

The battle #3

Eph 6:10-13

(10) Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

(11) Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

(12) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil 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 firm.

Recap

We come again to our look at the area of spiritual warfare.

We started looking at the area because I am concerned about what has passed for spiritual warfare in the body of Christ over the last 20 years or so.

At times like these, times of stress times and uncertainty – people tend to not run to the word, but to run to the peculiar.

they recognize that the devil is at work, they want to pray and ask God for help, but they really don't know how to deal with the spiritual world.

At times like these so called Christian ministries arise that would like to lead the people of God astray, resulting in vain hope and no concrete answers. They pray on the vulnerabilities and frailties of people's minds and concerns.

I want to guard against that by taking you to the word and showing you the nature of the war we are in.

I will over the coming weeks emphasize the fact that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty and effective with dealing with the devil and the world at this time.

Last week we look at the context of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, the setting in which it took place.

We then looked at this term ...*be strong in the Lord*... we looked at what it meant and how we can apply it to our lives

We looked at why we need to be strong and we looked at how we can be strong

We examined the reasons behind the fact that we can trust God

- We can trust God because of His past record
- We can trust God because of our present situation
- We can trust God because of His eternal love and desire for us.

General Intro

And now we come to continuing to look at this verse

Here is where I would like to depart from the classical or expository treatment of the text.

This is a treatment that was used extensively by Puritan preachers and in particular Gurnell in his classic study, *The Christian in Complete Armour*, which was an in-depth look at this series of verse and a book I encourage you all to get and read

Logically, if I was dealing with this in a purely expository manner, I would start to look at the next statement made by Paul to *Put on the whole armour of God...* and I would go on and investigate the nature of this armour.

But I feel instead that I should look at the reason for this armour, I believe that is what Paul was doing here.

You would have noticed in the scripture reading this morning that the Apostle first mentions the armour, ever so briefly, then goes into it in much greater detail later on.

He mentions the armour, because he is about to describe the nature of the enemy we are fighting.

He mentions the armour because it is the only effective weapon we need against the enemy and he is giving us hope.

But if I was to start looking at the nature of the armour, I am concerned that I will find myself getting drawn into the study of it without first looking at the reason we are needing our armor at all.

And you must remember that.

The armour is for a reason...

We saw last week that...

Paul first of all tells us to 'be strong in the lord' .
Then he goes on and tells us why we should be strong (V 11-13)
Then he tells us how to be strong (V 14-20).

And that is how I would like to approach our exploration of these verses.

I would like to look at Why we need to be strong.

We need to be strong because we have an enemy

So I would like to start this morning looking at this enemy, our enemy, the enemy that we are engaged against.

The enemy that has been committed to destroying God's people since the beginning of time.

Topic Intro

You will remember that I made the observation a couple of weeks ago that we have the defensive amour of an occupying force, because we are following the victor.

"It is finished" were the words our Lord and Savior used.

There is no longer a battle.
We no longer need the weapons of an invading force

We have amour that will protect us against skirmishes.

We don't need siege engines, or horses or artillery, because the victory is already ours.

We need protective gear because we are fighting against insurgence and pockets of resistance.

We are fighting against terrorist who want to take back the land that has been taken from them

terrorist use tactics to provoke and draw a soldier away from the barracks
away from his unit
and attack him when he is isolated,
vulnerable,
out numbered and
unarmed.

People allow bitterness,
rebellion,
Pride,
anger,
a haughty spirit to isolate them from others in the body of Christ.

They get away for there unit.
They have no back up.
They are out numbered and under armed.

They have no covering, they have no support because they have no church.

That is why the author of Hebrews says

Hebrews 10:24-25 ESV

(24) And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,

(25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Now think about this personally,
how many people do you know who say they are Christians,
yet are not committed or regular and passionate about Christ and His church and they are constantly in battles, warfare, distraction, going from one skirmish or another.

There is such a thing as victory through proximity.

If we are on the same team and the team wins, we all win.

We share in the victory

If one scores, we all score

We all go home victorious.

The Church, This war and our enemy

Life is a battle.

MLJ in the late 1950s, early 1960's said: *"There is no grosser or greater misrepresentation of the Christian message than that which depicts it as offering us a life of ease with no scathe and no struggle."*

Not to remember this, not to regard this is to entertain disaster and personal tragedy. To prevent & twist this either through ridicule, denial or erroneous teaching is to set people up for failure and disaster.

