

“SPIRITUAL WARFARE”

PART 1- “THE SPIRITUAL FORCES OF EVIL”

EPHESIANS 6:10-20

REV. CHARLES R. BIGGS

As Christians we are united to Jesus Christ and seated with Him in the Heavenly Places as we are taught in Ephesians 2:6.

Although we are more than overcomers in Jesus and His victorious death and resurrection over death, hell and the devil are ours by His grace, there are still battles that must be waged against our enemy in the Heavenly Places.

As Christians, we are called to take up Jesus’ armor, the armor of God, so that we can stand against the deceptive evil onslaught of our enemy the devil as we live in this world.

The decisive victory of the war has been won and Jesus has conquered, disarmed, and defeated our ancient foe, but we must endure until the final Day, standing strong in Jesus, and in the strength of His might.

The devil and devils, or demons are real, but we often either overestimate or underestimate him. When you think of the devil, what pops immediately into your mind? Explain.

Two common yet opposite errors: (1) Devil is unimportant; (2) Devil is too important.

Anti-supernatural-minded materialists speak of Satan: “Evil man with a red suit, a bifurcated tail, and a pitchfork who rules over hell.” “[According to comic strip humor] He sits in the “Manager’s Office” in hell.

“Unbelief about the existence and personality of Satan has proved the first step to unbelief about God.”- J. C. Ryle

Supernaturally-minded spiritualists speak of Satan: “We must appease him (through magic, séances, black arts, witchcraft, etc) lest he destroy us; there is nothing for us to do but to turn to him for help and surrender.” Christian version: “We must focus all of our time and attention on casting him out of ourselves and others.” “There’s a devil under every rock!” “Whoops! The devil made me do it!”

Background to Letter of Ephesians: Converts from Asia Minor had become Christians who were formerly affiliated with Artemis/Diana cult, practiced the magic arts, consulted astrologers, and had in general participated in various demonic activities. There was a great fear of demons and their power.

Like many superstitious folks today, there was much imbalance in their understanding of evil.

The Apostle Paul wanted the Ephesians and us today to have a theologically balanced, scriptural understanding of evil.

What to Expect in the Christian Life?

Struggle.

Conflict.

Fight.

“Wrestling” – “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood” (6:12)

“Standing (as in hand-to-hand combat)”- “To stand” (6:11); “withstand” or “stand against” (6:13a); “stand conquering” or “to stand firm” (6:13b).

Thlipsis- Tribulation – **yet with great joy and hope of becoming beautiful like Jesus!**

ESV **John 16:33** *I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.*

ESV **Revelation 7:13-14:** *Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴ I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, **"These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.***

The “great tribulation” is the time period between the first and second coming of Jesus Christ.

The time of tribulation is the time period before Christ’s return that is characterized by struggle and conflict.

Why? So that sinners will become holy; the selfish become selfless; the proud become humble; the self-centered become gracious; the evil become good and righteous in Jesus.

Illustrations from life and nature of the importance of struggle and conflict: (1) Chick coming out of egg; (2) Moth breaking through cocoon to become a beautiful monarch butterfly; (3) Infant coming through birth canal created struggle, conflict, ***birth pangs***.

In all of these struggles, good comes out; beauty is realized through struggle.

In the Christian life, God sovereignly makes alive sinners dead in trespasses and sins, folks full of evil, that he begins to make holy and blameless in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:1-3; 1:4-5; 2:10).

Through battling with “armor” and “warfare” through difficulty we find Christ-likeness.

How does God specifically use conflict and struggle and tribulation in our lives to make us more like Christ and prepare us for heaven? (see Gen. 50:20; Revelation 7:14).

