

## STAND!

### UNDER SPIRITUAL ATTACK

INTRO: Just over a year ago I gave a message on Ephesians 6:10-20 and called it standing strong in the last days. This passage has been in my mind many times, and for some time I have thought of verses 13-14, and the command to stand. I want to look at Ephesians 6:10-20 this morning from a more topical point of view. The topic is standing as a Christian.

Let me point out once more from verse 10 that it says the Christian is to be strong in the Lord. You may not remember, but I have pointed out before that I believe the translation, 'be strong' which is in the active voice, is not correct. The original is passive which would read, 'be strengthened' in the Lord. The point is this: We cannot make ourselves strong in the Lord. It must be done to us.

Let me explain. Let us say I have a brain tumor and I am told that I should remove it. That is active. But it is not something I can do. It is something I must have done for me by another. There is no use telling me to remove the tumor. But there is use in telling me to have it removed. We cannot make ourselves strong in the Lord. We must be strengthened in Him. And to have a tumor removed, we need to go through the steps required to have surgery done. To be strengthened in the Lord, we need to go through the steps to have that done to us as well.

And how do we become strengthened in the Lord? We must put on the whole armor of God. And what is that? Well, the passage likens the Christian to a soldier, because the standing involved in the passage is against the mighty demonic force of Satan. And to stand against Satan requires first of all, according to verse 14, that we be girded with truth. We must be saturated with the truth of the Word of God.

But to be saturated with truth, good as that is, is not enough. It must now be lived out in honesty. When truth is honestly lived out, it results in righteousness. So verse 14 says we must put on the breastplate of righteousness. There is no possible way we can be strengthened by the Lord when we live unrighteously. By living unrighteously we expose our vitals to Satan. Then we must take up the shield of the faith. That means becoming familiar with Bible doctrine. And then we must take up the helmet of salvation. This is not just initial salvation. This is ongoing salvation, the process of sanctification. And

then we must stand on the sure footing of the true Gospel. And I am afraid that much of what passes for the Gospel today is not the true Gospel.

And why are we to take up this whole armor? Why are we to be strengthened in the Lord and in the power of His might? We find the answer to that in verse 11 (read). We are to take up the whole armor of God in order to be enabled to stand against the wiles of the devil. We need to be able to stand! The word 'wiles' is plural. We must learn to stand in a host of different kinds of situations, because that is what the devil will throw at us.

#### I. THE SCENE OF BATTLE

So, let me begin by drawing the scene of battle as pictured in this passage. It is not the scene of evangelism. The picture here is not that of, "Onward Christian Soldiers". It is not that of the Master leading against the foe. That is also a true Christian scene, and one we are called to, but the scene here is that of every Christian's personal battle with Satan. Here is the scene I see. It is not the scene of the Christian attacking Satan's domain, but that of Satan attacking the Christian.

You see, the command here is not to go into all the world. That is another scene. The scene here is that of the Ephesian believers, having come out of Satan's domain, and he is coming to defeat them and take them back. These believers have come out of the very ungodly pagan practices of Ephesus; the place of the temple of that great goddess Diana.

They had built their lives on false hopes and teachings and Paul has come with the Gospel and they are being delivered from darkness. And now, the prince of darkness has arrayed himself against them to take them back. Here is the picture I see. As soon as a person truly repents and turns to God, Satan will seek to begin to draw him back into his fold or destroy him, if he cannot regain him.

#### II. THE FORCES IN THE BATTLE

So let us look at the forces that have arrayed themselves against the Christian in verse 12 (read). Notice first, that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood. If the form of the battle in our lives seems to be with other people,

we must ever remember our battle is not with flesh and blood. It is not those people that we are battling. It is very important that we ever remember this, because if we think our battle is with people, we have lost the battle already. If the devil can use other people to seek to defeat us and bring us back, it is easy to get our attention on those people, and if we do, the devil is winning already. We need to be reminded first of all, our battle is not with flesh and blood.

Second then, we must understand that our battle is against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. There is every indication that Satan's hordes are a very highly organized army.

I cannot see other than that the moment a person truly becomes a Christian, maybe even while he is contemplating becoming a Christian, demons have met and held a council meeting, to discuss how best to keep or get this person back. They might say, "So and so is young, and he or she does not have strong parental oversight and he or she has a cell phone or access to the internet. We can place these thoughts in his or her mind, and if we can do that, then we can bring in this or that demon who specializes in such cases. There are innocent places this person goes on the internet, and we can work this or that into those sites." Or maybe they say, "This person has a real bent for music and our music strikes a chord with him or her. There is so and so over there and they meet sometimes. We'll influence so and so to get them to hear this music. And once we can get them to hear that, we can begin to feed their soul and the Bible will lose its power in their lives."

