

ROCK GROUP BIBLE STUDY

September 12, 2003

Stand Firm! [Part 1] "The Believer's Warfare"

Ephesians 6:10-17

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual {forces} of wickedness in the heavenly {places.} 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, 15 and having shod YOUR feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil {one.} 17 And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Paul now makes a transition here in verse 10 with the use of the term *finally*. He now moves on to the conclusion of his letter to the Ephesian believers. Paul is providing both his final and vital instructions to the church in Ephesus. In chapters 1-3, Paul emphasized the believer's high calling. In chapters 4 and 5 and the first 9 verses of chapter 6, Paul has emphasized the believers walk in response to their high calling. They were to walk in a worthy manner, in righteousness and holiness of truth, in love, in light, and in wisdom. Now Paul concludes by emphasizing their need to stand firm in the midst of spiritual battle.

John MacArthur states, "If we are walking worthy of our calling, in humility rather than pride, in unity rather than divisiveness, in the new self rather than the old, in love rather than lust, in light rather than darkness, in wisdom rather than foolishness, in the fullness of the Spirit rather than the drunkenness of wine and in mutual submission rather than self-serving independence, then we can be absolutely certain we will have opposition and conflict." So Paul, closes by exhorting the Ephesian believers to be prepared for spiritual battle.

· ***With his first admonition in verse 10, how are believers to be prepared for spiritual battle?***

They are to *be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might*. The first imperative is to "Be Strong!" It is important to note that this is in the passive form and is literally, "*be made strong*" or "*be strengthened*!" This fits well with Paul's prayer in 3:16, "*that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man.*" It is clear that believers do not empower themselves. Rather they rely on an external source, who is none other than the Lord Jesus (cf. Philippians 4:13). The apostle had already prayed that his readers might understand the extraordinary power of God working on their behalf in 1:19-21. Now he commands them to be strengthened with Christ's power.

We cannot face a spiritual battle on our own, we clearly need Christ's strength, which comes by submitting to the control of the Holy Spirit. This is how we can initially be prepared for spiritual battle.

· ***How are believers to be strengthened in the Lord's might according to Paul's second admonition found in the first part of verse 11?***

The imperative, "*Put on the full armor of God!*" explains how the admonition of verse 10, "*Be strong in the Lord,*" is to be carried out. In order to take advantage of the strength of God's might, a believer must put on the full spiritual armor that God supplies (cf. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5). The term *put on* [ENDUO] carries the idea of a once and for all permanence. In other words, it is not something that is taken on and off, but it is to be permanently put on. It might refer back to chapter 4 and the idea of having laid aside the old self and put on the new self. The term *full armor* [PANOPLIA] means complete equipment, head to toe protection, both defensively and offensively. This gear was used for hand to hand combat, not for appearances. Paul wrote this letter while chained to a Roman soldier and the soldier's armor must have brought this metaphor to mind. Keep in mind that this is a spiritual battle so the armor that is to be put on is not physical equipment, but spiritual equipment.

· ***According verses 11 and 13, why are believers to put on the full armor of God?***

"*So that we might be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.*" The phrase *To stand firm* when used in a military sense, had the idea of holding a critical position while under attack. It really emphasizes the idea of resisting the enemy, holding the position, and offering no surrender. Believers are to put on the full armor of God, which is described in verses 13-17 so that we might be enabled to resist the temptations brought about by our enemy, Satan and to hold our position against his evil attacks. The goal is doing everything that we possibly can in God's power to resist these attacks by the enemy.

· ***According to verse 11, who are believers in a spiritual battle against?***

Against the schemes of the devil (vs. 11): We need God's strength and armor in order to do battle against the devil. Clearly, the spiritual battle exists between believers and the schemes of Satan, himself. As we will see in the next verse, Satan does not work alone. He needs help, because he is not omnipotent, omniscient or omnipresent. He will require the help of the fallen angels. The term *schemes* [METHODIA], from which we get the English term *method*, carries the idea of craftiness, cunning and deception. It was often used of a wild animal who cunningly stalked and then unexpectedly pounced on its prey. So Satan's schemes are built around stealth, craftiness, and deception.

