

Living In Resurrection Power
(Week 13)
Ephesians 6:10-13
“Spiritual Warfare”

Introduction

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens.” **Ephesians 6:12**

There are two things that the devil would just as soon you not believe. First, he most certainly would like to divest you of all faith in God. But, if he cannot accomplish this, he will readily settle for your unbelief in his own existence. He does the most damage in this world, when no one even knows he is around. He is a stealth predator, who likes to remain in the shadows to pounce upon the unsuspecting. Scripture warns us repeatedly to take this threat seriously and to always be on guard.

“Be sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour.” **1 Peter 5:8**

It is imperative that every Christian realize that he is in a battle. And this battle will rage until Christ returns to banish evil from this sinful world. Until that day, we have been commanded to stand our ground as believers and to resist the enemy.

“Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” **James 4:7**

But, as with any scripture, these verses must be taken in the proper context. In your own human strength, you are no match for the devil. He is not the least bit afraid of humanity. It is God that he fears. Many people often mistakenly think that Satan is somehow the equal adversary of God, that they are engaged in some cosmic struggle that has gone on for an eternity, but the truth is that Satan doesn't even compare to God. He is just another creation, a mere fallen angel. There is none like God.

“Remember what happened long ago, for I am God, and there is no other; I AM GOD, and no one is like me.” **Isaiah 46:9**

You see, God has no equal. And Satan knows it. He is no match for God and never will be. In fact, his destiny has already been written. He will go down in defeat, and what's even worse, he knows that as well. So, what does he do in the meantime? He wants to wreak as much havoc as he can. And he's good at it. So remember, he would like nothing better than to destroy you. And, the only thing that will keep him at bay, is the mighty power of The One and Only Almighty God. So, when we are commanded to resist the devil, we are commanded to resist with God's strength and not our own. Remember the theme of Ephesians? The same power that rose Jesus from the dead lives within every believer. So, we are to face Satan in the same way that we face everything else in this life; by the power of The Holy Spirit!

In the **sixth chapter of Ephesians**, Paul compares living by The Spirit's power to being clothed in “The Armor of God”. It is worth mentioning here, that when Paul wrote this letter to the church at Ephesus, he was imprisoned and chained between two Roman guards. These guards would have worked in shifts, with Paul being chained between several of them round the clock. I'm sure that they thought of him as their captive, when in fact they were the ones who were captive to his constant preaching of the Word! I wonder just how many of those guards came under conviction and surrendered their lives to Christ as a result? At any rate, spending twenty-four hours a day chained between two soldiers no doubt gave Paul just the sermon illustration that he needed to describe what it is like to be clothed in the power of Christ. He took the wardrobe of his captors and turned it into a message that has been preached throughout the ages! Isn't it amazing how God can take something that the world intended for harm and use it for good? Paul wanted his beloved brothers and sisters at Ephesus to fully

understand the battle that they were facing. He wanted them to Be Strong, to Suit Up, and to Stand Firm. He wanted them to fight in God's power, as soldiers wrapped in The Armor of God!

Be Strong (in The LORD)

"Finally, be strengthened by The LORD and by His vast strength." Ephesians 6:10

The child of God, filled with the Holy Spirit of God, has little to dread from the devil. For although Satan has no fear of you when you are "standing on your own two feet", he is terrified of you when you are down on your knees! Abiding in Christ shall ever be the formula for the victorious Christian life. Paul reminds those at Ephesus that to be filled with The Spirit is the only way to resist the devil, and it is only by the Spirit's power that he will indeed **"flee from you" (James 4:7)**.

Contrary to some religious teachings, a child of God cannot become "demon possessed", for God's Spirit lives within them. Jesus Himself said:

"But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can plunder his house." Mark 3:27

If you are indeed filled with The Holy Spirit, my friends, then you have the greatest "strongman" that there is living in "your house". The devil has no chance of overcoming The Holy Spirit, and he knows it. So, the child of God need not fear demonic possession, but he can absolutely count on "demonic oppression"! Satan will do everything that he can think of to turn your thoughts and desires away from Christ. He cannot get your soul, but he most certainly can entice you away from your first love.

Sadly, this is exactly what he was ultimately able to accomplish in the church of Ephesus. He caused them to grow cold in their love for Christ, even as they were attempting to strictly adhere to The LORD'S commands. The church at Ephesus became good at obeying the rules, but they became neglectful in their devotion to The One Who gave His life to save them! Without devotion to Christ, church becomes mere ritual observance. Without love, relationship grows cold, and we return to The Law. To be Spirit-filled is to be in love with Christ and to obey as He leads. When our love grows cold, we are in grave danger of being seduced by one of Satan's many schemes. So, how do we remain in God's strength? By remaining close to Christ, motivated by love and worship.

The devil attacks just as a lion does. He looks for the weakest animals that can no longer keep up with the rest of the herd. He divides, then conquers. If the devil can entice you away from your devotion to follow Christ, trust me, he is getting ready to pounce. And on your own, you do not stand a chance. You need to fan the flames of devotion for your Savior. You need to diligently attend to your love relationship with Him. You need to abide in Him (**John 15**), as well as, in the fellowship of other faithful believers. Then, you will in fact **"Be strong in The LORD"**. You won't have to fight your battles, for He will fight your battles FOR you.

