

Ephesians 6:10-13 "God's Provision In Spiritual Warfare"

EPH 6:10-13 "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."

Paul is beginning to wrap up his letter to these Ephesian Christians. In the previous chapter he spoke of living a life that would honor Jesus Christ.

EPH 5:1-2 "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

Paul would later give feet to his teaching as he demonstrated the practical ways we are to accomplish this in real life, and in interpersonal relationships like marriage.

EPH 5:22 "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord."

EPH 5:25 "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her..."

He even touched on the relationship children are to have with their parents in EPH 6:1 "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."

And then to round things out he gave an example of how even slaves of that time were to demonstrate how they are to imitators of God in Christ.

EPH 6:5 "Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ."

If you were here for these teachings you might remember how the bottom line for all of us, no matter where we are in life, is found in COL 3:23-24 "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

Whether it's working at your marriage or working at being a good mom or dad, or whether you're working at being a good servant in a work context, we need to approach every area of life as though we were doing it for the One who gave us eternal life. We need to be doing it for Jesus Christ, for His honor and glory.

And as Paul wraps things up here he has one more reminder as to how we must accomplish all of these tasks as unto the Lord. And so we come to our text for this morning.

EPH 6:10-12 "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."

This is a portion of Scripture we usually associate with spiritual warfare. The reason for this is the imagery Paul uses in this section and the metaphor of war with terms like armor, struggle, together with the battle array a soldier would employ going into battle.

The connection we don't often make, however, is that this section on spiritual warfare comes on the heels of everyday activity. What Paul wants us to do is to equate being a good wife and mother, or a good husband and father, or an obedient child, or even a good employee, with the spiritual realm in mind and the battles that will ensue when pursuing these endeavors as unto the Lord.

This is why Paul starts this section with "finally", which is to say, 'having encouraged you to walk in a way that pleases the Lord, let me finally add the means by which you will be able to accomplish these things in a way where you will be empowered and Christ will be lifted up.'

You see it's not enough to simply think ourselves successful in any endeavor, as believers in Christ, we must "do" all things in faith to ultimately glorify Christ. Peter brings this out quite clearly.

1PE 4:11 "If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen."

And so, what you and I must do as we approach life is to realize that it is one big battlefield with the potential not only for war, but also victory in that setting, be it personal relationships in the home

or relationships at work or in coming into contact with the world-at-large, most of whom we don't even know.

By way of summary Paul is calling our attention to what he's already touched on earlier in this letter. In verses 10 and 11 of chapter 6 he speaks of power.

We also read in EPH 1:19-20 "and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,..."

In verse 11 of our text this morning Paul also says to "put on" the full armor of God. We read earlier in EPH 4:24 "... "put on" the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

Paul warns of the devil's schemes in our text. We read in EPH 4:27 "... do not give the devil a foothold."

We read of "evil spiritual forces" in verse 12 of our text. And yet when Paul contrasted the authority and power of Christ in Eph.1:20-21 he stated that our Lord is far above all rule and authority, power and dominion,..."

In verse 13 Paul speaks of the "day of evil" and yet again he had already reminded these Ephesians, and by extension, you and me, in EPH 5:16 "[make] the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil."

This is why it is essential that we come to our God for help and total dependence and this is why Paul say's, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power." (EPH 6:10)

To do anything apart from the power of our Almighty God is to approach life in a spiritually anemic state. Jesus Himself testifies of this when He said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (JOH 15:5)

The phrase "be strong" in the Greek is in the passive form which "indicates that this empowering is something done to Christians, not something they do themselves; its present tense shows that the empowering is continual. This is not an instruction for a quick fix, but for [an abiding] life spent [continually] drawing strength from Christ. To be strong in the Lord means to know His strength and

to draw closer to Him. It's an exhortation to act on what is known."
(Klyne Snodgrass)

What are we to be strong in? The NIV puts it, "in his mighty power", referring to the power of the Lord. What is this power like and do we have any idea of the kind of power we are trusting in? You bet we do. Paul has already talked about it in the very beginning of this letter.

Ephesians 1:18-21 ¹⁸ *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the *surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might* ²⁰ **which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,** ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

When our Lord encourages us to seek His power it is the same power which raised Christ from the dead. It is the same power which spoke this universe into existence. It is the same power which turns the hearts of kings and rolls back the waters of the Red sea.

It is no small thing to live in the power of God which He makes available to all of His children in Christ. And though this is a power which He gives to us we are still to seek after it, which means we have a part in the way God works in and through us. And so we have "divine grace and human responsibility combined in this closing section." (William Hendriksen)

By the way, this phrase "His mighty power" in verse 10 of our text is the exact same phrase found in Eph.1:19 which the NIV puts as "his incomparably great power...". Or as the NAS puts it, "the surpassing greatness of His power..."

What an awesome God we serve who avails Himself to us as He extends grace in His power for works of service to His glory. Continuing on in our text we come to verse 11.

