

“Spiritual Warfare 1: Introduction”

Introduction: How do we withstand the attacks of the enemy? How do we stand firm in our battles?

Text: Ephesians 6:10-14a

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then ..."

Background: In Ephesians Paul presents for us how a Christian is supposed to be and what a Christian is like. We have received: adoption, love, forgiveness, knowledge, understanding, and power. We have been moved out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. We are to walk in humility, unity, light, wisdom, fullness in the spirit. Our relationships within marriage, family and in our jobs are to be different. There is still one thing we must know. We will not accomplish all of these things without a fight. Just because we know the truth, doesn't mean that we will apply it in our lives. The reason we are often stopped and many times we fall is because we are in a fight. We are in a war! Our enemy is bent on destroying us. Don't take that lightly. We must stand firm and learn not to fall.

This passage is the only place in Scripture that goes into as much detail about spiritual warfare. Other verses do mention it however ...

Read: II Corinthians 10:3-5

"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

Read: James 4:7

"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Read: I Peter 5:8,9

"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings."

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Binding & Loosing

There is NO Biblical precedent for binding and loosing. It is not taught anywhere in God's Word.

Read: Matthew 16:17-19

"Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'"

Read: Matthew 18:18

"I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

The tense of both of these passages is future perfect passive, so a more accurate translation would be ...

"And whatever you bind on earth *will have been* bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth *will have been* loosed in heaven."

What it is talking about there is not that we do something and heaven aligns with our activity. Rather, it is us aligning with heaven. Whether it's in an area of church discipline or if your talking about raising up the church and the church's authority, Jesus is telling us that what we start to do will have already been ordered in heaven.

In neither one of these passages are we talking about evil spirits. There are no references to demons. Neither of these passages are meant to teach us about spiritual warfare. Also notice that it says "whatever" you bind, not "whoever" you bind. If it were demons or angels that are to be bound or loosed there would be a pronoun there because they are persons. It doesn't have anything to do with spiritual warfare. Rather, it deals with the church's authority.

In chapter 16, Peter is being authorized in advance to build the kingdom of God according to God's plan. In other words, it was like Jesus was saying ...

"Peter, I'm going to build my church through you and Peter I'm going to lead you and guide you and I know that it's going to be scary and I know that it's not going to be easy but just as you spoke by the Spirit you can be sure that as you build My church I'll be leading you so that whatever you permit in the church will already have been permitted in heaven and whatever you forbid in the church will have already been forbidden in heaven. Peter, I'm going to lead you and I'm going to guide you."

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In chapter 18 the context is similar. The idea is that when you go into a situation regarding church discipline and you don't want to discipline someone. If someone misbehaves then you are to go to them one-on-one and if there is not repentance then you take one or two others. If there is still no change in behavior then you take the matter to the church. If there is still no repentance then you are to remove them from the church. You are to treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. The fact of the matter is that no one wants to do that.

In the church today we are hesitant to do that. Where is the love in that? The issue is this: Are you going to follow the Scripture or not? If you follow the Scripture and discipline the brother or sister it will open them up to the Spirit's working in their life and bring them back ultimately to restoration. The goal of this passage is not to be punitive but rather to restore. It's no fun and it's scary. But we can know that whatever is done here on earth has already been done in heaven. If you move someone out of the church then you can know that you're lining the church up with what has already been decreed in heaven.

In this next passage Jesus is being accused of doing His works through demon power ...

Read: Matthew 12:29

"Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house."

What Jesus is talking about in this verse is His ministry to the world. He is affirming here that through His ministry and ultimately through His death He will have bound the strong man and we know that it's true because of Colossians 2:15 ...

"And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."

At Calvary, Jesus bound satan. The beautiful and wonderful news is that at Calvary satan was bound once and for all. At Calvary his power was limited. At Calvary sin's power was broken. So now people in the world are not bound, they are blind. Paul says ...

"The god of this age has *blinded* the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." 2Cor. 4:4

So we can see that there is no directive to bind satan or demons. That doesn't mean that we can't cast a demon out of someone. You can move demons out of people. Clearly Scripture teaches that. But it does not give us the power or the authority or the prescription ever to bind satan or rebuke him. We don't have that directive from the Word of God.