May I ask you, what is your picture of the demonic hosts, or armies? Do you think these spirits float around at random and hit at random, sort of accidentally? Do you think they are not very intelligent? Do you think they don't converse among themselves as to how best to get you? Do you think they don't discuss who you are and what your weaknesses are and how best to get you? Do you think they don't know you and don't know what you like or don't like? Do you think verse 12 describes an unintelligent army? It is the picture of a highly organized and powerful enemy.

One of the surest ways to lose to Satan is to underestimate him.

### III. THE CALL OF THIS BATTLE

I want us now to look at the call of this battle. The Lord has given us a directive. He has already indicated what this is in verse 11. It says, "Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to..."? To? To what? To stand! What happens in battle when you get knocked down? Well, you are beginning to lose. And I ask, just what is meant by standing? Well, it means to stand as a Christian. It means to stand on what is right. It means to live right.

Now look at verse 13. I have mentioned this in another message but let me point it out again. I believe there should be a period after the word 'day'. It would then read like this, "Therefore, take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day" (end of sentence). The next sentence then goes like this, "And having done all to stand, stand therefore..." And it continues by telling us how to stand.

Now in verse 13 it says we are to take up the whole armor of God so that we will be able to 'withstand'. You see, the Christian comes under attack. He does not attack the devil, the devil attacks him. And he is to withstand or stand against the devil. Paul then tells us how we can stand. The very first thing is to be girded with truth. Are you under attack in some area right now? Let me ask you, are you honestly seeking the truth in that matter, or do you have your own agenda? Number one in standing is truth. Does your heart tell you one thing, but you yourself are making every effort to excuse what you are actually doing?

Number two is righteousness. What is the right thing to do in your situation? Are you determining what is right according to what you want, or are you letting truth determine what is right? Do you seek the Scripture on your situation?

I remember an incident in my life many years ago. I had a Backhoe business at the time and I was hired to go north of my home town, which was Vanderhoof, B.C. to do some work on a small scale, kind of a hobby gold mine. The mine was on Tom Creek. I trucked my machine as far as I could and then drove in by machine when the road became too difficult for

the truck. The road now followed Tom Creek. If you ever go to Fort St. James, just north of Vanderhoof, there is an old steam shovel worth checking out. When I went up to Tom Creek years ago, it was parked beside that creek where the road wound its way up. Trees had overgrown it.

Well, I was a relatively new Christian, and the whole crew of us, about 7 or 8, were put up in a large log cabin. There was a big cooking area, a number of bunk beds and a lot of different kinds of guns hanging on the walls. Well, I was there for a number of days doing exploration digging with my machine. They had a cook, and each day we would eat our meals, and I felt too intimidated by these men to pray in their presence. On the last day the Lord brought about circumstances whereby I began to practice what I believed. I will tell you what happened to me in those days. I failed to stand. I thank God I didn't stay down and I eventually overcame, but just such an experience can be the beginning of destruction. Why was I so ashamed?

Just recently one of our folk here told us of an experience of their son-in-law. It happened this fall. He went hunting, and shot the wrong kind of deer for the area by mistake. And his Christian faith came under severe attack by Satan. It appears he could easily have gotten away with it, but his conscience smote him. I ask you, do you know what a time like that is like? There comes the time when your conscience smites you and you begin to make excuses and argue in your heart. And the devil is there and he gives you every excuse under the sun. And the battle turns from fierce to fiercer. And here is the question: Will you stand?

While his children were anxious to get to skinning this prize, he was doing battle. And eventually Satan lost and he turned himself in. I ask you, do you know this battle? There are many like this. You say something nasty to your partner, or anybody else, and the battle sets in. And what happens when we excuse ourselves? Oh, we may not yet fall, but we may be on the way down.

I want to tell you something most wonderful, though it does not feel wonderful at the time. Let us say we have failed and the hordes of hell have descended on us and we have no power against them. If at such a time we truly repent there are not enough demons to keep us down. When we repent in

those times, we will be so empowered that we will have no difficulty overcoming them! And most times when we come out of such a victory, we come out stronger than we were before. But when we fail, and we do not deal with it, we get weaker and weaker. And in those times we must remember that Satan's demons know about our situation and do all in their power to bring us down. If you want a picture of this in your mind, picture the Hyenas after some large animal. Or picture the timber wolves of our area after a big moose. And one finds a weak spot here and another there, and finally the big animal cannot stand anymore.

