

WE WRESTLE NOT AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD

TEXT: EPH. 6:10-24

Introduction:

1. Paul is now coming to the close of his epistle, and we are coming to the close of our series.
2. We are to be “strong in the Lord” (6:10). The Christian life is a battlefield, not a playground.
3. Satan and his demonic hosts (6:12) are committed to hinder and obstruct the work of God and to knock us out of the battle.
4. Therefore, we must be “strong in the Lord” (6:10). We must take our “stand” (6:13, 14).
5. The more effective we are for the Lord, the more we can expect to be attacked by the devil. A man once said to Evangelist John R. Rice, “How come you are always preaching about the devil? I am a Christian and he never bothers me.” Dr. Rice said: “If you’d start living for God and winning souls, believe me – he’d start bothering you!”
6. We must remember that in our own strength we are no match for the devil. So we need to be “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might” (6:10).
7. When the Israelites entered Canaan, they were confronted with many enemies. The Promised Land truly was a land flowing with milk and honey but the Israelites soon discovered that before they could possess the land they first had to conquer it.
8. And it is the same today. When a person receives Christ he or she enters into a wonderful new life in Christ, but the devil and his emissaries (who are far more devious and dangerous than the Canaanites, et al) seek to hinder us and rob us of our blessings (cf. Num. 25:16-18).
9. This is why Ephesians 6:10-17 is in the Bible!
10. The moment we begin to appropriate our blessings in Christ, we discover right away that many of our family and friends are not happy about our conversion. In fact, oftentimes they are upset.
11. After we are saved, we start seeing things differently. The Bible says we are born again. We begin to realize how hostile Satan is toward genuine Christians. Soon we realize the Christian life is indeed a battlefield, not a playground.
12. To be “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might” (6:10) calls for an unceasing dependence upon God. We must learn not to depend upon our own strength, our own abilities, our own ingenuity, our own wisdom, etc.

I. WE MUST KNOW OUR ENEMY (6:10-12).

1. We should never underestimate “the wiles of the devil” (6:11). He has had 6,000 years experience deceiving people.
2. The devil does not come to us and say: “Hello, I am Satan and I am going to ruin you and your family, destroy your church, and cause a lot of misery and heartache for as many people as I can.”
3. In the original Greek text, the word “wiles” is *methodia* – literally “methods” of the devil. Satan’s methods are deceitful
4. Paul does not elaborate on “the wiles of the devil” but they would include deception, discouragement, frustration, confusion, moral failure, doctrinal error, and pride.
5. One of his tricks is convincing people that they know more about the Bible than most people, even more than the pastor. They get haughty and proud. They try and divide the church and so on.
6. We need to follow the humble example set by Paul and by our Lord (cf. Rom. 12:3; Phil. 2:1-8).
7. Satan knows where we are most vulnerable. He knows our weakest point and he aims for it (cf. Eph. 4:27).
8. Second Corinthians 2:11 says, “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.”
9. We cannot afford to be “ignorant of his devices.” Satan is dangerous. The Bible describes him as a serpent and a dragon. Our Lord called him a liar and a murderer.
10. He is a master deceiver and has blinded the majority of mankind. He masquerades as an “angel of light” (II Cor. 11:14).
11. Once we recognize the true nature of the battle, we realize that “we wrestle not against flesh and blood...” (6:12). Our real enemy is Satan and his demonic forces. These battalions of fallen angels, evil spirits, and devils yield tremendous power and actively resist the work of God.
12. We may not be able to see them, but we see their work on every hand. Demons cannot indwell believers (cf. I John 4:4), but they can hinder us, they can oppress us, and they can harass us.
13. One preacher put it this way: “Why can we not halt the drug trade that is destroying countless lives and damning souls? Why has sodomy become acceptable? Why can we not stamp out child abuse and the legalized slaughter of the unborn in abortion clinics? The Bible makes the answer clear: the human race is being

manipulated by vast numbers of evil spirits who have great power” (John Phillips, *Exploring Ephesians*).

14. The terminology used here in Ephesians 6:12 and elsewhere (cf. 1:21) suggests a vast organization of devils with differing degrees of authority.
15. Alexander Whyte was a preacher from Scotland, well known for his books on Bible characters and characters from Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*.
16. During WWI, Dr. Whyte wrote a booklet entitled, *Not Against Flesh and Blood*. In this booklet, Alexander Whyte stressed that in that war we were not fighting Germany or the Kaiser, or Turkey or the Sultan.
17. No, he said, “We are fighting the demons which live in these men, we are fighting the powers that are behind these men.”
18. I think Dr. Whyte was right, and I think we can say the same thing today regarding this war against the terrorists (cf. Dan. 10).

II. WE MUST PUT ON OUR ARMOR (6:13-17).

1. Paul wrote this epistle from a Roman prison. Undoubtedly he saw many Roman soldiers and centurions and was familiar with their attire. Twice he exhorts us to put on “the whole armor of God” (6:11, 13).
2. Three times we are told to “stand” (6:11, 13, 14). “On this I take my stand. I can do no other. God help me” (Martin Luther).
3. Let us look now at the armor (6:14). First, we need to have our “loins girt about with truth.” I heard that Truth and Error went swimming one day. Error got out of the water first and put on Truth’s clothes. But when Truth came out, he refused to put on Error’s clothes. That is why whenever you see Error today, it is clothed with the truth. But whenever you see Truth, it is always the naked Truth.
4. Next, we are instructed to wear the “breastplate of righteousness” (6:14; cf. Isa. 59:17), not our filthy rags of self-righteousness (Isa. 64:6).
5. These pieces of armor speak of personal integrity and uprightness. Someone has said, “Words are no defense against an accusation but a good life is.”
6. If we are going to stand right we need to have our “feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (6:15). Spurgeon said, “Observe with delight their excellent foothold: we can tread with

holy boldness upon our high places with these shoes.” (Cf. Isa. 52:7; Rom. 10:7).

7. “Take my feet and let them be
 Swift and beautiful for Thee” – Frances Ridley Havergal.
8. Next is “the shield of faith” (6:16). The devil will continue to hurl his fiery darts, but “faith is the victory.”
9. Knowing that the Lord Jesus Christ has already defeated Satan, and that the spiritual armor and weapons are available to us, by faith we accept what God gives us and we go out to meet our enemy (cf. Rom. 8:31).
10. We already saw a reference to “the helmet of salvation” (6:17) in Isaiah 59:17 (cf. I Thess. 5:8). The helmet protects the head. Satan usually attacks peoples’ minds (cf. II Cor. 4:4; 10:4, 5).
11. The “sword of the Spirit” is the Word of God (cf. Heb. 4:12). The Lord is our great example (Luke 4:1-13).

III. WE ARE TO PRAY ALWAYS (6:18-24).

1. Praying should always be “in the Spirit” (6:18), i.e. directed by the Holy Spirit. Dead, formal prayers written beforehand and recited with no real interest or enthusiasm, will not help us in our great battle against the devil.
2. We must be “watching thereunto with all perseverance...” (6:18) – watching against drowsiness and distractions. We cannot allow our minds to wander. We must prevail in prayer (cf. Luke 11:5-10).

CONCLUSION:

1. Remember Paul was writing from prison. He did not ask that they pray for his release, but that “utterance may be given...” (6:19).
2. Twice Paul asks them to pray that he may preach the Gospel “boldly” (6:19, 20). You do not have to be a preacher to get the Gospel out. Paul was in prison but he kept on witnessing.