

29. October 2020

“Aspects of the spiritual fight”

Eph 6:10-18

Finally, grow strong in the Lord, with the strength of his power. Put on the full armour of God so as to be able to resist the devil's tactics. For it is not against human enemies that we have to struggle, but against the principalities and the ruling forces who are masters of the darkness in this world, the spirits of evil in the heavens. That is why you must take up all God's armour, or you will not be able to put up any resistance on the evil day, or stand your ground even though you exert yourselves to the full. So stand your ground, with truth a belt round your waist, and uprightness a breastplate, wearing for shoes on your feet the eagerness to spread the gospel of peace and always carrying the shield of faith so that you can use it to quench the burning arrows of the Evil One. And then you must take salvation as your helmet and the sword of the Spirit, that is, the word of God. In all your prayer and entreaty keep praying in the Spirit on every possible occasion. Never get tired of staying awake to pray for all God's holy people, and pray for me to be given an opportunity to open my mouth and fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel of which I am an ambassador in chains; pray that in proclaiming it I may speak as fearlessly as I ought to.

A topic that is always important, because this struggle will remain with us until the end, i.e. either until we go home to the Lord or until He comes back before then.

To avoid this fight would mean to have lost it already. It depends very much on whether we consciously accept it. This does not mean, of course, that we should have much to do with the devil: We know about his existence, we know his intentions and we listen well to the apostle, how to resist these cunning attacks and we do it!

If this struggle is also a burden, because who would not like to simply live in peace with God and people, it leads us more and more to God, because we ourselves could not withstand this enemy with our strength and need the help of the Lord. Therefore this struggle drives us towards the Lord and our prayer can become very imploring.

If we put on the above mentioned armor, God will lead us both to watchfulness and deeper into faith. We learn how to counter these attacks and benefit spiritually from them.

When we gird ourselves with truth, it means living in accordance with God's will, following His Son, and also being truthful with ourselves and others, living in true justice. Through such armour the arrows of evil will hardly come.

Likewise, the devil will lose ground when we fight for the gospel, when other people find faith through our witness.

To use the shield of faith means that we hold on to God and to all that He has given us as truth. This also helps us against evil thoughts that come like poisoned arrows, it can also be thoughts against faith, serious doubts etc.

If we seize the word of God, God's sword, which separates the truth from the lie, which is the light on our dark paths (*cf. Ps 119:105*), the darkness of the fallen angels have to go!

We can see how God uses the circumstance of the enmity of the evil one for His believers. They are called to resist and thereby become stronger in faith. Even more: The Lord defeats the power of evil on earth through His own, because His kingdom must spread and this kingdom is resisted by the devil. So we have the honour - to express it in a spiritual language of war - to fight in the army of God as "warriors of light". At our side are the faithful angels, the saints of heaven, even the army of the poor souls. They will intercede for us.

Let us live our faith consciously and grow every day in love, carry out the works that God entrusts to us, unite our suffering with the suffering of Christ, rise again and again after defeats and trust in God's mercy.

In this way, in the grace of God, we will survive this struggle.

God is with us at all times and always rushes to our aid. But he wants us to do our part and thus also show him our love and loyalty!

Finally, a reference to the Jesus Prayer, which I highly recommend for those who wish to deepen their prayer and to put the word of St. Paul into practice, recommending praying all the time. Like the Holy Rosary, it is a wonderful prayer and very helpful against the powers of darkness. (To deepen this theme:

<http://en.elijamission.net/?s=prayer+of+the+heart>) Let us listen to the words of a spiritual teacher from the orthodox tradition:

“My children, I beg you for the love of God do not stop saying the prayer of our Christ, not even for a moment. Your lips should continuously murmur the name of Jesus who destroys the devil and all his plots. Cry out incessantly to our Christ and he will hasten wholeheartedly to help us. Just as iron cannot be grabbed or even approached when it is red-hot the same thing happens with the soul of him who says the prayer with fervor. The demons do not approach it - and how could they? For if they draw near it, they will be burned by the divine fire which the divine name contains. Whoever prays is enlightened, and whoever does not pray is darkened. Prayer is the provider of the divine light. This is why everyone who prays well becomes all radiant and the Spirit of God dwells in him.”