I want to say this, if Satan can get you to a circumstance where you are downed by sin, there is no more powerful tool to turn the tables than repentance. One small Christian can overthrow a horde of demons by repenting.

I have no doubt all over our community are people, who have been or are being downed by sin. They may go through all the motions of Christianity, but the devil does not have to bother them anymore. Their mouths are shut. They cannot turn anyone to righteousness, many times not even their own children.

We want to spend a little time in the various places of battle.

#### IV. THE PLACE OF BATTLE

##### A. Standing on Spiritual Truths

We begin with the most important place to stand of all. All the other places will flow from this is standing on Biblical, spiritual truths. I think it must be admitted by all that a very large percentage of our professing Christians in North America are not Christians at all. Then, of those who are Christians, many are doctrinally illiterate. I have no fear of being wrong on that. They are, as the Suter Twins would sometimes say, evanjellyfish.

Many, many Christians do not have much to stand on. They have few doctrinal stands. With the free access we have to Bibles and Bible material, we should be the most theologically sound people who ever existed; but instead, we have deception on every hand. So called Christians are reading almost every kind of liberal perversion of the Scriptures called Bibles, such as the Message and even

worse. And they say, "We can understand this so much better." But their theology is more off base than ever. Most people today do not even know the basics underlying modern versions. They have no idea that they are just helping somebody or some company to make more money.

On television and on radio are preachers of every stripe. There are those that are seemingly good preachers who listen to horrible music, like Charles Price. There are preachers who preach some great messages and quote from The Message, like David Jeremiah.

The very things on which people should stand are corrupted by versions and preachers and teachers. There are discernment ministries revealing amazing things, but as someone recently pointed out, they don't mention divorce because they themselves grew up in an era in which it was largely accepted, and they are just doing the same.

I have spoken of this matter to some present day missionaries and Bible teachers. I have been amazed at how many Bible teachers and preachers only parrot some position taken years ago when the Church was liberalizing its position.

Let me take you to the first piece of armor in standing against the wiles of the devil. We find it in verse 14. It says, "Having girded your waist with truth." Now I mentioned earlier that we were to be strong in the Lord. We are to be empowered, enabled in the Lord. And how do we do that? Here is step number 1: Gird yourself with truth.

The Greek language has three voices for the verb. English only has two. The voice the Greek has that English does not have is when the subject of the verb acts on him or herself. Let me give you an example. If I say, "I hit the ball", that is the active voice. I am doing something to the ball. When I say, "The ball hit me", now I am acted on by the ball. That is the passive voice. But when I say, "I hit myself with the ball", that is the Greek middle voice.

Now listen to this. "Finally brethren, be empowered", or, "be enabled in the Lord." I am being acted upon. That is passive. But there is something I must do in order for the Lord to empower me. The first is this: I must gird myself with truth. Here is the third voice of the Greek language. We use a reflexive pronoun to convey this meaning. It is

something that I do to myself. I must gird myself with truth. If I do not gird myself with truth, the Lord cannot enable me, or empower me.

Let me go beyond that. If I am dishonest or lie, now I have opened myself up to Satan to be disabled by him. I may carry out all the motions of a Christian, and unbeknown to me, Satan is accomplishing his task through me. I have fallen. I am no longer standing. And if I do not repent, the long-term effects of my life may have the reverse affect from what I thought it was having. There is one remedy for liars, and it is repentance. And without repentance, such a person is a child of Satan (John 8:44).

#### B. Standing in Family Pressures

Let me recommend another area where it is most important to stand. It is in family pressures. If there is an area where Satan can exert constant pressure, it is in family. If there is an area he can make you squirm and wiggle, it is here. One of the areas we are most prone to give in on stands that we have taken, it is in family.

Now let me add something. It is most crucial that our stands are based on Scripture as much as possible. But there are times when we are not clear ourselves, but our conscience calls for us to take a stand. You might wish to study Romans 14 in this light. There are times when we grow in the faith, and we might realize that our stand is not actually biblical. For example, in our culture we may be bound by conscience to keep certain days holy. But in the study of Scripture, we might find we have no ground for our stand. We must then not be too proud to listen when our stands are brought under question.

