

A Bible Study on Dealing with the Enemy

L2: Identification and the Battle

Now that we have a cursory overview of who the enemy is, we must delve deeper into making sure we clearly understand how to identify who the enemy really is. Initially, we were given several precepts in the book of Ephesians chapter 6 as to who the enemy is and how to identify him. However, a closer look at the sections of verse 12 in chapter 6 allows us to further identify who we are dealing with. Let us not forget that the enemy can come in the form of other people, situations, temptations, the devil himself, and surprisingly ourselves as well.

Part 1—Identifying the Enemy

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."*

The apostle describes the combat in this verse, "We wrestle". A Christian's life is a perpetual warfare, a continual wrestling; but with what, and with whom? *The answer:* not with flesh and blood; that is, not only or chiefly with flesh and blood, with human enemies; but we must grapple and contend with angelic powers, with devils, who are principalities and powers.

Take note of how the devil and his angels are described: ¹

1. By their prince-like authority and government which they exercise in the world, called therefore principalities and powers, to denote that Satan is a great and mighty prince.
2. By the seat of his empire: he rules in this world, not in the other; the highest the devil can go, is the air; heaven fears him not. And he is a ruler of the darkness of this world: that is, in sinners that labour under the darkness of sin and ignorance.
3. Satan and his angels are here described by their spiritual nature, called spiritual wickedness, that is, wicked spirits: intimating to us, that the devils are spirits; that they are spirits extremely wicked; and that these wicked spirits do chiefly annoy Christians with, and provoke them to, spiritual wickedness.
4. They are described by their residence or place of abode: in high places; that is, in the air, of which he is called the prince.

The difference between Christ's dealing with his followers, and Satan with his: Satan does not let sinners know who that God is whom they fight against, but Christ is not afraid to show his saints their enemy in all his power and strength; well he might, because the weakness of God is stronger than the powers of hell.

¹ William Burkitt Commentary on the New Testament, Ephesians 6:12

A more detailed and in-depth analysis of our enemy put forth by the Apostle Paul is outlined by the Albert Barnes New Testament Commentary:

Ephesians 6, Verse 12

- ❖ For we wrestle. "There is not to us a wrestling with flesh and blood." There is undoubtedly here an allusion to the ancient games of Greece, a part of the exercises in which consisted in wrestling. The Greek word here --palh--denotes a wrestling; and then a struggle, fight, combat, here it refers to the struggle or combat which the Christian is to maintain--the Christian warfare.
- ❖ Not with flesh and blood. Not with men. The apostle does not mean to say that Christians had no enemies among men that opposed them, for they were exposed often to fiery persecution; nor that they had nothing to contend with in the carnal and corrupt propensities of their nature, which was true of them then as it is now; but that their main controversy was with the invisible spirits of wickedness that sought to destroy them. They were the source and origin of all their spiritual conflicts, and with them the warfare was to be maintained.
- ❖ But against principalities. There can be no doubt whatsoever that the apostle alludes here to evil spirits. Like good angels, they were regarded as divided into ranks and orders, and were supposed to be under the control of one mighty leader. It is probable that the allusion here is to the ranks and orders which they sustained before their fall. The word principalities refers to principal rulers, or chieftains.
- ❖ Powers. Those who had power, or to whom the name of powers was given. Milton represents Satan as addressing the fallen angels in similar language :-- "Thrones, dominations, principedoms, virtues, powers."
- ❖ Against the rulers of the darkness of this world. The rulers that preside over the regions of ignorance and sin with which the earth abounds. Darkness is an emblem of ignorance, misery, and sin; and no description could be more accurate than that of representing these malignant spirits as ruling over a dark world. The earth--dark, and wretched, and ignorant, and sinful--is just such a dominion as they would choose. It is a wide and a powerful empire. No empire has been so extended, or has continued so long, as that empire of darkness; and nothing on earth is so difficult to destroy. Yet the apostle says that it was on that kingdom they were to make war. Against that, the kingdom of the Redeemer was to be set up; and that was to be overcome by the spiritual weapons which he specifies. When he speaks of the Christian warfare here, he refers to the contest with the powers of this dark kingdom. Therefore, this passage cannot be regarded as having a primary reference to the struggle which a Christian maintains with his own corrupt propensities. It is a warfare on a large scale with the entire kingdom of darkness over the world
- ❖ Against spiritual wickedness... "or wicked spirits." Literally, "the spiritual things of wickedness;" but the allusion is undoubtedly to evil spirits, and to their influences on earth.
- ❖ In high places, "in celestial, or heavenly places." The same phrase occurs in Eph 1:3; 2:6, where it is translated, "in heavenly places." The word celestial / heavenly is used of those that