The reality is that the Christian life is warfare.
Yes we are victorious ,
but we do have to fight for it.

It is a battle to remain victorious,
a battle to remain positive.
A battle to remain focused on all we are called to do and meant to do.

Someday, you get out of bed and it seems like the devil has beaten you to the day.
You just want to cancel Thursday and get up and call it Friday.

You feel the enemy mocking you faith, friends & family call you forth into question. The world tells you your nuts.

Despair can cloud you

Christians falling, minister failing –it is no wonder that Paul says here... take up the complete armor of God & stand-be strong in God & stand! Stand against the plans, the devious acts of the devil.

The Apostle tells us that there is an unseen power afoot.
Powers of evil.
Power of darkness.
Rules of the spiritual world.
Evil spirits and heavenly beast that want to destroy mankind.

So people say...

Dont tell me that. Don't let me know. I find this sort of teaching depressing.

Depressing? I find it invigorating

I find it comforting.

I am depressed when I do not know what I am fighting.

I find it difficult when I don't know the nature of my enemy.

You see a belief in the devil & his power is absolutely essential to a belief concerning sin & evil.

You can not believe one without the other.

In fact if you do not believe in Satan & the spiritual realm then you probably do not believe in the virgin birth or the miracles of Christ or the nature of His incarnation and resurrection.

Is the bible true to you? Is it the final authority in your life?

This letter of Paul's is A call to war

There is no road to Christian nirvana

This verse in Ephesians is a Call to War.

A call for troops

for warriors to ready themselves and engage and rid the world of the devil, his foes & his works

To ready themselves and determine to stand.

To prepare to go forward and take the land.

Holiness is not weakness

Christianity is not a moral or ethical code.

It is not a program of behavior modification.

Christian is the passionate pursuit of Jesus Christ and the enforcement of His right to occupy & rule planet earth through the establishment of the kingdom of God –that is the church.

We war in the flesh as well as in the spiritual realm

We war in the flesh as well as in the spiritual realm, that is what Paul is saying here

Eph 6:12

(12) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood,

Some people read that this verse, and I have heard it put like this: that all our battles & enemy's are spiritual and the flesh has no part in it at all.

That we just have to pray more.

That we can deal with this enemy on a spiritual level only

They say that that is what Paul is conveying here.

That is just not true

If we accept that, then we are ignoring the other works written by this great man.

In Romans Paul tells us that:

Rom 6:12

(12) Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

the flesh & sin are obvious issues dealt with by all people including the church at Ephesus.

There is still sin left in the body,
still lurking as a result of our fallen nature.

He dealt with this “Internal issue’ (the flesh) in his letter to the church at Rome, now he is dealing with the external issue to his friends in Ephesus.

*“For we wrestle **not only** against flesh and blood...”* is how Martyn Lloyd Jones suggest we could accurately read this verse.

So my warning to you as we start to look at this verse is don't press the distinction beyond the bounds of what the Scripture is saying.

The devil & sin can be at work in us and can work **through us**, that is why we must watch over our flesh.

But neither is it just a work **of us**,

There is a power beyond us that is arrayed against us. A power that is committed to destroying all that God loves, stealing from those the God loves and killing all that God loves.

So along with the flesh & sin that we must rule and reign over ,there is the devil and the forces of darkness.

The enemy described.

Let us start where Paul start, with the being called the devil.

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

The name of someone describes there attributes and what they are like.

We read the names of God and we know there meaning and we are encouraged because they describe the essence of who He is. They describe His character. We know God because we know His name

- Jehovah-Elohim -- The Eternal Creator
- Jehovah-Jireh -- The Lord our Provider
- Jehovah-Nissi -- The Lord our Banner
- Jehovah-Ropheka -- The Lord our Healer
- Jehovah-Shalom -- The Lord our Peace

Paul starts here by calling him the devil. He is also called satan else where in scripture

You will also find many other names –Beelzebub, Belial, the evil one, the wicked one.

He is also known as a serpent, a hater, an opponent, a beguiler, a speaker of pervert wisdom and subtleties

The prince of this world, lucifier....John 8 calls him a murder, a destroyer of life

Also in the N.T. he is called ‘the strong man armed.
Also he is described as the red dragon in Revelations 12.
Also a roaring lion, looking to devour the saints.

