Church in Saluda, North Carolina. One of the special saints in that church was a dear brother by the name of Simpson (Simp) Thompson. He was saved later in life from a terrible life of drunkenness. I hardly remember a service that he didn't say something derogatory about the devil. “Ole' Slewfoot,” as he called him, had made a wreck of his former life and Simp saw him as a bitter enemy.

Through the years, I heard him quote different verses about the devil. One of his favorites was Jesus' description of him. “He is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44). Another was that Satan comes “to steal, and to kill, and to destroy” (John 10:10), and when he was claiming victory over “that old serpent,” he would quote, “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony” (Rev. 12:9, 11).

The verse before us was constantly on his mind. “Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” This is an emphasis that needs to be on all believers' minds, for accompanying the call to stand for righteousness and truth is a call to stand against the devil, the instigator of unrighteousness and deception. Several important lessons can be learned from this text.

We are taught that, on the authority of the Bible, there is a real devil! The language the Holy Spirit employs is neither figurative nor allegorical. The archrival of Christ and believers is an actual personality. The name “devil,” indicating “slanderer, or false accuser,” sets forth the malicious, destructive nature of the enemy of our souls. No, he is not wearing a red suit, with horns, a long tail, and a pitchfork in his hand. But he is as real as the flesh on our bones.

We are warned that, in ourselves, we are no match for the enemy! The phrase “that ye may be able to stand” reminds us that we must face the devil with more than mere human knowledge and ability. The word “wiles,” meaning “deceptive strategies,” reveals that the devil's attacks are too organized and well planned for mere mortals. We must have spiritual enablement to fight spiritual battles.

We are reminded that, arrayed in spiritual armor, we can effectively stand against the foe! In ourselves we are not able to handle the enemy. But with “the whole armor of God” (6:13), the girdle of truth, the righteous breastplate, the gospel shoes, faith's shield, salvation's helmet, and the Spirit's sword (see 6:14-17), we can prevail against him. May we put on our armor, trust Jesus to work mightily through us, and stand against the devil.