There is not one instance in Scripture where you see the Apostles bind a spirit over a region or geographical area. You never see Jesus bind the spirit of religion in Jerusalem. You never see Him bind the spirit of unbelief in Bethsaida. You never see Paul bind the spirit of idolatry in Ephesus or the spirit of lust in Corinth. The reason they didn't do it was because it does little good. It wasn't something they did. God has not told us not to bind or to rebuke the enemy.

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That's the reason Paul didn't give it any attention in this passage of Scripture. If we can bind satan then why don't we do it once and for all?

Read: II Corinthians 12:7,8

"To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded *with the Lord* to take it away from me."

We don't know for sure what Paul's thorn was. It is possible it was an individual that was personally persecuting him or perhaps a direct demonic attack. Notice that Paul knew the source. It wasn't trivial to him. In fact, the word thorn there could be better translated a "stake" so that Paul was impaled on it. Notice that Paul knows it was a demon and he was right but he didn't bind satan, he didn't take authority over him. He didn't spend any time talking to satan. Rather, he talked to the one who could do something about it - God! We shouldn't waste our time talking to the enemy when we could be talking to Almighty God!

It's a good thing that we can't bind satan at our will because if we could we would run the risk of getting in the way of what God wants to do in our lives. God is so powerful that He is able to use a rebellious being like satan when he tries to destroy our lives. He uses those times of trial to develop our Christian character. And if we could bind satan then God's work would be frustrated in our lives. See what Paul says, "To keep me from becoming conceited..." Paul was a man whom God had to keep humble. He needed to keep Paul reliant upon Him.

Paul had a great ministry in Thessalonica. He was only there three weeks but during his time there a church was born that was one of the most dynamic churches under his ministry. He was run out of town and had to go to Corinth. The ministry was much harder there and he wanted to return to Thessalonica.

Read: I Thessalonians 2:17,18; 3:10

"But, brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. For we wanted to come to you — certainly I, Paul, did, again and again — but Satan stopped us ... Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith."

Did Paul try to bind satan? Did he try and rebuke the enemy? No! When Paul had a problem he went straight to God. Why? Because only God can change the situation. Not even Jesus, when attacked by satan, bound him. Rather, He came back at him with "It is written ..." Jesus used a part of the armor that Paul talks about in Ephesians 6 - the Sword of the Spirit (God's Word).

Question: How do we fight? How do we do battle?

There are four things in verses 10-12 that we need to be aware of. They are four aspects to our victory ...

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I. The Preparation (v. 10)

We must not fight the battle without being prepared. We can't stand strong without being prepared.

Question: What does it mean to "stand strong"?

"Stand" (*stete*) is a key word in this passage. The equipment enables the soldier to ward off the attacks of the enemy and make a stand against him. *Stete* is a military term for holding on to a position. Before any offensive can be launched, one must first of all maintain his own ground. The word "against" (*pros*) stresses the determined hostility confronting the Christian soldier.

It's standing strong when you gain victory over that temper. It's standing strong when you say no to that sexual temptation. It's standing strong when you're a person of integrity even when it's going to cost you. It's standing strong when you don't give in to bitterness or unforgiveness. It's standing strong when you live a holy life even when the world around you is conforming.

Question: What is the primary principle to spiritual warfare (v. 10)?

Depend on the strength of the Lord. It's not in our own strength. The word "in" is critical. When we are "in Christ" we are strong. No matter what the enemy does to us we are protected if we are in Christ. "The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." (I John 4:4)

Read: Revelation 3:8

"I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have *little strength*, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name." (Church at Philadelphia - even little strength is enough vs. satan.)

Read: Ephesians 1:19-23

"That *power* is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."

Read: II Corinthians 12:9,10

"But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my *power* is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's *power* may rest on me ... For when I am weak, then I am *strong*."

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II. The Armor (v. 11)

Notice that it says, "put on." It's permanent - once for all. You leave it on and you wear it for the rest of your life. Unlike a football uniform, it becomes a part of you. Paul is under house arrest and may have been chained to a Roman soldier and he begins to look at his armor.