One of my favorite Bible stories can be found in **2 Chronicles 20**. King Jehoshaphat (meaning God has judged) was confronted by an enemy of superior force. They invaded the land, and by all accounts appeared to be an unstoppable army comprised of an alliance of nations bent upon the destruction of God's people. Jehoshaphat knew that he had absolutely no chance of defeating these enemies of Judah. So, he commanded the people to fast and pray, then he got down on his knees as well, and he prayed:

"Lord, God of our ancestors, are you not the God Who is in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in your hand, and no one can stand against You. Are You not our God Who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel and Who gave it forever to the descendants of Abraham Your friend? They have lived in the land and have built You a sanctuary in it for Your Name and have said, 'If disaster comes on us—sword or judgment, pestilence of famine—we will stand before this temple and before You, for Your Name is in this temple. We will cry out to You because of our distress, and You will hear and deliver.'" Now here are the Ammonites, Moabites, and the inhabitants of Mount Seir. You did not let Israel invade them when Israel came out of the land of

Egypt, but Israel turned away from them and did not destroy them. Look how they repay us by coming to drive us out of Your possession that You gave us as an inheritance. Our God, will You not judge them? For we are powerless before this vast number that comes to fight against us. We do not know what to do, but we look to You. **2 Chronicles 20:6-12**

Would you like to know how God responded? He told them not to be afraid, for the battle was not theirs... but His.

“...Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast number, for the battle is not yours, but God’s.” **2 Chronicles 20:15b**

So the very next morning, Jehoshaphat sent out an army, but it wasn't his soldiers that led the way. It was a choir singing praises to God. And when they reached the battlefield, the enemy lay dead on the ground before them! So, let this be a lesson to us all. We do indeed have a mighty enemy that longs to defeat us, but if we remain in the steadfast love of Christ, then the choir can go ahead and start warming up now, for the victory is at hand. We shall overcome by the strength of The LORD!

Suit Up

“Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens.” **Ephesians 6:11-12**

As we stated earlier to “Put on the Armor of God” is simply a descriptive way of saying be clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Later on in this study, we will examine each component of the Armor of God and see just how we are to wrap ourselves in things that Christ has provisioned for our success in the battle against Satan. For now, suffice to say that if we are to survive the conflict we must “suit up” in the battle gear that He has graciously provided to each of those who profess their faith in Him. The word that Paul uses here for “put on” (enduo in the Greek) means to put on and continually keep on. The thought being conveyed here is that the Christian must continually remain in a state of “battle-readiness”, being cloaked in God’s armor at all times. Satan doesn’t take a holiday, and he can and will strike given the slightest opportunity.

Paul makes it plain that our struggles are spiritual and not physical. We often mistakenly focus on our symptoms in this life, rather than the disease that is causing them. The struggles that we have against the wicked things of this world, whether it be wicked people or wickedness in general, are merely visible signs of something much more ominous that we cannot see. I am often reminded of this fact when I see people on the news rallying to support of all manner of evil. I find myself getting angry with the people and forgetting that it is the devil and his demonic legions that are behind it all. Paul’s words should be a reminder to us all that it is not with wicked mankind that we are struggling, but with the unseen evil that is motivating these men to act as they do. Like the tip of an iceberg, what we can see with our eyes does not come close to revealing the real danger that lies hidden beneath. The devil and the multitude of demonic legions at his command are the real enemy.

Paul describes these many layers of Satan’s collaborators as **“rulers, authorities, cosmic powers, and evil, spiritual forces”** end quote. Anyone who claims to have a complete understanding of Satan’s hierarchy of evil is either being intentionally misleading or simply misguided. No one, except God, fully understands just how Satan has arranged his system of governance, but suffice to say that they **are** organized and determined. And, they comprise a force too great for any mortal to withstand in his own power. Just like the aforementioned King Jehoshaphat, we are facing a force too numerous for us.

The *Book of Revelation* tells us that when Satan rebelled against God, he took a third of the angelic host with him (**Revelation 12:4**). And, it is this group of fallen angels that make up the demonic host, who are enjoined to him to do their master’s bidding. This demonic host has tormented mankind throughout the ages, but they are no match for Christ. He cast out a legion of them (a Roman legion

consisted of six thousand troops) from two possessed men into a herd of pigs (***Matthew 8:28-32***). The demons shrieked in fear, when they saw Him coming. They begged Him not to send them into the abyss before their time. With a single word, He dispatched them. The lesson here for all of us is simple; if you are wrapped up in Christ, even six thousand of “Satan’s finest” doesn’t stand a chance against you. But, that won’t stop them from trying, mind you.