EPH 6:11 "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."

Again, we must keep in mind that putting on the full armor of God is in the context of being strong in the Lord and in His might. And

this is all through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. None of this can be accomplished apart from faith in Christ.

This whole section on the armor of God has been understood by many Christians to mean that we must do just the right thing to be able to acquire this armor as if we must take it down from the coat rack and place it over our heads and put our arms through its sleeves to secure it and make it snug.

This would leave us in a precarious position if we had to go through this routine every time we wanted to do battle, because we simply don't know when the battle is going to heat up and you may be away from your closet when it hits.

No. To "put on" the armor of God is another way of saying, "put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness," as you depend on and seek the Lord continually. (EPH 4:24)

If we are believers in Christ Jesus, do we have to go through some formula in putting on the new self? Of course not. We are already new creatures in Christ. The new self is the new life, and the new nature we've been given by faith alone in our Lord's substitutionary death and resurrection.

What Paul is saying here about putting on this new self is to walk in this new self. To appropriate this new self, by faith, which you already possess. In other words, walk in this new life by faith. If you have life in Christ then show yourself alive as you seek and love Him.

And so to put on the full armor of God is to walk in the armor you already possess. It's not like a suit of clothes we put on when we get up in the morning. We go to bed with our armor on. And we ought to wake with it as we approach the new day in the power of our God which only He can supply.

That's why it's called the full armor of God and not the full armor of Drew. I didn't create it and I can't sustain it. It is of the Lord. But the Lord wants us to use this armor which we already possess as we walk by faith and as we walk trusting that the battle belongs to the Lord and He is the One who goes before us. He just wants us to follow and stay close, loving Him every step of the way, because He first loved us.

One person put it this way. "The armor of God can be understood as the armor which God provides, the armor that God Himself wears, or even the armor that is God Himself." (Snodgrass)

What he means by this is that God's power and nature and substance is who He is. He is almighty and when we put on His armor we are putting on God, or to put it in a way Paul has described in ROM 13:14 "... clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."

Paul is not suggesting that we can put Jesus on and take Him off at the end of the day. He is stating a present fact about our new status with Christ which cannot change. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. Therefore nothing can unclothe us from Him.

GAL 3:26-27 "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves [present tense] with Christ."

You and I already have the full armor of God in Christ which cannot be taken off. Our Lord is now encouraging us to walk in His power as we go out to do battle. Now, from a practical standpoint it may look like many Christians have in fact taken off their armor and are walking aimlessly across the battlefield with a big red target painted on their backs. But the truth of the matter is that we have all we need in Christ to go forward for Him and to His glory.

But what is this armor for? Why has God clothed us in this armor and strength which only He can supply? Well, Paul answers that at the end of verse 11.

EPH 6:11 "Put on the full armor of God *so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.*"

You mean we have to stand up against the devil? Is that a problem for you? God never places us in a situation in which He doesn't also provide the grace and strength to go through it. However, standing against the devil's schemes doesn't necessarily mean you have to have a personal encounter with Satan, that serpent of old.

What this does tell us is that Satan's in charge of the scheme department. The word scheme in the Greek is an interesting one. It's *methodeia*, and it's where we get our English word "method". Satan has a methodology. He is very methodical. He puts a great

deal of thought into His methods, so that when he uses them on us he knows that his ability in those methods can be pretty successful.

He has had a number of years to perfect these methods. Methods which include cunningness and deceit. Nothing about Satan is good and none of his tactics are entirely truthful. This is what Jesus meant, when telling the unbelieving Jews, that Satan was their father. And then our Lord went on to describe this person.

JOH 8:44 "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

We need the power and the armor of God to contend with such a person who is hell-bent on trying to destroy what Christ has purchased with His blood. But when we realize we already have the power of God, then by faith, we can stand against this foe.

To stand denotes the ability to be rock solid against the attacks of the enemy. But the Rock upon which we stand is Christ. And so, Paul tells us that as we go out in this world we must stand upon the One who is King of kings and Lord of lords. If He is for us who can be against us? Can Satan? No, not even Satan can come against us without God's permission.

And so, instead of cowering behind the bushes when we go out to serve the Lord, we should go out with the boldness that God's power is working in us to accomplish His will. And His will is to make disciples of all the nations. And believe me Satan will come against such work, which is why God's armor is so important in our lives.

But who is this foe? Is he the Rambo from hell? Is he simply the dark side of the force Obeewan Kanobe warned us about? Is this a real person, or some sick evil joke to scare us all when we go to bed at night? Paul answers this.

EPH 6:12 "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

When Paul talks about this struggle he means just that. The KJV says, "we wrestle not against flesh and blood..." Struggling and wrestling give the sense that there is somebody we wrestle against.

