

The battle #4

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

And over the last 3 weeks we have been looking at the nature of this battle. This battle that has been raging in the heavenly.

This battle that manifests on earth.

What you see is not what you get when it comes to spiritual things.

There is an unseen world that we are aware of and there are unseen force arrayed against all of mankind and against the Church of Jesus Christ.

So lets continue...and if you need to get a copy of the teachings from previous weeks, please see Melissa or Kevin Smith and please visit our website for the free podcast

You will remember that I have repeated the observation over the last couple of weeks that the armour described by Paul in Ephesians 6 is the daily amour of the roman occupying force, not the full army of an invading force.

We have amour that will protect us against skirmishes against insurgences.

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

because we are following the victor.

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

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

As our armour is different,
So the tactics of the enemy is different.

The battle we face, is not the battle Christ faced and won.

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.

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

Last week we looked at the purpose of satan
and now we come now to look at the activities of this hater of all of mankind,
this hater of all that God loves.

To Stand

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.

We now come to the place in Paul's writing where he encourages the church at Ephesus to *stand against the schemes of the devil*

To stand...

This term has several meanings.

To stand: To be set, to be put, to make a stand

To stand firm

To be immovable

To be ready

To be prepared

To be steadfast of mind

To be one who does not hesitate, one who does not waiver

Stand: to maintain your Christian position.

To stand: it is the opposite of falling or of fleeing.

Able to Stand

But Paul doesn't just say Stand, he says, *Able to stand*

Able through the power and virtue of ones own ability and resources.

This is not something you pray to do, this is something you decide to do.

Able: capable and powerful

Able to stand; suggests that there is a difficulty of holding our own in the Christian fight.

many Christians fall,
and many Christians flee the battle field at the height of there struggle, at the time when there victory is immanent because they attempting to stand against an enemy that they are ill prepared to fight.

Paul warned the Corinthians of this

1 Corinthians 10:12 ESV

(12) Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

People, sometimes what we need to do is NOT praying against uour enemy, but make a stand against an enemy

Our God is immensely practical and heavily into personal responsibility.

Hudson taylor said:

"All God's giants have been weak men, who did great things for God because they believed that God would be with them

That is what Paul is saying here..

you need to be strong in God

You need to put on the armour because you need to make a firm stance against the schemes of the devil. This is something you must physically as well as spiritually do

Schemes

Then Paul uses this word Schemes:

Now the word *schemes* is a compound of two other words which meanto travel and from behind.

Schemes...cunning arts, deceit, trickery, to travel behind you, to go behind you, to come up form behind you.

To catch you unawares and unprepared.

For armed *is* forewarned,

Down through history, armies who have been under armed yet practiced and prepared have won time and time again

if you know what the schemes of the enemy are...and they are not many, and yes they are often repeat

Now in all that I am laying out for you, please do not here what I am not saying.

I am not saying that spiritual warfare is Not a spiritual thing and does not involve prayer.

But what I AM saying that what has been passed off as spiritual warfare most of it is hokey, non-biblical and really weird.

Spiritual warfare is neither mystical, nor impotent. It is in fact very practical and very powerful.

But it involves us doing - So God can deliver

All power that Satan has is derived power
He has none of his own.

He either gets it from God, as in the example of Job
Or he gets it form us

His ability to influence your life is based upon the permission and access you give him

Let us have a look at the area in our life that is most attacked by the devil

Lets look at the battle field of our mind

Turn with me 2 Cor 10

The Mind.

The supreme activity of the devil happens & is inflicted upon the minds of men.

You think about it.

You become sick, the devil attacks your belief in Gods ability to heal. You suffer financial set back and you start to think fearful thoughts about what the future could look like. Challenges arise in church life and people lash out and start to accuse.

All of this things, these issues start in the areas of our mind

The church in Corinth was in turmoil.
Factions had arisen that were denying the gospel.
Factions had arisen that were usurping leadership
People were in open rebellion.
This was the church who Paul rebuked for engaging in sexual practices and perversions that non Christians frowned upon
They were hard of heart and not prepared to repent.

What Paul did to the church in Corinth is what I am encouraging you to do.

Attack the root of the issue, not the fruit of the issue.

Remember Paul said in his letter to the Romans that we are transformed in our life by the renewing of your mind

We are set free from the demonic influences when those forces have no room to grow in our life.