[Satan can only do to the saints what God permits him to do; what Satan means for evil, God means for our good] “Saints by the afflictions that do befall them, gain more experience of the power of God supporting them, of the wisdom of God directing them, of the grace of God refreshing and cheering them, of the goodness of God quieting and quickening them, to a greater love to holiness, and to a greater delight in holiness, and to a more vehement pursuing after holiness.” – Thomas Brooks, ‘Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices’

“No man will cast himself wholly upon God, but he who feels himself in an extremely weak condition, and he who despairs of the sufficiency of his own powers. We will seek nothing from God but what we are conscious of lacking in ourselves.” - John Calvin

“In times of affliction we commonly meet with the sweetest experiences of the love of God.” – John Bunyan

Christ’s pattern in life, death and resurrection glory that we must also follow:

Cross → Crown

Humility → Exaltation

Crucifixion → Exaltation

What to Understand about Spiritual Warfare?

Ephesians 6:10-12

“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” (Eph. 6:12).

- **Know Your Enemy**
- **Know Your Lord’s Victory**

Know Your Enemy

Evil is multi-dimensional.

**There is evil inside.
There is evil outside.
There is evil above us.**

**Evil is psychological.
Evil is sociological.
Evil is demonological or “spiritualogical”**

Those who don't believe in God have a simplistic view of evil.

We have sin within; sin outside and around us; sin above us.

As John Newton wrote so biblically and from his own experiences:

*“Bow'd down beneath a load of sin,
By Satan sorely pressed,
By wars without, and fears within,
I come to Thee for rest.”*

There is a PERSONAL EVIL; EVIL IS PERSONAL: A personal devil and his fallen angels: “Spiritual forces of evil.”

And if you're a Christian, they have their diabolical eyeballs focused on you!

Who are these rulers, authorities, cosmic powers, and spiritual forces? (Read Ephesians 6:12).

Satan and the devils, or the “spiritual forces of evil” were created as glorious angels who sinned against God because of pride (various scriptures:). These glorious angels fell from their great and lofty estate to be chained until Judgment Day:

^{ESV} Jude 1:6 And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day...

- Devil's are SPIRITS- Not “flesh and blood”! (Eph. 6:12)
- Devil's are EVIL SPIRITS- Not good, not holy, not righteous.

This teaches that EVIL SPIRITS are:

- Intellectual- superior minds and craftiness; “schemes” (Eph. 6:11): always plotting, always planning, always scheming to do evil against mankind.

- **Immortal**
- **Invisible**
- **Inexhaustible**
- **Insidious**- wily, crafty, deceptive, and cruel

A Redemptive-Historical Overview of Satan, the Adversary (**Highlights**)

Revelation 12: A mini-redemptive-history; A summarized version of the conflict between the Seed of the Woman and the Seed of the Serpent.

ESV Revelation 12:1-6: And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. ² She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. ³ And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. ⁴ His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. ⁵ She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, ⁶ and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

Eden (Genesis 3) → Babel (Genesis 11) → Job (Job 1-2) → Joseph's Brothers (Genesis 37-50) → Pharaoh/Egypt (Exodus 1-15) → Babylon/Tyre (Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28) → Our Lord's Ministry (Matthew 4) → Acts of the Apostles (various) → Congregations of Christ's Church (various, Revelation 1-3) → Judgment of... (various, Revelation 13-22).

What are the names of the devil used in Scripture? What does that teach you about him?

Devil: (*diabolos*): Deceiver/Slanderer

Satan: Adversary

Apollyon: Destroyer (of relationships, people, races of men, creation itself)

Belial: Wicked

Beelzebub: Prince of Demons

Dragon-Serpent: Great, powerful, cunning

Roaring Lion

Prince of the Power of the Air

Strong Man

Spirit of Anti-Christ

Are Satan and these spiritual forces equal in power to God? (see Colossians 1:15-18).

Are they equal with God in their power? “Who did *that!*?? God or Satan!??

- **The devil is “God’s devil”** or as Martin Luther memorably put it: “Satan is God’s ape.” This means that although He truly is a roaring lion seeking to destroy, he is on a chain (see Pilgrim’s Progress as an example of this).
- **Created beings like angles are less than God, not equal;** but created beings such as angels are more than man can handle alone (“You made man a little lower than the angels” –Psalm 8).
 - Contrary to ancient and modern forms of Dualism, God is supremely sovereign over the devil and “his angels”; God is supremely sovereign over the “spiritual forces of evil”
 - Yet these spiritual beings are be very dangerous—especially to fallen man.

