

Ready to Live

Christians know that life is not just drifting. There are things to know, decisions to make and battles to fight. In the life we have been given, we need to be strong.

Paul writes about this at the end of his letter to the Ephesians (6:10-18). He has shown how we are brought near to God, how his Son has made this happen, and how we are to live. Now, he wants us to be strong and to live this life.

Study 1: The Battle and the Strong Man

Ephesians 6:10-13

The real battle—in ‘heavenlies realms’

In the real world—as God reveals it to us, our battle is not with people we can see but against ‘powers of this dark world’—headed up by the devil or Satan (6:12). They are powers of this world—in other words, everyone is affected by them. But they are operating in ‘the heavenly realms’.

The battle to live—for everyone—cannot be reduced to visible enemies.

- ❑ When something goes wrong, human instinct is to blame, avoid or attack someone.
- ❑ If we don’t understand human hostility to God, discomfort is worked out on visible enemies.
- ❑ Christians have had their eyes opened and have been granted to live in ‘heavenly places’.

It’s in the heavenlies that God blesses us with the full blessing of being in Christ (1:3-10).

- ❑ Effectively, it’s the space where we know and relate to God.
- ❑ Only the blessing of God can settle questions of identity, purpose, deal with guilt and assure us of grace.

It’s the place where Christ is reigning—seated beside God (1:20).

- ❑ Christ is totally in control of the place where we relate to God.

It’s the place where we sit with Christ in God’s presence (2:6).

- ❑ In other words, it’s the space where we enjoy his friendship.

It’s the space where God displays the greatness of his work in us for others to see.

- ❑ The rulers and authorities in heavenly places (3:10).

The heavenlies are not heaven but where Satan and his hordes come to mess with our relationship with God (6:12).

- ❑ The real battle in life is about relating to God. If you are ignoring ‘the heavenlies’ you’re not dealing with your God, or with your real enemy. You’re not really ready to live.

Having to battle in this space is how things have been from the beginning.

- ❑ Adam and Eve in Eden have a place in which they can relate to God.
- ❑ Satan enters this space. He sows doubt about who God is, suggests to Eve and Adam that they should decide things for themselves.
- ❑ He moves them over to his side (Genesis 3:1-6). They eat the forbidden fruit and immediately are ashamed.
- ❑ Satan has others with him now who are experiencing God as an enemy rather than as a friend.

This battle is worked out in a very domestic way.

- ❑ Adam and Eve immediately start blaming others. They don't deal with the real problem but fight each other. And it goes on. Their oldest boy kills his younger brother.
- ❑ They have given opportunity to the devil by not accepting that their enemy is Satan.

Paul gives us some idea of how anger can play into Satan's hands. He says, 'be angry, but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, *and give no opportunity to the devil*' (4:26-27; cf. 2 Corinthians 2:10-11).

- ❑ There are some things that ought to make us angry—enough to make us speak up, or act. But anger can take us over. It can move from being right, to being wrong—in a flash!
- ❑ Satan will have us being furious with each other while we don't even admit he exists—and he's laughing.

This is the battle we are all in. To be ready to live, we will need the strength of the Lord!

The real breakthrough

Everyone must live in God's world, but the world without God says you can stay in charge by assuming people and the environment are all there is.

- ❑ This leads to a life of blame shifting and discontent. And the anger gets out of control.
- ❑ In fact, our problem is Satan—because he's messed with us relating to God.
- ❑ This is true for everyone, but Christians know what is going on.

Jesus makes the real breakthrough.

- ❑ The Gospels show that Jesus takes the initiative to make sure we deal with life's real issues.
- ❑ He begins by wrestling with Satan—for over a month (Luke 4:1).
- ❑ In the place where the first man—Adam—gets everything wrong, this second Man gets it right. He sends his enemy off unheeded! And he begins his ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:13-14). He is strong—in his Father God.
- ❑ Jesus continues by showing he is stronger than the devil (Matthew 12:28-29).

The death of Jesus is the judgement of this world, and the world's Prince is driven out (John 12:31).

- ❑ Jesus acknowledges a rival Prince. Unseen powers lie behind what this world experiences (1 John 5:9).
- ❑ Satan will not be able to achieve his goals anymore (John 14:30).
- ❑ As he dies, Jesus says, 'It is finished' (John 19:30).

Now we come to why we can be 'strong in the Lord'.

- ❑ God raises Jesus—our Saviour—from death. He does this to demonstrate his great power, not just *in* Jesus, but *for* us (1:18-23).
- ❑ Our collaboration with the enemy, our sharing of his rebellion and God's judgement on it, have all been worn by a loving Saviour. We have forgiveness through his blood. And God raises him from the dead to show that this rebellion doesn't have a future!
- ❑ Satan no longer has us on his team. By trusting Christ, we can be strong and ready to live.
- ❑ We still live in the world but are not subject to its Prince.

Now, anger with one another doesn't need to rule us. We will deal with antagonisms, but they won't be the main game. Rather, we will wrestle against 'spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms'—in the space God has created for us to relate to him. 'Resist the devil and he will flee from you' (James 4:7).

There are lots of ways this happens and Paul is going to show us how to 'take up' and 'put on' this strength of Jesus Christ.