All of these names used to describe the powerful yet terrible nature of our foe.

We should never speak loosely or flippantly about the devil.

The Bible never refers to him in that light and flippant manner; it emphasizes his power, his status. He is a real threat and a real issue

Nevertheless, let me hasten to say, his power is limited, he is not allmighty.

This again is an important point, and to me a very comforting one.

The devil, because he is a created being, and because he is finite, is limited and can therefore only be in one place at a time.

The scripture makes it very clear that we must think of the devil in a personal sense.

We must not think of him as a force or a power or a type or symbol of evil.

No. We are given very clearly to understand that the devil has super-human personality, and attributes, yet it is very clear that his not divine. He is not God. They are not in the same league.

One is the Creator, the other is created

That is how I choose to make the distinction. One is super-human, stronger than man, the other, our Lord, is Divine

He maybe stronger than man, but in no way are we to consider him stronger or more powerful than God.

There are not to equal powers fighting for the fate of mankind.

This is not a celestial arm wrestling match and it is in a tie old we know one day we will win.... But it doesn't look like it @ the moment.

The devil may be the god of this world, but he is not God.

The purpose of satan and his activities

So what is the purpose of this enemy?

First of all, he is an accuser

He accuses us to God, and he accuses us to ourselves.

The Bible describes him as our '**adversary**' - one who is always opposed to us in every way.

In Zechariah 3:1 you will find,

Zechariah 3:1

3:1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.

He is also our accuser; he is essentially the accuser of the brethren.
(rev 12:10)

he accuses you of your sin. He assaults your God given potential

This leads me to his second activity

Secondly Satan also discourages us.

We are told that he is like a lion waiting to devour us (I Pet. 5:8), to try us and to deceive us. (Luke 22:31).

He tempts us with his wiles, his snares, his fiery darts, his deceits and his suggestions; he excites our passions;

He affects our minds.

He is responsible for most of our moodiness, our depressions, our sense of hopelessness and our sense of despair.

Is some of it chemical? Yes

Environmental? Yes

Situational? Yes

But a large portion of it is demonic as well

Now don't go looking for demons under every rock

These are tools to help you overcome,
not excuses and reasons for you to be a victim.

However every time you are turned in upon yourself, and find yourself looking at your weakness, your failure, your disability, or anything else in yourself, when you are looking at yourself like that, it is always the devil.

I do not hesitate to say that the devil turns men and women in upon themselves, knowing that when they are looking at themselves they are not looking at God, and so he produces all these moods and depressions within us.

Thirdly, he resists our works and our activities

Have you ever wondered why something's don't go the way they should.

Everything is there. Everything is ready to go, yet it doesn't ever get off the ground?

Paul writes about the 'messenger of Satan sent to harass him - to prevent his preaching, and doing his work as he would like to do it.

Then in 1 Thessalonians 2:18 Paul says,

1Th 2:18

(18) because we wanted to come to you--I, Paul, again and again--but Satan hindered us.

The good news is that nothing can stop the sovereign plan of God, but the enemy will do everything he can to hinder it, slow it, delay it and discourage those of us charged with stewarding it.

Fourthly he even affects our bodies,

Job 2:7

So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

He can produce sickness and illness; he has the power to do so and he uses it.

Now I would like to spend extensive time on the area of divine healing.

But I can not.

That is what we do Sunday nights

Sunday nights is our Supernatural Sunday service

And again I will continue the series on faith for the supernatural out of Mark and, as always we will be praying for the sick

Against the rulers

Now we come to this next phrase 'rulers & authorities' over this present darkness.

Eph 6:12

*(12) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, **but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers** over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*

The KJV puts it like this

Ephesians 6:12

*"12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against **powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.**"*

Rulers, authorities, cosmic powers

The term rulers denotes both the scope & the limit of the power & influence of the beings Paul is speaking of here.

They ruler only over what they have power

These beings have limited power.

They have limited authority

It can also mean a set period or time.

They rule for only the time that is allotted them

They are limited to the world outside of, or the world not submitting to the government of God.

We use the same word when we say "so & so was once in the world, but now he is not"

when he become a Christian "he came out of the world".

It has a spiritual meaning.

In Colossians one Paul says we are delivered from the power of darkness.

It is the same concept.

We are delivered out of that place which is the dominion of the enemy.

This enemy has limited scope & limited power.