As you may recall, it was demonic angels who even attempted to hinder the prayers of Daniel. But God prevailed (***Daniel 10:12-13***). Remember what the angel called the demon who tried to keep him from answering Daniel? He referred to him as “the prince of Persia”. This story is a reminder for us that behind every government of man, there is the demonic force pulling the strings. Do you wonder why things are getting so out of hand in this country? Well, there’s your answer. Satan is hard at work, in the spiritual places that we cannot see, pulling the strings of his puppets embedded within every level of government. They are blissfully unaware of his manipulation, and yet, they follow his every move. He is doing everything that he can to set up the “one-world government” that is prophesied in the *Book of Revelation*. The government that will be under the control of his antichrist. We are watching this drama unfold before our very eyes, and we must remain vigilant as this world plunges headlong into darkness. So, if you haven’t already done so, my believing friend, you had better suit up. Things are gonna get a lot worse, before they get better.

Satan not only attacks on a global scale, he does so individually as well. As I stated earlier, he longs to separate each of us from the body and from the love and protection of Christ. He does this most often as any invading enemy would, by establishing a “beach-head” behind the defenses of those he wishes to conquer. In short, the devil identifies your weaknesses and looks for a “way in”. He will tempt you to sin in the places where you are most vulnerable, in order to defeat you from the inside out. So, suit up my brothers and sisters in Christ and be wise concerning the devils schemes (*methodia* in the Greek, meaning *methods*), for it is with *his* forces that we are in constant struggle.

The word that Paul uses for “struggle” is actually a wrestling term used to convey the thought of subduing an opponent by deceit and treachery. Just as a wrestler tries to submit his opponent by “baiting him” to move in a certain way so that he can get a dominant hold on him, the devil wants to use your own weaknesses against you and pin you to the ground. If you are a believer, he cannot take your soul, but he can certainly render you immobile, and therefore, useless in the struggle. There is nothing more pitiful than a believer who has lost his testimony, because of some besetting sin that has rendered him helpless. Or as Jesus says;

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty? It’s no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet”. ***Matthew 5:13***

And THAT my friend is exactly what the devil wants to do with you. To entice you with your own weaknesses, to cause you to fall into some sin, and then, when you’ve lost your testimony, your very “saltiness”, as it were, to have you to be trampled upon by this wicked world. Not a pretty picture is it? So, suit up! You don’t stand a chance unless you do.

Stand Firm

“For this reason take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand.” ***Ephesians 6:13***

I recently read an article about a movement within some Christian denominations to remove what they designated as “militant” songs from their hymnals. The type of songs to which they referring are ones such as “Stand Up For Jesus” and “Onward Christian Soldiers”. Remember those? Who knew they were so controversial?! Personally, I think Paul would have loved those old songs. Because he, of all people, knew that taking stand for Christ was anything but a walk in the park. Paul was put in chains because of his faith. He lived a life a persecution that most of us could not even begin to imagine, and when it finally came to an end, it did so with his beheading. He lived in a perpetual state of spiritual warfare, and I am quite certain he would have loved these words:

*“Stand up stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross
Lift high His royal banner, it must not suffer loss
From victory unto victory, His armies shall He lead
'Til every foe is vanquished, and Christ is LORD indeed.*

Yes, I'm pretty sure the Apostle Paul, the prisoner and bondservant of Christ, would have sung that song at the top of his lungs, when facing his darkest days. The trouble is... Christians today are, for the most part, of a much weaker variety. We only want to take a stand... when it's safe, or when it doesn't cost us anything. The only thing most believers need today to send them running in discouragement is for someone to say something negative about them! I've seen more people retreat from the battlefield over hurt feelings than any real spiritual struggle! The devil must really love today's church member. He can save his heavy artillery. All he really needs is a slight inconvenience to put most of our soldiers to flight.

Christ commands us to stand and to stand firm. And, as Paul puts it, “to do everything to stand.” I had a conversation just this week with someone who asked about some of my “experiences” during my years in the ministry. They seemed genuinely surprised that many ministers continue to “stick it out” year after year in the face of discouragement. The sad fact of the matter is that only about one in ten of those who surrender themselves to the ministry actually finish well. So remember, if you are planning to take a stand for Christ, then you should expect to be hit hard with spiritual warfare. Those who are not ready are asleep in their foxholes! I once heard a preacher say, “If you are not meeting the devil head on, then you are both walking in the same direction!” Pretty accurate statement wouldn't you agree? The devil doesn't waste his ammo on Christians that are afraid of the fight. He shoots at the ones who are actually standing for something.

The battle cry is therefore very simple; “Take your stand for Christ!” For there is a world of lost people who are perishing all around us. We have been sent to their rescue. They are not the enemy, even though they often act as though they are. We must never forget that they have been deceived. They are dead in the darkness of the tomb and desperately need to be rescued and resurrected to life in the light, just as we too once were, before Jesus brought us to life. We, therefore, are called to take a stand for Christ, so that lost souls will become His disciples. We cannot fail in this battle, so long as we go in the **Strength** of the LORD, **Suited Up** in His Armor and **Standing Firm** for His cross. The victory is at hand, the praise choir is warming up. For this battle is not ours... but God's!

And let All of God's Soldiers say... TRUTH!!!