dwell in heaven, (*Mt 18:35; Php 2:10*); of those who come from heaven, (*1Cor 15:48; Php 3:21*); This is the allusion here. The evil spirits are supposed to occupy the lofty regions of the air, and thence to exert an evil influence on the affairs of man. In whatever way their power is put forth--whether in the prevalence of vice and error; of superstition and magic arts; of infidelity, atheism; of evil customs and laws; of pernicious fashions and opinions, or in the corruptions of our own hearts, we are to make war on all these forms of evil, and never to yield in the conflict.

Part 2—Engaging The Enemy in Battle

Ephesians 6:13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Many people mistakenly think that dealing with the evil one requires some deep level of knowledge and a super-spirituality and that it involves a long, laborious struggle. Jesus identified Satan as the “father of lies, the master of deceit.” As such it is the truth of the Word of God that dispels and expels the lies. Case in point, Matthew 4 recounts how Jesus refuted all the devils deceitful claims by responding to each with the Word of God (Matthew 4:1-10). The word of God and practical spiritual strategies are what will give us our best opportunity to battle and win over the devil.

While many of the devil’s devices may appear complex, breaking them is scripturally simple:

1. Faith in the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus’ name (Mark 11:22-24; Matthew 18:18-20).
2. Confidence in the power of his atoning blood (Revelation 12:11)
3. Courage to claim and use our authority in resisting evil (Luke 10:19)
4. Total trust in the immanent power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38)

Now that it is ours to battle the enemy, every soldier in the army of the Lord must be properly equipped for the battle. Paul continues in *Ephesians 6:13-18* by telling us what we must wear to be properly suited for engaging the enemy, and we well know this passage to detail the Armor of God.

Ephesians 6:13-18 KJV 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. {having...: or, having overcome all} 14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; 15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: 18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

The Armor of God...²

Observe how our apostle comes to describe the Armour of God piece by piece, which the Christian is to put on before he takes the field against the enemy. Here is the soldier's girdle, his

² William Burkitt New Testament commentary on Ephesians 6:13-18

breastplate, his shoes, his shield, his helmet, and his sword, all described; his offensive and defensive weapons, wherewith soldiers of old used to arm their bodies from head to foot.

Please observe, that although there be pieces of armour for all other parts of the body, there is none assigned for the back, nor back-parts, because there must be no running away, no hope of escaping by flight in this spiritual warfare: if we turn our back upon our enemy, we lie open to his darts, and are in danger of destruction; if we fight on, we have our second in the field, and are sure of victory. *The first piece* of armour is the girdle (belt) of truth, “*Having your loins girt about with truth*”, Eph 6:14 that is, sincerity of heart. Does a girdle or belt adorn the soldier? So doth sincerity adorn the Christian. Does the girdle strengthen the soldier's loins? So does sincerity strengthen the soul, and every grace in the soul: it is sincere faith that is strong faith; it is sincere love that is mighty love.

Secondly, The breastplate of righteousness; by which is to be understood the love and practice of universal holiness. But why is this compared to a breastplate? Because as the breastplate defends the most principal parts of the body, where the heart and vitals are closely couched together; thus holiness preserves the soul and conscience, the principal parts of a Christian, from the wounds and harms of sin, which is the weapon that Satan uses to give conscience its deadly stab with.