· ***Describe what you know about the character, work and names of Satan.***

Satan was once the chief angel, the anointed cherub, the star of morning, who sparkled with all the jewels of created beauty--until he rebelled against his Creator and tried to usurp God's power and glory (cf. Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:1-10; Revelation 12:7-9). He first appears in Scripture in the form of a serpent, as he tempted Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:1). Jesus not only spoke about Satan (Luke 10:18; John 8:44; 12:31), but was tempted by him in the wilderness (Matthew 4:3-10). Paul, Peter, James, John, and the writer of Hebrews all speak of him as a personal being (Romans 16:20; 2 Corinthians 2:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:18; Hebrews 2:14; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:9). We see him opposing God's work (Zechariah 3:1), perverting God's Word (Matthew 4:6), hindering God's servant (1 Thessalonians 2:18), hindering the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:4), snaring the wicked (1 Timothy 3:7), appearing as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14), and fighting with the archangel Michael (Jude 9). He brought sin into the world and now the whole world lies in his power (1 John 5:19). [MacArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 338-339]

The bible refers to the devil by such personal names and descriptions as, "the anointed cherub"

(Ezekiel 28:14), "the ruler of demons" (Luke 11:15), "the ruler of this world" (John 16:11), "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4), "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2), and by many others. He is identified as the great dragon, a roaring lion, the vile one, the tempter the accuser, and the spirit working in the sons of disobedience. Fifty-two times he is called Satan, which means "adversary," and thirty-five times the devil, which means "slanderer." [MacArthur, p. 339]

· ***How do you think Satan might be working in the world today or what are his schemes as he works in the world today?***

A good indication lies in two verses from 1 John. 1 John 2:16 which says, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world." 1 John 5:19 which says, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in {the power of} the evil one." How does Satan work? He works through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. We see this in his temptation of Eve in Genesis 3:6, (the tree was good for food--lust of the flesh; the tree was a delight to the eyes--lust of the eyes; and the tree was desirable to make one wise--the boastful pride of life). We also see this as Satan tempts Jesus in the wilderness in Matthew 4. In verse 3 Satan says, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to be bread,"-lust of the flesh. In verses 8-9, Satan showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory and said, "All these things I will give to you if You will fall down and worship me,"-lust of the eyes. In verse 6, Satan says, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down...",-the pride of life. The devil's schemes are through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life.

· ***According to verse 12, who else are believers in a spiritual battle against?***

Verse 12 says, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual {forces} of wickedness in the heavenly {places.}" It is interesting that the term struggle [PALEI] is not found anywhere else in the Greek New Testament. However it was commonly used during the first century to describe the sport of wrestling, which was immensely popular in the games of western Asia Minor. Who are we wrestling with? Four terms are given in regards to our opponents in this spiritual battle: 1) rulers; 2) powers; 3) world forces of this darkness; & 4) spiritual forces of wickedness. "This certainly suggests a definite army of demonic creatures that assist Satan in his attacks against believers. The Apostle John hinted that one-third of the angels fell with Satan when he rebelled against God (Revelation 12:4), and Daniel wrote that Satan's angels struggled against God's angels for control of the affairs of nations (Daniel 10:13-20) [Warren Wiersbe, *Be Rich*, p. 165]. Some have suggested that these terms refer to different ranks of Satan's demonic army, while others suggest that each of these terms suggest a different sphere of operation. It is not clear if Paul was highlighting different ranks, or spheres of demonic operation. I don't think Paul was writing to necessarily emphasize either a ranking system or a sphere of operation. I think that Paul was emphasizing that this is a spiritual battle against spiritual forces and used a variety of synonyms to describe these spiritual forces. It is really unnecessary to go beyond that emphasis. Paul's emphasis is on the location of this spiritual battle and that is in the heavenly places. This is likely just a general term used to identify the spiritual realm.

· ***Why do you think that Paul repeats the admonition to "Stand Firm!" again in verse 13?***

Paul is instructing the Ephesian believers as to their role in this spiritual battle. He repeats this statement again for the purpose of emphasis. Believers are to stand firm! How are they to stand firm? By putting on the full armor of God so that they may resist in the evil day. The full armor of God helps the believer to resist the devil's temptation. In fact this is the way in which believers are to fight this spiritual battle, that is by resisting the devil. In two other places, this is the prescribed

method of dealing with Satan's schemes. In James 4:7 James instructs, "*Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*" In 1 Peter 5:8-9 Peter teaches, "*Be of sober {spirit,} be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in {your} faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.*" The modern day teachings that we can bind Satan, cast out demons, should rebuke the devil, defeat territorial spirits or word our prayers in specific ways in order to triumph over Satan and his evil forces are unbiblical. Clearly the main focus for the believer is to resist the devil, by standing firm in our faith and we do that with our spiritual equipment, the full armor of God.