So lets look at Pauls advice to a church and a group of people caught in the midst of a spiritual battle and attack from the enemy how he advised them to overcome it

Then lets go through it verse by verse.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 ESV

(3) For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh.

(4) For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

(5) We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

There are 4 things which Paul identifies as the key to winning our battle of the mind

4 things that the enemy uses over and over again to try and destroy the lies of all people

- The first thing is our thought life
- The second thing is lofty opinions
- The third arrogant arguments
- And finally these all manifest in strongholds against the purposes and will of God arrogant arguments

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

1) *For though we walk in the flesh,*

Walk: to conduct ones life.

Now this is important.

We live in the flesh,
we experience things in the flesh,
we exist day to day in the flesh.

This is an undeniable reality

So our battles and our victories will manifest in the flesh

But then Paul goes on and says....

2) *we do not war according to the flesh.*

War: to fight, our military duty

We may walk it out,

But these forces we are dealing with are spiritual forces.
These spiritual forces are our enemy.
These forces are the object of our warfare.

Not your neighbor,
not our spouse,
not our daughters boyfriend
Because we may life in the flesh, but we war in the spirit

Because we may live in the flesh, but we war in the spirit

It is our duty to wage war
It is expect of us as Christians standing strong in the strength and
might of God

But our battles are spiritual

3) *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for*

weapons: our tools or implements of war

are not

Carnal: having the nature of flesh.

mighty: strong in soul (mind; will ;emotions) able; having power

So even though we live in the flesh,
we have victory on a spiritual level because the weapons that God
has given us are powerful to destroy

Then Paul goes on and lists the four major areas that this battle,
this non physical battle, where it takes place and how it is run

a) *pulling down **STRONGHOLDS***

b) *casting down **ARGUMENTS** and every **Lofty opinion** that
exalts itself against the knowledge of God,*

c) *bringing every **THOUGHT** into captivity to*

captivity: to carry off into slavery

4) *the obedience of Christ.*

To force it to obey Christ Jesus

So this verse can be reworded:

For although we conduct our lives in the realm of the flesh,

we do not fight according to this realm because the tools and implements of our war are not of a fleshly nature, because that is not the area that we need to be guarding against

but rather they are strong implements of our mind, will and emotion

and are used to pull down mental fortresses, to pull down proud obstacles and to pull down pretentious thoughts,

and everything else that exalts itself against the knowledge of God

The fruit of this victorious warfare is that we bring all our mental activity into slavery and force our mind, will, and body to obey Christ Jesus.

What Paul is saying here is that our spiritual warfare is an issue that is fought entirely in the area of our mind

That the weapons and the victory that we need are won first mentally and then they manifested physically.

Notice the four levels of thinking described in this passage:

- (A) Pretentious Thoughts
- (B) Lofty opinions and Arguments
- (D) Strongholds

- What starts as a thought;
- Graduates to a high thing or pretentious thought
- Then becomes a proud imagination and obstacle
- That eventually creates a mental fortress against God and His word and claims on your life.

□

He is trying to show the Corinthians that these thoughts are things.

They are either like weeds or trees.
They will either pollute or bear fruit.

And the people of Corinth, just like the people in Ephesus are responsible for the condition of your garden.

(A) Pretentious thoughts

A pretentious thought, is a self important thought
It is a thought that looks or sounds important

This is exactly what the devil did with Adam and Eve

They're sitting there having dinner one night watching the news – another brilliant day in paradise and the devil comes and says in Genesis 3,

“Did God actually say ‘You shall not eat...’”

The devil cast doubt on what the word of God said, not by statement, but by innuendo.

Often that is how the devil starts with us and starts the process of destructive behaviour

Have you ever found yourself sitting there in a perfectly happy mood, then something comes from out of now where and you are starting to think the most horrible and irrational thoughts about people or things.

You start to doubt God, doubt His word, doubt your salvation – that is a pretentious thought

Nothing is said, everything is implied.

(B) Lofty opinions and arguments

A Lofty Opinion is a thought that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, The picture is that a lofty tower being built up proudly by the enemy.

These are thought patterns which have graduated from simply being a contemplation, a stray thought, a wondering to something that is opposed to what God says and what god's standards are.

Again in Gen 3

What started a suggestion by satan to eve, a thought, moves on to what sounds like a logical argument.... *You will not surely die*

Do you see the pattern?

If still you do not take authority over your thoughts.