The third piece of Christian armour is the spiritual shoe, fitted to the soldier's foot, and worn by him so long as he keeps the field against sin and Satan: the soldier's way is sometimes full of sharp stones, and sometimes strewed with sharp iron spikes stuck into the ground; the soldier will soon be wounded, or foundered, if not well shod. Therefore the direction here is, Let your feet be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; that is, maintaining an holy readiness of spirit, and a resolute frame of heart, to undergo any suffering, and endure any hardship in your Christian warfare; which frame of spirit being wrought in us by the doctrine of the gospel, is therefore called the preparation of the gospel of peace.

The fourth piece of armour recommended above all to be put on, is the shield of faith; this is that grace by which we believe the truth of God's word in general, and depend upon Christ in particular, as crucified, for pardon and life, and this upon the warrant of the promise. But why is faith compared to a shield? Because, as the shield defends the whole body, so faith defends the whole man; the understanding from error, the conscience from searedness, the will from rebellion against the will and command of God. And as the shield defends the whole armour, as well as the soldier's whole body, it defends the breastplate, as well as the breast; so faith is our armour upon armour, a grace that preserves all other graces whatsoever.

The fifth piece of armour is mentioned, The helmet of salvation, (Eph 6:17) by which the grace of hope is understood, which has for its object salvation, called therefore the hope of salvation. Salvation is the ultimate and comprehensive object of the Christian's expectation; and it is compared to an helmet, because as the helmet defends the head, so doth the hope of salvation defend the soul; it keeps the head above water, and makes the Christian bold and brave. Hope is a grace of singular use and excellent service to a Christian, in the whole course of his Christian warfare; it puts him upon noble services, it keeps him patient under the greatest sufferings, and it will enable the soul to wait long for the performance of divine promises.

The sixth piece of spiritual armour is the sword. (Eph 6:17) The former were defensive, but this is both an offensive and defensive weapon; such is the word of God. But why compared to a sword? In regard both of its necessity and excellency: the sword was ever esteemed a most necessary and useful part of the soldier's furniture; of such usefulness, necessity, and excellency is the word of God, by which the Christian doth defend himself, and offend his enemies. But why is it called the sword of the Spirit? Because the Spirit was the author of it; the Spirit of God is the interpreter of it: and it is the Spirit that gives the word its efficacy and power in the soul: the word of God, contained in the scriptures, is the sword by which the Spirit of God enables his saints to overcome and vanquish all their enemies.

The seventh and last piece of spiritual armour is mentioned, and that is prayer: praying always with all prayer (Eph 6:18). It should be noted,

- The time for prayer is always;
- The sorts and kinds of prayer is always with all prayer;
- The inward principle of prayer, from which it must flow, is in the Spirit;
- The duty of prayer is watching thereunto;
- The constancy to be exercised in the duty of prayer is with all perservance, the comprehensiveness of the duty, for all saints.

Prayer is a necessary duty for all Christians, and to be used, with all other pieces of spiritual armour, by the Christian soldier.

Lastly, in an effort to confront the enemy in battle, there is another way of engaging the enemy, and it is a Jesus commanded us to do in *Matthew 5:43-45 (also Luke 6:27-28)*. Exposition of this context is wonderfully stated by the British Theologian, Charles H. Spurgeon...³

Good for evil is to be our only weapon, and with this we are to fight perpetually, cost us what it may. The love of God falls on men who deserve it not, and so also must our kindness. It would be far better that a hundred evil persons deceived us, and so obtained our aid, than that one suffering fellow-creature should be neglected because of the wickedness of others. Hardness of heart gradually grows upon men through contact with a deceitful and oppressive world; but we must not allow evil influences to mastery us, and steel our hearts against our fellows.

To close out this lesson on identifying the enemy and doing battle with the enemy, know that this is the principal part of the battle with the enemy: knowing who the enemy is and how to defeat them.

Realize Your Position in Christ.

Think of our true identity as enthroned with the Savior (Ephesians 2:6). In reality, you are looking down on the principalities and powers. Meditate on this truth, and let the Lord's authority give you confidence. This is not positive thinking, but the potency of being identified with the risen Lord.

³ Spurgeon Devotional commentary on Matthew 5:43.