But let us take this most common subject of divorce and remarriage. We have taken a stand that the Bible teaches that all remarriage after divorce, as long as one's original partner is alive is the sin of adultery. But maintaining that stand is even more difficult than coming to that stand originally. This difficulty is most clearly set out for us in 1 Corinthians 5. Turn to it (Read 9-12).

You see, verse 11 says, "But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is a..." and then a list of sins follows. Now let me mention that that is not a complete list of such sins. A study of 1



Corinthians 6 and Galatians 5 will add numerous other such sins and Galatians 5 says, "and such like."

Now some say this means not to have communion with such persons because of the previous context, but note that verse 11 says not to company with them. Verse 9 has the same word. It means to not mingle together with, or mix together with. Now when you live in a divorce saturated society, and divorce filled Church like we have today, it becomes very difficult to maintain such a stand.

And let me add something here. Some people say, "Oh, I tell them exactly what I believe. I do my part." But all the while they mingle with them. Let me tell you what I see from my own experience. You can tell those who live in such things all you want, but if you continue to mingle with them, they really don't mind that you are not agreed with them. Your words have little if any affect. When you do not take the stand the Scriptures set out, separation, you have not taken the stand that speaks louder than any other thing you can rightfully do. People who divorce and remarry, or live in other sinful relationships are usually OK with you telling them what you believe; but they are not OK with you separating from them. If one continues to mingle and talk, they feel a very large measure of acceptance.

Then parents, the devil will cause you to let your stand go through pressure from your children. He will put the fear in you. He will put you in the kind of fear the airplane pilot goes into when he feels his instruments are no longer working right and he has run into heavy fog. Your feelings will scream one thing, and your instrument, the Bible, will tell you another. The devil will tell you that if you maintain this stand or that stand, you will lose your children. Fear will strike your heart, and if you have not already, you will come under huge pressure to give in.

And let me tell you parents another thing. You will be made to think, "If I only give in on this, then we will have peace." But in many cases there is no end to giving in. As long as your children are under your roof you have some very major responsibilities. And when they are no longer under your roof, you still have some.

C. Standing in Marriage Difficulties

There is another area where Satan wants to cause us to relinquish our stands. It is in marriage. The marriage is the key to the home. The home is the key to church and country. You can see then how crucial it is for Satan to cause friction between husband and wife. Sometimes I am afraid to preach some things because the very next thing the devil seeks to do is trip me up in that very thing I have preached on, and then I am tested if I will actually go to my wife and tell her I have done wrong and ask her to forgive me.

There are two very key things for marriage. First, husbands love your wives. Husband, you have taken a stand that divorce is wrong and that you will love your wife. And you will find Satan seeking to destroy that resolve. And if he can destroy your stand there, it is the beginning of the end. You will not find a more powerful weapon against the devil to maintain your stand, than that of repentance when you have done wrong. It will save a lot of chocolates and meals out. Oh how I hate getting into that predicament.

And second key thing in marriage is, wives, submit to your husbands. Let me give a word to you wives. L. E. Maxwell spoke of manipulating mothers. Mothers, do not whittle down the stands of your husband with your children. Support him. If you disagree with him, humbly approach him on that. It is possible for you to very subtly whittle away on a very important fibre in your husband's soul. Then, second, do not keep things about your children from your husband because you are afraid he will take a stand, and you think you love your child too much for what he will do. Do not become a manipulating mother, who stands on the side of her children.

The mother of Zebedee's two sons, James and John, came to Jesus and knelt down before Him, seeking honorable positions for her sons in the kingdom. She said, "Grant that these two sons of mine..." listen to her selfishness. Scripture says they were the sons of Zebedee. She said they were her two sons, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in your kingdom." It may be true that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world, but it can also ruin the world. Manipulating mothers have been the downfall of many a son or child.

If one would boil down to the basics that which will help every marriage, it is this: husbands love your wives, and wives, be submissive to your husbands.

#### D. Standing in Personal Struggles

Let me take you to the last battle scene for today, though there are many more. It is that of personal, inner struggles. Again, there are many and various things to consider. By way of example, let mention the valleys of life, say for example, a time of depression. Let me draw a picture for you. People have what we might call a normal range of emotions. And when we are down emotionally, it can become a very big spiritual test. It is not there are not dangers in the high places, or the middle places, but in these valleys Satan sometimes moves in, in full force. He is the destroyer and is very well known for kicking you when you are down.

Let me add here though, that sometimes we are down because of sin. When that is the case, repentance is the immediate key. But there are times when we go through a natural cycle of being down and this may not be related to sin at all. But here in these valleys, if ever we need to stand, it is here. Many a Satanic whisper is heard in these dark, deep valleys.