· *According to verses 14-17, what equipment have believers been given for this spiritual battle?*

1) The Belt of Truth: The Roman soldier wore a tunic, an outer garment, which served as his primary clothing. It was draped loosely over the body. Before a battle it was carefully cinched up and tucked into the heavy leather belt. This belt was usually made of leather and about 6 inches wide. It also served the purpose of holding the rest of the armor, in place (i.e. breastplate and the sheath for the sword). The belt of truth refers to the truth of God's Word and his message in the gospel. Obviously Jesus is the truth (John 14:6), but also His Word is truth (John 17:17). We can certainly stand firm and resist the enemy by standing on the truth of God's Word. In fact, it was the truth of God's Word that Jesus used against Satan's temptations. Each time Satan tempted Jesus, Jesus countered with a quote from the book of Deuteronomy.

2) The Breastplate of Righteousness: The Roman soldier wore a breastplate, which was a tough, sleeveless piece of armor that covered his full torso. It was often made of leather or heavy linen sewed over slices of animal hooves or horns or pieces of metal. The purpose of the breastplate was to protect the vital organs. Righteousness here, is to be taken and wrapped around our whole being just as Roman soldiers wrapped themselves with the breastplate of armor. The righteousness that Paul is speaking about here is not likely the imputed righteousness that God applies to all believers, but it more likely refers to the practical righteousness of life lived in obedience to God's Word. It is likely referring back to Ephesians 4:24-32 and putting on the righteous behavior of the new self, which will not give the devil an opportunity (4:27).

3) The Feet shod with the Gospel of Peace: The term *preparation* [HETOIMASIA] has the general meaning of readiness. A good pair of boots allows the Roman soldier to be ready to march, to climb, to fight, or to do whatever is necessary in battle. The gospel of peace refers to the good news that believers have peace with God. Since we are now in Christ and at peace with God, then we can stand in confidence of God's love for us, His union with us, and His commitment to fight for us. Thus, we will not fear the enemy.

4) The Shield of Faith: The shield spoken of here was a full body shield about four and a half feet tall and two and a half feet wide. It was usually made of wood and leather with an iron frame. It was sometimes soaked in water to extinguish flaming arrows. It was used on the front lines of battle to protect the archers who stood behind this protective wall. For Christians this shield is faith. It is the basic term for trust in God and means a total dependence on God and a willingness to do His will. It suggests a believing in His promises even though they have not come to fruition yet.

5) The Helmet of Salvation: The helmet protected the Roman soldier's head. It was usually made out of either leather and brass or at times bronze and iron. Isaiah 59:17 describes God wearing a helmet of salvation. Paul instructs believers to put on the hope of salvation as a helmet in 1 Thessalonians 5:8. The idea here is also likely that of hope, the hope of our final salvation that gives us confidence and assurance during our present struggle. It is the culmination of our salvation. Peter describes this living hope in 1 Peter 1:3-9. [READ]

6) The Sword of the Spirit: The sword referred to here varied in length from 6 to 18 inches. It was the common sword carried by Roman foot soldiers in hand to hand combat. It was called the short sword. In fact the Roman army was often referred to as the "*short swords*." What is the Sword of the Spirit? It is the Word of God. God's word is not only a defensive weapon as Jesus used it to combat Satan's attacks (Matthew 4:3-10), but it is also the only offensive weapon in the spiritual battle. In fact it is a very powerful weapon as Hebrews 4:12 makes quite clear, "*For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*" The Bible is authored by God as the Holy Spirit moved men to write it. It is complete, without error, authoritative, effective and powerful. As believers in Christ we need to be motivated to read, study and understand, memorize and become quite familiar with God's Word our only offensive weapon for spiritual battle.

SMALL GROUPS

- *How are you doing at standing firm and resisting the devil?*
- *What areas in regards to your spiritual equipment are you weak in and how can you improve in those areas?*