



Eph. 6:10-13
Spiritual Warfare

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.

When you ask Christians what their greatest struggle is with or who their biggest enemies are, they'll generally give you very down to earth answers, they'll say well I struggle with depression, or a certain temptation or addiction or illness, and when it comes to their enemies, they'll talk about a certain person or perhaps a group of people. A Christian soldier in Afghanistan for instance, might say my biggest struggle is with homesickness, and my biggest enemies are the Taliban or perhaps a certain officer who seems hell-bent on making my life as miserable as possible.

But what God tells us in scripture is that as formidable as those things may be, they are *not* the Christians biggest struggles or our greatest enemies. What scripture tells us is that our biggest struggle is a war waged against spiritual forces, against the devil and all his minions. Or as Paul puts in verse 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.”**

If we are Christians we are engaged every day of our lives in spiritual warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil. And against them, the ordinary weapons of worldly warfare will not work. We must take up and make use of God's weapons or we will not stand.

Now if you tell most people today that the actions of evil men are directed by evil spiritual powers and that what we witness on earth, is what Abraham Kuyper called the backlash of that spiritual struggle they will look at you in about the same way as if you told them that you believe that your wallet had been stolen by Leprechauns. Even Christians fall prey to that. I can't tell you how often I have

encountered Christians who are willing to believe that they must fight against their own sinful nature, and the temptations of the world, or even their own psychological problems and hang-ups, but when you start talk about the devil and demons, they kind of laugh nervously and begin edging towards the door. Men tend to have little difficulty believing in good spiritual powers, God's ok, angels are ok, but the Devil and Demons? No.

In his wonderfully humorous little book on spiritual warfare, called "The Screwtape Letters" C.S. Lewis pointed out that the Devil's greatest victory was to make us think he doesn't exist. Why is that? Well, a sensible man doesn't worry about Leprechauns stealing his wallet, and he certainly doesn't take pains to make sure that he's taken every precaution he can against pilfering Leprechauns. Why would he? They don't exist! So why would someone who doesn't believe in the devil **"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil?"**

Brothers and sisters, it is for that reason that I am preaching today on the subject of spiritual warfare, because I believe that most Christians at some point forget that they are actively involved in it, or they think it only happens once in a while, or they forget all the dimensions of spiritual warfare – that it occurs at the personal, family, congregational, denominational, national, and worldwide level. So remember if you believe the bible is the word of God, and that it is true in what it teaches, then you must accept it's testimony that you live in the midst of a great battle in the heavenlies, that has its effects on earth. In the book of Job, we have the story of the terrible misfortunes and restoration of the title character, Job, but we learn from the very beginning of that book, that the terrible events that happened in the life of Job were not the result of freakish weather patterns or the evil natures of the Sabeans and Chaldeans. They were a direct result of the conflict between God and the Devil and we also learn that through them, God is vindicated and glorified, the Devil defeated, and ultimately Job grows enormously in grace and the knowledge of God.

And as we discuss spiritual warfare remember those lessons that the book of Job teaches, namely that God is sovereign in all these things, and when angels and demons do battle it is never a battle between equals. God is the Creator and the governor of the universe, the Devil, is powerful as he is still only a creature. As Luther said, *even the Devil is yet God's devil*. And while the conflict is real and even terrible the final outcome of the battles is never in doubt, and all of these battles no matter how terrible they are work for the good of the saints. Remember that even spiritual warfare is part of that great promise ***"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."*** (Romans 8:28)

Now in these verses, Paul is talking about the reality of spiritual warfare and applying it to what the individual believer must know and do. But please understand one of the things that I REALLY want to bring home to you today is that our personal spiritual warfare has far ranging implications. Your part in this warfare, and the way you either fight or fail to fight it, will have implications for your family, your congregation, your denomination, and even the nation you live in. And keep in mind, that if you are

not a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, you are still engaged in the broader warfare, but you are on the wrong side, and you can be sure you will be used, whether or not you realize it, by the Devil.

