

Pentecost 13
Ephesians 6:10-20
August 22, 2010

Scripture does call Jesus the Prince of Peace. God's Word does often describe the gift of peace to all who rely on Jesus as their Savior from sin and hell. There is something about words like peace, quiet, rest that strikes a chord with people.

It is all the more jarring the to hear Jesus say, as we heard it today in our Gospel reading from Luke 12 that He had come to ignite a fire of division, upset, and trouble on the Earth.

So, which picture of Jesus are we to follow? That is a trick question, of course. I have told you often and I am going to tell you again. "We dare never pick and choose what we life from God's Word and let the rest go." All of the Bible is God's pure, holy, eternal, Word of truth.

We need everything God tells us, not just the pleasing, pleasant, easy, delightful parts, but the unpleasant, hard, troubling parts, too.

Our verses from Ephesians fit in with Jesus saying that He came to ignite a fiery trial on the Earth. Yet, we shall see that it is a battle worth fighting our whole life because of the peace of Jesus Christ that we are actually keeping thereby.

So, let us listen as God's servant, the Apostle Paul, urges us to

Put On All of God's Armor, because We need It!

We need that armor to stand and fight.
We need it to stand in victory at the end.

You realize that Jesus brings spiritual peace and spiritual war in different ways. He brings sinners peace with God through the forgiveness of sins He earned by His life and death on our behalf. That very peace brought into this sinful world, where satan works his lies and tricks, is what makes for trouble. Christ doesn't actually cause the trouble, but sin, unbelief and the devil react violently against the Prince of Peace and His Peace. They cause the trouble when they oppose and attack Christ, His blessed gifts, and His people.

In fact, that's exactly why Paul pictures every believer in our Lord as a soldier in need of God's full armor.

Because we have peace with God by faith in Jesus, sin, the unbelieving world and our enemy the devil, hate us and want to destroy us. They destroy Christians by turning them back to unbelief either by attacking what they believe or by tempting them back into an impenitent life of sin.

In fact, Paul reminds us that the fight we are in – and we are in it whether we want to face up to it or not – is not against flesh and blood. Our fight is against the rulers, the authorities, the powerbrokers of this dark world. It is against spiritual forces of evil far above us.

There is an interesting point the Apostle make here, one we could easily miss. He says our struggle is not against flesh and blood. You might feel life arguing that. It certainly seems that human beings are fighting faith in Jesus Christ. Of course, that is true. What we are reminded of here is that these human beings are not our real enemies. Those people opposed to what a Christian believes are tools, are dupes of the devil. They are satan's slaves! They are so deceived so as to be our foe's willing slaves, but they are slaves, are being used, swindled, robbed and finally spiritually murdered. This is why we should pray for all non-Christians, even those actively hating Christians and trying to destroy believers in Jesus. We do NOT pray for satan or for any of his spiritual troops, the demons, the Bible calls them.

Paul is calling on God's people to function as God's soldiers. Listen to all these commands, "Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God." He says that twice. "Stand firm! Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. Be alert and always keep on praying."

Certainly, as we shall see, our weapons are drastically different from what we normally think of for fighting this spiritual war. Certainly our methods are totally different, too. But do NOT think that this war is less desperate. It is far MORE desperate. It's not just earthly freedom and good government at stake. It's not even only our earthly life that we may lose. If we are defeated in this spiritual battle, it is eternal loss that is the issue.

But there is no reason at all for any followers of Jesus to be defeated. What is going on today is not more than mop up operations. When Jesus died on that cross, then right on schedule as predicted rose from the dead on the third day, the war was won by God.

That's why Paul directs us to the Lord Jesus' might strength. That's why Paul directs us to put on the full armor God has provided us.

The various pieces of the typical Roman infantry soldier's armor are a way for Paul to list some of the things God has given us by faith in Jesus, things which will defeat the devil, beat sin, resist the unbelievers in the world.

They include God's truth. Meet satan's lies and tricks with absolute, permanent truth. The Bible, all of it, is the truth. God has provided us saving righteousness, the perfect righteous obedience of our Redeemer, lived and earned for sinners, for us. The Gospel of peace – NOTE PEACE – in our Savior we are at peace with almighty, eternal, holy, loving, gracious God Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This Gospel of peace makes us fully able, ready and prepared for whatever sin the world and satan may throw at us. It gives us firm footing to stand up against sin and hell.

Faith in Jesus and His Forgiveness is able to stop and put out whatever flaming arrows our enemy shoots at us. Faith is total confidence in Jesus and His Word. Salvation is eternal life, joy, glory in heaven with Jesus. That goal keeps us going on the march and in the fray. And God's Word is perfectly capable of fighting back, capable of slicing up the devil and his lies.

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And all the while we put all these God-provided weapons to use, let us pray. Communication with our commander is vital. Pray all the time about everything. Pray for every other believer in Jesus for they are in the same battle. Pray for the sergeants and other officers, too. That they fearlessly lead, fearlessly speak the Gospel under all circumstances. Pray that fear will not keep any one quiet (scared quiet) about Jesus, His Word or His forgiveness, life and salvation.

Put on all this armor. Make use of it. With it we will stand and fight. With it we will still be standing when it's all over. The victory is our in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.