ESV Colossians 1:16 For by1 him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things were created through him and for him.

- Created beings such as the “spiritual forces of evil” are part of God’s plan of the mystery hidden for ages to display god’s wisdom and supreme sovereignty for His own glory!

ESV Ephesians 3:9-10:....And to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, 10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

- God must grant permission over these forces; their power is limited. As Jesus said to Pilate (so this could be used of God speaking to the evil forces, John 19:11):

"You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin."

- God is using the means of these afflictions, conflicts, *thlipsis*-tribulations for His glory and our good!

ESV Genesis 50:20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people¹ should be kept alive, as they are today.

*“And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us, we will not fear,
For God hath willed his truth to triumph through us.
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure, for lo! His doom is sure;
One little word shall fell him.”
- A Mighty Fortress, Martin Luther*

Where does the battle take place?

“...Against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).

Heavenly places? Yes! BUT...Although we are united with Jesus and live in heavenly places in Him (Eph. 2:6), we live our lives in “the ordinary” “the mundane” - places like church congregations, living rooms, workplaces, etc.

Where does this “wrestling match” and “standing firm” in the Lord take place?

Look at the passages before our passage (do not forget Paul’s context). In chapter 5, Paul has told them how to “walk” as imitators of God, as his beloved children. In 5:22-33, Paul speaks about **husbands and wives**, the Church; in 6:1-4, Paul speaks about **children in parents**; in 6:5-9, Paul speaks about **slaves and masters** (or today perhaps employers and employees).

What does this teach us about Ephesians 6:10ff? Well, the standing firm against the devil and his craftiness, in the power and might of the Lord, is **in everyday affairs: marriage, church, family, business relations!**

This is the arena for our standing in the power of the Lord, and I do not have to remind you, this is the arena where Satan and his “insidious insiders” or his “diabolical demons” will attack most vehemently!

- Genesis 3-4: Fall of man and consequences of sin: We see temptation of the serpent; blame-shifting after the fall into sin between husband and wife; division and disharmony in marriage relationship; breakdown in family relationships resulting in brother murdering brother; mankind seeking a name for themselves through pride.
- All of these events happening because the evil one tempted mankind to do what he had done before them: Question God’s rule and goodness; desire and seek to be in God’s place rather than his servant.
- PRIDE.

What are the specific stratagems or schemes or methods the devil uses to defeat and discourage the believer? (see 2 Cor. 2:10-12; Eph. 6:11).

We will focus on this next week, Lord willing.

Know Your Savior

The Bible says that Jesus has conquered the devil and we are more than conquerors in him. Why, then, do we still fight a battle against this evil foe?

Illustration of D-Day. The decisive battle that defeated Hitler and those who were allied with him didn't mean the last battle of the war. Although it was the decisive victory that caused the Allied Powers to triumph, the enemy did not surrender completely until a year later.

In Jesus' cross and resurrection from the dead we see the decisive victory of God's Almighty Power in Jesus Christ!

Although the final victory has been won, and as believers we are on the winning side, nevertheless, the enemy continues to fight because he knows his time is short (see Matthew 8:29).

^{ESV} ***Revelation 12:12*** *Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"*

^{ESV} *Colossians 2:15* He disarmed **the rulers and authorities** and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

When Jesus was surrendering to the evil forces in the Garden of Gethsemane, as he was taken to be tried and crucified, he declared confidently (in his humility and what seemed to be his defeat):

^{ESV} ***John 12:31*** *Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.*

^{ESV} ***Ephesians 6:12*** *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.*

Why is the devil so interested in us as Christians?

The devil hates JESUS CHRIST with every fiber of his being; the devil hates God and especially the incarnate God who destroyed and defeated him through the death on the cross, to set His people from his grotesque grip!

[This hatred of the incarnation is why the “spirit of antichrist” denies that Jesus has come in the flesh incidentally: ^{ESV} **1 John 4:2-3**: By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ **and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.**].

The devil cannot get to Jesus Christ; but he can get to us! He pursues us to persecute us, to discourage us, to destroy us, to kill us. The devil would rip Christ’s incarnate heart out of his glorified breast if it were possible.