Because the warfare in which Christians are engaged is on the scale described in v.12, the command to take advantage of the *panoply* God has provided is reiterated from v.11. The verb, though translated in NIV "put on," is a different one from that in v.11 where *endysasthe*, literally, "be clothed in," is used. Here it is *elabete*, "take up, assume. So when the battle is at its fiercest, the soldiers of Christ will still be able to hold their line even against the most determined attack.

Question: What is the armor and why is it so important?

The belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, feet fitted with readiness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit. It's not enough to simply have the power, we need the armor.

III. The Battle (v. 12)

The following passage is directly related to a prophecy against the king of Tyre and so some would argue that it has nothing to do with satan. However, it seems likely that the references to his being a "cherub" and present in "Eden, the garden of God" mean that either the author was applying truths about satan to the King of Tyre or describing satan who is represented in this instance by the King of Tyre. In either case it is possible directly or indirectly to learn something of satan himself.

Read: Ezekiel 28:12-19

“Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: “‘You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper, sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings. By your many sins and dishonest trade you have desecrated your sanctuaries. So I made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching. All the nations who knew you are appalled at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.’”

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Question: Who is the enemy?

Satan ("adversary")

Devil (32 times in N.T.)

Lucifer (Isa. 14:12-15)

Anointed Cherub (Eze. 28)

Liar & Father of Lies (Jn. 8:44)

Accuser of the Brethren (Rev. 12:10)

The Enemy (I Peter 5:8)

Serpent & Dragon (Gen. 3:1; Rev. 12:9, 20:2)

Abaddon (Apollyon in the Greek; Rev. 9:11)

Destroyer

The Angel of the Abyss (Rev. 9:1)

The god of This Age (II Cor. 4:4)

The Prince of demons (Mt. 12:24)
2:2)

The Ruler of the Kingdom of the Air (Eph.

The Ruler of Darkness (Eph. 6:12)

The Tempter (Mt. 4:3)

The Evil One (Mt. 13:19)

Belial (II Cor. 6:15)

Beelzebub (Mt. 12:24)

Murderer From the Beginning (Jn. 8:44)

Question: Did Jesus believe in a devil?

Yes! He was tempted by him in Matthew 4. He mentioned his working in John 12, 14, and 16. Paul, James and Peter all mentioned him as well.

Question: How many demons are there?

We don't know for sure but according to Revelation 5:11, John "saw and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand." If you multiply that out it is 101 million. According to Revelation 12:4 satan took a third of the angels with him. There may be billions of angels but suffice it to say that satan is leading a large host of demons. According to Ephesians 6:12 there is apparently some kind of demonic army - a hierarchy of spirits?

Question: What does the enemy do?

His desire is to thwart the power, the presence, and the plan of God. He is smart, crafty, and cunning. He deserves our respect. We don't have to be afraid of him but he is a celestial being.

Tempts (Gen. 3; Mt. 4)

Perverts God's Word (Mt. 4)

Opposed God's Work (Zech. 3)

Hindered God's Servants (I Thess. 2)

Hindered The Gospel (II Cor. 2)

Snares The Wicked (I Tim. 3)

Desires To Control All Nations (Rev. 16)

Brought Sin Into The World (I Jn. 5)

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Question: What warning do we receive from II Peter 2:10-12 and Jude 9?

"This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, *these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings*; yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord. But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish."

"In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and *slander celestial beings*. But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!' Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals — these are the very things that destroy them."

We would be wise not to run the devil down. To call him a liar and the father of lies is not slander, it is fact. It is a mark of false teachers when they run the devil down or slander celestial beings.

IV. The Victory (v. 13)

Standing firm is the victory! Being able to stand firm is the victory. Putting on the armor and remaining in Christ will allow us to stand firm. The combination of these two things, the power of the Lord plus the armor of God guarantees victory!

Lord's Power + God's Armor = Standing Firm (Victory)

Conclusion:

Are you in a battle this evening?

Are you able to stand tonight?

Do you need God's power in your life?

Next Week: Get Ready