Now before anyone gets mortally offended by that, please keep in mind that this isn't me making that up, it's what the Lord Jesus Christ, said, for instance he told those who followed Him in the hopes that He would be their political messiah, but didn't believe He is the Son of God:

"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it." (John 8:44)

And also remember that, every Christian, prior to their conversion was in exactly the same situation, we all once did the will of the Devil. Earlier in this same letter to the Ephesian church, Paul wrote:

***Ephesians 2:1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,
2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,
3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.***

Now as I said, the way you fight, or fail to fight in this war will have much wider implications, little actions that you don't see as very important can have enormous consequences for good or evil. Wars are won or lost on the basis of countless little details. For instance kids, it used to be the case that before cars people used horses to get around, and those horses didn't have tires, they had horseshoes. Now what was the importance of a blacksmith making sure that one little horseshoe nail was made with due care and attention? He might have made hundreds of thousands of those nails, and gotten sloppy with just a few. Some of those bad nails would break and fall out. And the shoe might come off the horse, and when a horse loses a shoe, it was like getting a flat tire. A famous poem though, explored how one bad nail could have disastrous consequences:

***For want of a nail the shoe was lost.
For want of a shoe the horse was lost.
For want of a horse the rider was lost.
For want of a rider the message was lost.
For want of a message the battle was lost.
For want of a battle the kingdom was lost.
And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.***

We can see how that idea applies to the spiritual realm as well, we've been wonderfully reminded today of the power of prayer, prayer is often the means that God ordains to bring things to pass. We've just seen how the individual prayers of saints can make all the difference in a life, in a family, and in a

congregation. Perhaps several congregations, because haven't you and I been affected by that testimony?

How about a nation though? Can one man's prayers affect a nation?

Well turn with me to *Daniel 10:12*

What is going on here? Well Daniel the Jewish prophet and leader is mourning and praying over that lack of faith in his countrymen, and he is also mourning and praying over something even more serious. The exiles who had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon and started the rebuilding of the Temple have been forced to stop the rebuilding. You see the Samaritans who lived in the area were not happy to have the Jews back, and sent petitions pointing out that the Jews were well known as rebels, and so the king's son had written an edict suspending the work of rebuilding. So what did Daniel do? Did he start a political action committee? Contact a lawyer? No he started praying!

And now an angel has been sent by God to deliver a message to him:

Then he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words.

13 "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.

What does he say to Daniel here? He lets him know that as a result of his prayers a spiritual battle ensued along with the outcome. The prince of the kingdom of Persia, the angel speaks of is not the earthly king of Persia, this is a demon who seeks to influence all the decisions made by that Empire, and does it surprise us therefore that he would want an edict suspending work on the temple?

Now did the king's son know he was doing the Devil's work with his edict? Undoubtedly the answer is no. In some sense he felt he did the bidding of his own God, just as Muhammad and the Jihadis felt they do the bidding of Allah in waging Jihad. But there is no God but the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and those who worshiped and served the gods of Persia, or Greece, or Allah were actually serving demons – and brothers and sisters that is not my opinion that is what Scripture tells us and what Paul said - *1 Cor. 10:19 What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? 20 Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.*

So the sad thing is those who believe **they** are the power, the center of the universe, are blinded to the real state of affairs, they are like the Servant of Elisha in Dothan. All they can see are princes and armies and money, worldly power. They are like I was, blind to the truth, that what is going on is the earthly outworking of a spiritual conflict. And that just as prince of the kingdom of Persia could not

resist Christ and Archangel Michael, so the forces that stand behind everything that opposes the Christ and His kingdom will eventually be cast down.

So what are the applications of this to you?

First take heart, Christians, you are not alone against the forces of wickedness in this world. Than can be overcome precisely because, He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

Remember that when things seem grimmest, when you are in the deepest valley, the worst pit, remember that this all part of that great spiritual struggle and that Christ has promised never to leave nor forsake you. He will stand with you, we don't stand strong by ourselves, we can't, but you can stand and you can fight the good fight because you are not alone - **Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.**

Second don't fight your battles as the men of this world do. Remember their weapons are weak by comparison and incapable of affecting real change:

2 Cor. 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.

4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,

5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God,

bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

And so we must:

Eph. 6:11 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.

Now what was the mightiest weapon that Daniel employed here and elsewhere? Prayer! An old man in Persia prayed, and history changed. That is because prayer is the means that God uses to bring about what He has decreed!

3) Remember you are engaged in warfare with wily foe and if you are the Lord's servant he will use every weapon against you, including people of all kinds.

Example of the Pastor and Ruling Elder who went to visit the man inquiring about the way of salvation and his son.

"Clearest example of Spiritual Warfare I've ever seen!"

Now it won't just be little children, it will be men and women and relatives and friends. Especially as a conversion seems imminent. The Devil hates to give up his property.

While you cannot avoid the temptations, but we have the means of resisting them, in God's word and in prayer, and in the indwelling of the spirit you can resist. : "You can't stop birds from flying over your head, but you can stop them from making a nest in your hair." - Martin Luther

Remember also the interconnectedness of these things, your stand for the Lord, can mean the standing and falling of a family, a congregation, or a nation. And the devil will always been trying to get you to desert your post in all three of them. What he wants are Christians husbands and congregants and citizens who are AWOL most of the time.

Finally remember this, until we close with Christ...