He is not God.
He is not omnipresent
He is omniscient
He is not omnipotent

Within the boundaries of his domain,
he has the power for terrorist.

Outside of it, he has no influence.

That friend should bring you great comfort.

That is why I love the doctrine of the sovereignty of God so much.

God is in control.
God is all powerful

He sets the boundaries of life and death

He in his wisdom charts the course and tell us which way to walk

He loves us

Is for us

He hovers over us

Loving and longing for us

Wanting us to prosper and succeed....and there is nothing the devil can do to stop it

He may try

He may even look like he is winning at times...he is not

Let us have a look at another phrase

over this present darkness

What present darkness?

This is a very specific darkness

It is the darkness that hovers over the life and soul of all people who have no knowledge of Christ.

The vast majority of the people in the world today live under this fog, this cloud of appalling ignorance.

They are blind they are ignorant and they do not know it.

1Co 2:14

(14) The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

And again we read....

2Co 4:4

(4) In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

They can not believe.

They have no knowledge of the wonder and glory of God.

They are slaves to the devil and they are subject to the rules and government of his kingdom.

We are not.

Our will has been freed.

We are no longer bound by this false princess, this pretender to the thrown.

I think it is important to realize that the world that Paul is talking about here is not the physical realm, but the spiritual. The mountains, the seas, the planet is not against us. But the world system. The humanistic organizations

Our aim is to be in the world not of it.

evil in the heavenly places.

So now we come to this last phrase...

against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Namely there is indeed a myriad of evil spirits arrayed against all of mankind.

Now this term heavenly places can get confusing for people. They think that the demons are still to this day trying to raid heaven and somehow they have the power to access it... they do not.

What Paul is trying to say is that this battle we are engaged in is of a spiritual nature, not a fleshly one.

It may well manifest in the flesh, but the origins are spiritual & our victory will be obtained through spiritual means.

Does this seem overwhelming at times to us? Yes.

But that is due to marketing not spiritual fact.

Remember Paul starts out by saying "Be strong in the Lord and the Power of His might!"

there are 8 verses in total in what we are looking at. 2 of those talk about our enemy.

The other 6 talk about how we are to use the tools & equipment we have to walk in victory.

There is nothing to be scared of, just aware of.

The enemy has limited power. He has already been eternally judged and the outcome is assured. I have read the end of the book...we win

The judgment against Satan

Now I will step outside of the context of the scripture here and give you the final judgment against this enemy

God could have destroyed Satan and the sinning angels the moment they rebelled.

However, in His infinite wisdom He has permitted sin to run its horrible course as a witness to all of its destructive fruit.

In God's overall plan, it is evident that He is dealing with Satan in a progressive manner.

Kevin Conner outlines the are seven steps in the judgment of Satan.

1. The moment he sinned he was cast out of Paradise, the third heaven, which is the immediate presence of God.

(Isaiah 14~15; Ezekiel 28:16; Luke 10:18).

2. He was judged in Eden's earthly Paradise, when Satan caused Adam and Eve to sin (Genesis 3:14-15). He is under the irrevocable and eternal judgement of God.

3. He was conquered by Christ at Calvary's cross John 12:31; 16:11; Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3,8).

Some ask why did God wait so long before he sent Jesus?

He waited through the Jewish period to show that man can not save himself through obedience to works

He waited through the period of the Greek period to show that man can not save himself through philosophy and education

He waited through the roman period to show that man could not save himself through military might.

4. He and his hosts are being conquered by the church as they release the captives of the human race who are under his control. (Mark 16:15-20; Acts 26:18; Romans 16:20).

5. He and his angels are to be cast out of heaven to the earth in the time of tribulation at the close of the age.

This casting out is the result of an angelic war in the heavens (Ezekiel 28:17; Ephesians 2:2; 6:12; Revelation 12:4-13).

6. He will be cast out of the earth into the bottomless pit for a thousand years at the second coming of Christ (Revelation 20:2-3).

7. He will be loosed from the bottomless pit for a little season, after which he will be cast into the Lake of Fire and Brimstone for all eternity (revelation 20:10; Is 14:15; Matthew 25:41). The eternal judgment upon Satan will also be the same for all his host and all men who choose to serve him in this life.

And what applies to the devil also applies to those who follow him, those who are described as 'devils' or 'demons' or 'fallen angels'.