

# Spiritual Warfare

## Ephesians 6:10-13

General Dwight Eisenhower once said (source unknown), "War is a terrible thing. But if you're going to get into it, you've got to get into it all the way."

I sense that many Christians are defeated in their Christian lives because they are not *seriously* engaged in the warfare to which we are called. J. C. Ryle saw this in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He wrote ("Soldiers and Trumpeters," *Home Truths* [Triangle Press], 1:90), "The saddest symptom about many so-called Christians is the utter absence of anything like conflict and fight in their Christianity." He went on to say that they go through the motions of attending religious services each week. Then he added (*ibid.*), "But of the great spiritual warfare,--its watchings and strugglings, its agonies and anxieties, its battles and contests,--of all this they appear to know nothing at all."

**10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.**

**11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.**

**12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.**

**13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.**

Today we move into the last section of the book of Ephesians. In chapters 1-3, we learned about the believer's WEALTH. In 4-6:9, we learned about the believer's WALK. In this last section, 6:10-24, we will learn about the believer's WARFARE. Watchman Nee said that Ephesians could be stated with three verbs: we SIT in heavenly places with Christ, we WALK in a worthy manner in love, light and wisdom, and now we STAND against the schemes of the evil one.

If you are a child of God, chosen from the foundation of the world, adopted into God's family, redeemed through His blood and sealed by His Spirit... If you are walking after Christ, are being filled with the Spirit and submitting to other believers seeking peace in all relationships, in the church, in your marriage, with your family and in your workplace, *you can be sure that Satan is after you.* 1 Pet.5:8 says, "**Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.**" On the other hand, if you are not facing conflict from the enemy then it could be because you are living a life of immorality or laziness. He is not seeking to "**devour**" you because he already has you!

Believer, listen up. Spiritual warfare is real. There is a great cosmic invisible struggle between good and evil, light and darkness, between God and Satan. If you are a Christian you are involved in the battle. There are no elite Christians who specialize in spiritual warfare while the rest of us sit at home and support them. There are no spiritual Special Forces, Green Berets or Seal Teams. It is

vital for your survival as a Christian that you realize that when you became a Christian, you were drafted into God's army. Daily you are engaged in a battle with an unseen spiritual enemy that seeks to destroy you. Otherwise, when trials hit, you will think that something is wrong. I am in the battle. You are in the battle... like it or not we must fight. We cannot ignore spiritual warfare.

This part of chapter 6 falls into three sections: (1) (6:10-13), The explanation for the fight; (2) (6:14-17), The equipment for the fight; (3) (6:18-20), the effecting of the fight. Today we will begin by understanding our *struggle* in v. 12 and then return to vv. 10-11 to examine our *power* and our *protection*.

## I. Our STRUGGLE in Spiritual Warfare (v. 12).

### A. Our Struggle is Real.

In v. 10 Paul says, "**Finally, my brethren...**" We could accurately translate that "**From now on brothers and sisters...**" In v. 12 he uses the inclusive personal pronoun "**we**." Basically this means that all of us are corporately involved in this Great War between God and the enemy. Our struggle is real because our enemy is real.

Who is our enemy? Our enemy is the devil and all his evil forces. People's ideas about the devil or Satan usually fall in one of two extremes.

a. On one extreme there are those *who do not believe in the supernatural*. They are purely materialistic and cannot envision any life beyond the physical plane. They see Satan as a symbol of evil, not the embodiment of evil.

George Barna in a national survey asked Christians if they agreed with the statement: "**The Devil, or Satan, is not a living being but is a symbol of evil.**" Among those who claimed to be born again, 32% agreeing strongly, 11 percent agreeing somewhat and 5% did not know. So, of the total number responding, 48% either agreed that Satan is only symbolic or did not know!

b. Second, on the other extreme are those *who blame the devil for everything*. These folks see a demon behind every bush and around every corner. They routinely cast demonic hordes out of crashed computers and faulty traffic lights!

Somewhere in the middle is the biblical reality. Satan and his demons are alive and well on planet earth. Satan is the enemy of God. He is a powerful foe, but he is only a created being, whereas God is the eternal, almighty Creator of the universe. If the Lord so willed, He could annihilate Satan in an instant. God has already defeated the devil at the cross and resurrection of Jesus (Col. 2:15). In His perfect timing and plan, God will throw Satan into the Lake of Fire, where he will be tormented forever and ever (Rev. 20:10).