They grow into Lofty opinions, which eventually become arguments against God and His word

What started as a thought to eve ... "*Did God actually say 'You shall not eat...'*"

Moved to an opinion... *You will not surely die*

Now graduates to an argument. A vocal, deliberate attach against God and His word

For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

The word argument, which comes from the Greek word logismos meaning logical thinking or philosophical reasoning, judgment and decision against the Christian faith.

These arguments, are emotional statements are based on your high things which have been built on your thoughts.

You justify your actions and your attitudes based upon your lofty opinions or reason why you should or shouldn't do something

This is where the battlefield of the mind starts to really heat up

How often do we allow these things to happen

We sit around in rooms by ourselves, reasoning with ourselves and we come to conclusions on matters all by ourselves

Self-righteousness begins with self-justification.

We reason and rationalize with our self why we should do something:

- a) everybody else does it.
- b) the times are different today
- c) you cant take the bible literally
- d) The Apostles didn't face the same temptations we do

These thoughts start to total dominate and enslave you

That is how pornography grips a man

That is our attraction ends up in emotional affairs with sexual consequences

We allow and eventually justify things in our own minds

(C) Strongholds

Eventually a thought graduates from a Thought, to a so called a Lofty opinion, eventually becomes a Stronghold

strongholds are just that, they take a strong hold over your mind and subsequently, have a strong hold, or a vice-like grip, on your destiny.

"Thoughts" become "high things", or preoccupying and dominating thoughts.

High things become "arguments". They resist God's wisdom

Then these arguments become "strongholds" or fortresses which reverse or counter the wisdom of God.

Which lock out and keep out the divine wisdom of God.

Genesis 3:6 ESV

(6) So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

What you have here is the establishment of a way of thinking or a system of belief that exalts itself or has raised itself up against the knowledge of God

This area of your life is now in some ways impervious to the ways and wisdom of God

And the results are devastating on a personal and family level

So often I have seen this happen.

Families broken up

Lives destroyed

Futures aborted because people refuse to submit themselves to the word and will of God

They want to live and do things according to there own

Conclusion

People today are looking for answers

And once you start looking for answers, you start to ask yourself questions about the problems

People look around at the world and they wonder what is going on

The world system tells us that what we need is more education,
more science,
more money,
more health care and everything will work itself out.

They tell us and have told us for years that mankind is evolving into a better being...we just need these things and everything will get better

The reality is that we as a society, us as a generation are better educated.

We have seen the greatest technological advancements in the history of man.

We are more affluent than ever before yet.

Yet Evil appears to be everywhere.

Our world is dying.

Our life is constantly plagued.

For the answers humanism told us these things would bring, they have brought nothing

Anyone can see, if they are prepared to see, that we have not improved over time, in fact it seems that we have diminished and we have in fact de-evolved.

People look around and they sense there is more to life, more than just what they see.

They sense there is a supernatural realm,
yet this realm,
this supernatural has become a mystical thing to them, and in the church it is exactly the same.

The greatest ministries of our day seem to be denying the spiritual realm and saying “don’t worry- be happy” or they just seem to be selling trinkets and charms and not giving real biblical answers or biblical solution.

The last place Christians are being encouraged to look for answers is there bible.

Yet for us who have Hope,
who know Hope,
who walk in Hope,
the bible is the answer and the center for all that we do.

It is our guiding light, our compass
It is the reveler of the truth that we need and the answers that all of mankind is searching for.

Paul tells the Corinthians that there victory personally and corporately lies in bring all things into the subjection of God

He tells us in the letter to the Ephesians that we are able to stand against the schemes and the destructive plans of the devil

And the key to it, is our willingness and ability to submit to God

You do not have to allow you marriage to be destroyed

You do not have to allow your family to suffer

You do not have to allow the sins of a previous generation to be passed down to your childrens, children

Be aware

Be vigilant

The enemy can not come around behind you and devour you and your faith if you do not give him room

You are able to Stand

You can be strong in the Lord

But it starts with you being prepared to allow Jesus to BE LORD

Lordship is not an occasional thing

Lordship is not a sometimes things

Lordship is not a convenience thing

Lordship is bringing our will into slavery to Jesus Christ

Your emotions don't control you.

Your fears don't control you.

Your failures don't control you.

The devil doesn't control you

Your mind controls you.

Therefore you need to be in total control of your thoughts and have them submitted to the Word and Will of Christ

Lets pray