It is not possible for the devil to touch Christ, so he seek to touch us.

The devil longs to “sift us as wheat...”

Christ treasures us; we are his precious possessions.

Christ loves us; we are His redeemed.

Christ died for us; we are His “Beloved Bride”

Christ prays for us that our faith will not fail (see Luke 22:31-32).

In Christ, we have immeasurable power; the Holy Spirit’s power that raised Christ from the dead!

Remember the Apostle Paul’s prayer for believers in Ephesians 1:15-23? It ended with the hope of believers living powerfully **here** knowing that Christ was **seated in power in the Heavenly Places.**

^{ESV} ***Ephesians 1:19-21***: “...**And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might**²⁰ **that he worked 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 above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.*”

Believers are actually “seated with Christ in the Heavenly Places:

^{ESV} ***Ephesians 2:5-6***: “...*Even when we were dead in our trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved -*⁶ **and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...** (see also Colossians 3:1-4).

Believers are seated with Jesus safely by faith in Heavenly Places in union with Him. For life here, we have His armor.

The “Armor of God” is what the Messiah-Christ wore to win the great war against the evil one in His life and ministry (see Isaiah 59:12-20).

***How does Ephesians 2:1-10 speak of man’s life apart from Jesus Christ?
How does this same chapter describe man’s life in Jesus Christ?***

If you don’t have Christ, you are a slave of the devil; you may live a good life in your estimation; but you are “of the devil”; that is you are possessed by him as a follower (see Eph. 2:1-3).

“Not that’s not nice saying someone is evil and ‘of the devil’!”

^{ESV} Ephesians 2:1-3: And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience - among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

This may be offensive to you if you’re unregenerate, but Scripture says that if you don’t have Christ you are in terrible danger; if you don’t know this, he has made you ignorant; if you cannot see this, he has blinded you; if you don’t believe, you are his willing slave.

2 Corinthians 4:3-6: And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. 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. ⁵ For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Believe upon the LORD Jesus Christ—escape sins against God and escape slavery to the devil- -the most evil, insidious, heinous and devious creature ever to rebel against God!

- **There is no possibility of winning this “Holy War” and being victorious without Christ!**
- **If we are not Christ’s we are “dead meat” (literally!) and slaves already to what we will become throughout all eternity.**
- **We are absolutely no match for this awesome and terrible evil fallen angel called the devil.**

- We are to stand only by God's grace and power, lest we are destroyed!

Christ was defeated by the devil so that we could win with HIM!

Christ was betrayed and denied by those closest to him.

Christ entered into the darkness and all the demons of hell scoffed, laughed, and tormented him.

Christ laid down His life to bring victory over the Evil One.

While Christ lay in death's strong "bands"- -the LORD of Heaven and Earth set him free in resurrection victory!

*"Christ Jesus lay in death's strong bands, for our offenses given;
But now at God's right hand He stands, and brings us life from heaven.*

*It was a strange and dreadful strife when life and death contended;
The victory remained with life; the reign of death was ended.*

*Stripped of power, no more it reigns, an empty form alone remains
Death's sting is lost forever! Alleluia!*

*Here the true Paschal Lamb we see, Whom God so freely gave us;
He died on the accursed tree so strong His love to save us.*

*See, His blood doth mark our door; faith points to it, Death passes over,
And Satan cannot harm us. Alleluia!"*
- Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands, Martin Luther

THIS IS THE BELIEVER'S HOPE IN HIM!

ESV Romans 8:38-39: For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

"The Lord has chosen, called, and armed us for the fight; and shall we wish to be excused? Shall we not rather rejoice that we have the honor to appear in such a cause, under such a Captain, such a banner, and in such company? A complete suit of armor is provided, weapons not to be resisted, and precious balm to heal us if haply we receive a wound, and precious ointment to revive us when we are in danger of fainting. Further, we are assured of the victory beforehand; and oh what a crown is prepared for every conqueror...the gracious Savior shall place upon every faithful head...Let us not be weary and faint, for in due season we will reap."- John Newton