Can you imagine wrestling a suitcase or lazyboy recliner or a 57 Chevy, or any other inanimate object? Wrestling involves another person and when we wrestle not against flesh and blood, Paul is telling us that we are not ultimately wrestling or struggling against human beings, but we most certainly wrestle against a person. This person is not some impersonal cosmic force. He has a name. His name is Satan.

He is a spiritual foe. And this is what Paul describes in our text. Our struggles are "against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

First, we see that we struggle against rulers and authorities. A ruler is a person as one who is in authority. These rulers have power in the heavenly realms. Now, it should be noted that a ruler rules over others, which suggests that Satan and his rulers rule over others in his little kingdom, which means there are other spiritual persons involved in this battle that we struggle against.

There is most certainly another spiritual sphere which we cannot see with physical eyes, but it doesn't mean it doesn't exist. And so, what Paul is trying to convey is that these spiritual battles we encounter have as their source these spiritual foes.

Does this mean that human beings are not involved in coming against the Kingdom of God? Of course not. Since the time of Cain, other people have made it their business in rebelling against the Lord and in the process coming against Him. But the point Paul is making is that even when people try to thwart the work of Christ there is a bigger battle going on behind the scenes which has a power no human being in this world possesses.

These spiritual rulers and authorities take an active role in the trying to influence people in this world. This doesn't mean that people are not responsible for their own actions when they come against the work of Christ. When Paul was persecuting the church prior to his conversion our Lord Jesus approached him in a very dramatic way on the road to Damascus.

ACT 9:4-5 "He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do *you* persecute *me*?" 5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "***I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,***" he replied."

Paul is held responsible for his actions. But notice who he's coming against. Even though he's persecuting the people of God,

our Lord Jesus said, 'why are you persecuting Me?' There is a spiritual connection to all of this even though flesh and blood is being effected.

And so, the point is that if we are entering into a spiritual battle in a physical world we must understand who our real enemy is. Despite the fact that other people may be fighting against the gospel of Jesus Christ, and in that way are seen as an enemy of the cross, we are never instructed by God to hate these people or to declare war on them.

In fact, we're told by Jesus Christ in MAT 5:44 "..... Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,.... "

And yet, despite how we are to love our human enemies we are never told to love Satan or the angels who followed in the rebellion against God. For a Christian, hate is not an option when it comes to people in this world. We must be loving them with the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And yet we are instructed to hate in one area. ROM 12:9 "..... Hate what is evil; cling to what is good."

We must hate the sin that so easily entangles us and we know that Satan is the personification of sin and rebellion. This doesn't mean we spend our days hating Satan and throwing our fist in the air calling him names. It simply means we hate all that is associated with him enough that we would spend our days loving those who are the target of his hate and destruction. Does this mean that all people will love us because of our concern for them?

JOH 15:18-19 "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. 19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you."

Again, the world may hate us but it is nothing compared to the hate Satan and his angels has for us. And along with his hate he has power and authority to come against us in a meaningful way. This doesn't mean we should fear him, even though we may respect his power.

Our Lord makes this clear when the apostle John writes "...greater is He who is in us, than he who is in the world." (1JO 4:4)

The Holy Spirit of God resides in every true believer. We need not fear the attacks of Satan. In fact, this is exactly what Paul told

Timothy who probably was attacked from every side, as both Satan and the people who were influenced by him, came against the work Timothy was called to by God.

2TI 1:7-8 "For God did not give us a spirit of [fear], but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. 8 So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God,..."

It is in this context that Paul says in EPH 6:13 "Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."

We are not given the option to sit this war out. It is a war over the immortal souls of people in this world and we must not cower at the prospect of getting our hands dirty or entering into the fray. When encouraging the church at Corinth Paul made clear the attitude we must have when it comes to standing firm in the faith.

1Cor.16:13-14 "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love."

Paul is not suggesting that we be spiritual bullies. Rather, he is saying we must be spiritually strong in the strength of the Lord, which is always done in love and truth. We must resist in the day of evil. And believe me the day of evil is here.

Standing, resisting, wrestling, struggling are all action words. There is no inactivity with Satan, and there must be no inactivity with God's people whom our Lord equips to go forward against these spiritual rulers and authorities and powers.

What an awesome task. What confidence our God has in us to be able to accomplish so great work as He supplies us with everything we need to do His will of bringing the world the gospel of Jesus Christ. We need never fear if we can be soldiers of Christ. It is His armor and His power that is ever with us and will accomplish His will to His glory. This is what our Lord told Israel before they went out to battle.

2CH 20:15,17 "... This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's. 17 Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them, and the LORD will be with you.'"

Let us not fear. Let us trust our God and go forward in the strength He supplies with power and love and truth. And as we stand, as we go out to do His work, we will watch Him go before us and magnify Himself through willing vessels who serve Him because we love Him. Moses and Isaiah, both soldiers for Christ, put it well, as they recorded these words of the Lord.

DEU 31:6 "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."

ISA 41:10 "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."