Here are some Biblical truths about our enemy:

1. *First, Satan is terribly powerful.* He is not as powerful as God is. God is Creator. Satan is a creation. Yet, he is a powerful creation. He temporarily dominates the world. He is not like God, who is in all places at all times. However, his immense order of demons, fallen angels, do his bidding around the world. Listen to what the Bible says about him:

- 1 Jn.5:19: **"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway [control] of the wicked one."**
- 2 Cor 4:4 describes him as **"the god of this age"** who has **"blinded [those] who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ... should shine on them."**
- Eph.2:2 calls him **"the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience."**
- Acts 26:18 Paul says the Lord commissioned him to go to the lost Gentiles, **"to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God."**
- In Rev. 9:11, he is described by the Hebrew word **"Abaddon"** and in Greek as **"Apollyon."** Both words translate as "destroyer."

2. *Second, Satan is terribly cunning.* V. 11 speaks of the **"wiles"** or schemes of the devil. That comes from *methodia* – methods or strategies of deceit, craftiness and trickery. Back in 4:14 that word is translated to **"lie in wait."** The enemy ambushes us when we are unsuspecting have our defenses down.

In 2 Cor. 2:11 Paul instructs the church to forgive, **"lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices."** If you're ignorant of his schemes, the devil will be able to take advantage of you. His schemes always use cunning and deception. He often works through secular culture, to carry us downstream with the prevailing ideas of the day. Satan launches repeated attacks on the credibility of Scripture, whether through evolution or by attacking the person of Christ. Satan lures us into sin by portraying it as pleasurable and by hiding its consequences. He uses discouragement, pride, selfishness, the love of money, lust, and many other traps to lure us away from the Lord. To stand firm against the enemy, we must understand his schemes.

3. *Satan is ultimately defeated.* In John 12:31, Jesus said, **"Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out."** Jesus won the victory over Satan and his evil hosts at the cross. Col.2:14-15 speaks of how Jesus took our guilt of sin and **"nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it."** That's a picture of a victory parade! Jesus wins every time!

Someone might ask then, if Satan and his forces are defeated at the cross, why do we still have to fight them? I remember growing up on a small farm that we occasionally had snakes. Now, I understand that sometimes snakes can be useful creatures. But I have no use for them. When we found a snake one time in the cellar, dad took it outside and chopped off its head. Now you might think that a snake without a head is dead, and ultimately it is. But that snake's body continued to wriggle and thrash about for quite a while after its head was gone. And that is kind of the way it is with Satan--at the cross Jesus Christ crushed his head. But like a snake with its head crushed he continues to thrash about fight. He is a defeated foe, but he is still fighting even though he is mortally wounded.

So our struggle is real because we have a real enemy. And because the devil cannot do anything to God, he chooses to attack what is precious to God... us.

### **B. Our Struggle is Personal.**

Notice the word "**wrestle**" or "struggle" in v. 12. It means hand to hand combat. This does not portray arrows, artillery or long range bombing, but down in the dirt wrestling with the enemy. This is a personal fight for each of us.

Whether you realize it or not, everyday you are locked in a personal battle with the forces of darkness. Everyday the enemy tries to get a new hold on you and throw you down.

Our enemy personally fights to cause you to be proud instead of humble, divided instead of unified, filled with lust instead of love, walking in darkness rather than light, in foolishness instead of wisdom, in anger instead of self-control, in bitterness instead of forgiveness, in the drunkenness instead of the filling of the Spirit, in self-serving independence instead of mutual submission.

### **C. Our Struggle is Spiritual.**

Paul further says that our fight is not "**against flesh and blood**." This hand to hand combat is not fought by conventional means. We cannot fight the enemy like we would fight a mere man. That's why v. 10 says we are to "**be strong IN THE LORD and in THE POWER of His MIGHT**."

Our struggle is not against "**flesh and blood**" rather it is against even more powerful enemies. The latter part of v. 12 describes the "**spiritual hosts of wickedness**" the invisible but deadly army of Satan. We not only fight against Satan but against his legions of fallen evil angels.

Paul here, as in other passages, describes the ranks and organization of these unseen supernatural evil forces. There are "**principalities, ... powers, ...rulers of the darkness of this age**" and the "**spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places**." They inhabit the "**heavenly places**," that is the invisible spiritual realm. They do not have run of the highest heaven where Christ is seated, but they do run roughshod over creation.

Whatever all these titles mean, we can be assured that we have powerful enemies arrayed in an organized army. They are constantly at battle against you and me. They want to harm us, destroy us and kill us if possible. If they can't do that, they will settle for ruining our lives and testimonies with broken homes, addictions, bitterness, despair, depression, violence, etc...

## **II. Our POWER in Spiritual Warfare (v. 10).**

The Enemy defeats us when we rely on our own power. The easiest thing for us to do when we face some difficulty, temptation or struggle is to deal with it on our own. If you are thinking, "**I can handle it on my own**" you are beaten and you don't even know it.