If one is given to live by feelings, the valleys are a very dangerous place. I would say from my own experience that if my low is not caused by sin, the key in this valley is learning to live by faith. Let me explain what I mean by faith. I believe that living by faith is not necessarily related to trusting God for big things. That is the gift of faith which not every Christian has. But the capacity to live by faith, every Christian has. It is to trust God and live right no matter how we feel.

I liken this to flying an airplane in the dark or in the fog, to which I alluded earlier. When you fly an airplane in the fog, you have to learn to trust the instruments. The instruments tell you how high you are and if you are banking or if you are going up or down. Some years ago, when one of our local pilots went down in the fog, very close to the airport, I was sent this article written by Environment Canada. As I read this article I will stress the word to feel. It says:

If you're ever tempted to take off in marginal weather and have no instrument training, read this article first before you go. If you decide to go anyway and lose visual contact, start counting down from 178 seconds. How long can a pilot who has no instrument training expect to live after he flies into bad weather and loses visual contact? Researchers at the University of Illinois found the answer to this question. Twenty students "guinea pigs" flew into simulated instrument weather, and all went into graveyard spirals or rollercoasters. The outcome differed in only one respect; the time required until control was lost. The interval ranged from 480 seconds to 20 seconds. The average time was 178 seconds—two seconds short of three minutes.

Here's the fatal scenario...The sky is overcast and the visibility poor. That reported 5-mile visibility looks more like two, and you can't judge the height of the overcast. Your altimeter says you're at 1500 but your map tells you there's local terrain as high as 1200 feet. There might even be a tower nearby because you're not sure just how far off course you are. But you've flown into worse weather than this, so you press on. You find yourself unconsciously easing back just a bit on the controls to clear those non-too-imaginary towers. With no warning, you're in the soup. You peer so hard into the milky white mist that your eyes hurt. You fight the **feeling** in your stomach. You swallow, only to find your mouth dry. Now you realize you should have waited for better weather.

The appointment was important—but not that important. Somewhere, a voice is saying "You've had it—it's all over!" You now you have 178 seconds to live. Your aircraft **feels** in an even keel but your compass turns slowly. You push a little rudder and add a little pressure on the controls to stop the turn but this **feels** unnatural and you return the controls to their original position. This **feels** better but your compass is now turning a little faster and your airspeed is increasing slightly. You scan your instrument panel for help but what you see looks somewhat unfamiliar. You're sure this is just a bad spot. You'll break out in a few minutes. (But you don't have several minutes left...) You now have 100 seconds to live. You glance at your altimeter and are shocked to see it unwinding.

You're already down to 1200 feet. Instinctively, you pull back on the controls but the altimeter still unwinds. The engine is into the red—and the airspeed, nearly so. You have 45 seconds

*to live. Now you're sweating and shaking. There must be something wrong with the controls; pulling back only moves that airspeed indicator further into the red. You can hear the wind tearing at the aircraft. You have 10 seconds to live. Suddenly, you see the ground. The trees rush up at you. You can see the horizon if you turn your head far enough but it's at an unusual angle—you're almost inverted. You open your mouth to scream but.....you have no seconds left.*

I recommend that depression is a place Satan can move in and cause us to panic. There is then a very important key: trust God by faith. Go by the instruments, the Bible, no matter how you feel.

CONCL: So, let us conclude. I presented the scene of the battle in our passage as the Christian being attacked by the Devil. The Christian is not attacking the devil. The Christian has been taken out of Satan's domain by giving himself to Christ, and Satan is exerting every pressure to regain him or at least make him powerless.

So the forces the Christian faces is the principalities, powers, rulers of this age and the spiritual hosts or armies of wickedness or of Satan. It is a formidable foe that no Christian can handle on his own.

And the call has come to the Christian to stand. He can stand. The Lord will enable him to stand. But he must put on the whole armor of God. He must have truth, live righteously, have his feet shod with the foundation of the Gospel and take up the shield of the faith.

And he will meet the devil in all kinds of different places in all kinds of different ways. And those few pieces of equipment will allow God to empower him to overcome every circumstance in life. It will be important first of all to learn where to stand by learning Bible Doctrine. You see, by learning Bible truth and standing on it and living right, being shod with the Gospel and using the shield of faith he can conquer every family situation, every marriage difficulty and overcome in every valley. Such a person will be an overcomer in the Christian life.