**We defeat the enemy when we are strong IN THE LORD.**

Paul says, "**Be strong IN THE LORD**."

Why? Because God is greater than Satan is! Satan is powerful, but he is not even in the same class as God! 1 John 4:4 says, "...**He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.**"

From start to finish, the Bible proclaims the mighty power of God. He spoke the heavens and earth into existence out of nothing. Remember the scene in Ex.7 when Moses and Aaron went before the Pharaoh. Aaron threw the staff down and it became a snake. Pharaoh's magicians did the same thing. Snakes galore. Then God's snake ate up all the others!

More importantly, Jesus ultimately defeated Satan at the cross! At the name of Jesus, the hosts of hell quiver. Ja.2:19 says, "**The demons believe and tremble!**" When the disciples saw the wild demon possessed man in the Gadarenes, I'll bet they drew back in fear. However, the demons in that man feared Jesus!

Martin Luther wrote of that in *A Mighty Fortress is our God*:

*For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;  
His craft and power are great and armed with cruel hate  
On earth is not his equal.  
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;  
His rage we can endure, for lo his doom is sure;  
One little word shall fell him.*

Satan took his best shot at Jesus and lost. Because we are in Christ, we have ultimate victory. In chapter 1 of Ephesians Paul already told us of God's great power towards us who believe, that same power that raised Jesus from the dead and enthroning Him at the Father's right hand (Eph. 1:19-20). Remember in Ephesians 3 Paul prayed that we would know the power of the Holy Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ might dwell in our hearts through faith (Eph. 3:17). WE have the power through His Spirit that dwells in us. We just have to stand in the battle.

Don't trust you own strength. Be strong in the Lord. Go to your knees. Find your strength in Him!

### **III. Our PROTECTION in Spiritual Warfare (v. 11).**

#### **A. Our Protection Requires Putting on the Armor of God.**

Paul says that we are to "**put on the full armor of God.**" The "**armor of God**" is a metaphor of the components of the spiritfilled life. We will examine the six pieces of armor next week.

The armor is just a graphic way of saying what Paul says in Romans 13:14, "**But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.**" In other words, it is Christ Himself we are to put on in the battle against sin. Christ is our armor. He is the belt of truth (John 14:6). He is our breastplate of righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). He is the gospel of peace that we stand on (Eph. 2:13-14, 17). He is the shield of our faith (Heb. 12:2). He is our helmet of salvation (Titus 3:6). He is our sword, the word of God (John 1:1). He is our full armor, capable of protecting us from every onslaught of the devil.

Putting on God's armor means that in every trial and temptation by faith you appropriate Christ's strength in place of your weakness. By faith you cry out to Him for deliverance and strength to persevere.

## **B. Our Protection Requires Making a Stand.**

This is a military term that refers to holding a critical position in a battle... making a stand. Here are three things to remember when taking your stand against the evil one:

*1. Remember that we have been delivered from Satan's dominion.* Col.1:13: **"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love."** The devil is no longer your king. Jesus is our King. The only hold Satan has on you is what you give him.

*2. Remember we can't just send demons away.* Saying "in Jesus' name" won't necessarily make everything easier. We defeat the hoards of hell by being filled with the Spirit and living in holiness and peace. Ja.4:7 says, **"Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."**

*3. Remember we are strongest when we are weakest.* When we rest in the Lord we are the most secure. God said to Paul in 2 Cor.12:9, **"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."** Paul then said, **"...gladly I will...boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For when I am weak, then I am strong."**

I read about a missionary years ago in the jungles of New Guinea who wrote the following letter to his friends back home:

Man, it is great to be in the thick of the fight, to draw the old devil's heaviest guns, to have him at you with depression and discouragement, slander, disease. He doesn't waste time on a lukewarm bunch. He hits good and hard when a fellow is hitting him. You can always measure the weight of your blow by the one you get back. When you're on your back with fever and at your last ounce of strength, when some of your converts backslide, when you learn that your most promising inquirers are only fooling, when your mail gets held up, and some don't bother to answer your letters, is that the time to put on mourning? No sir. That's the time to pull out the stops and shout Hallelujah! The old fellow's getting it in the neck and hitting back. Heaven is leaning over the battlements and watching. "Will he stick with it?" As they see who is with us, as they see the unlimited reserves, the boundless resources, as they see the impossibility of failure, how disgusted and sad they must be when we run away. Glory to God! We're not going to run away. We're going to stand!

Are you making your stand? Let me leave you with this key verse, Rom.16:20 says, **"And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."**