

Spiritual Warfare

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[0 : 00] My subject today is spiritual warfare. Spiritual warfare isn't something that we switch on or off. Spiritual warfare is something that is constant for Christians. It's something that happens all the time and we're constantly in a battle. Spiritual warfare is going on all the time for every believer.

In Ephesians 6 verse 10 we read about the armour of God. Finally my brethren be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day. And having done all to stand, stand therefore having your loins girt about with truth and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.

[1 : 31] Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and watching thereunto, with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

It is a battle. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

It is said that men will fight and die in a war when they deem the cause worthy. Is there a more worthy cause than to rescue those rushing to damnation? Our active participation in this war is the most important thing that we can do with our lives.

This conflict is of such importance that the Father sent his Son to die on the cross so that men could be delivered from their bondage under Satan's tyrannical rule.

Satan wants to devour. You are a Christian now. Get ready for a fight. Will we join the fight? The fact is, we are all under spiritual attack already.

[2 : 35] Every Christian is engaged in a battle. Every Christian is called to this fight. It is an invisible war, an unseen battle, yet a very real warfare.

Very real. The battle with evil. True Christianity is a fight and every Christian is a soldier. We see there that we wrestle, we struggle.

It's a hand-to-hand combat. We battle with the world, the flesh, the devil every day. It rages all around us, within us. This conflict. And it's happening right now in the spiritual realm.

And it will go on, right on into eternity, but until the ultimate conflict is waged. In this context, we need not fear.

We have victory. We have protection. For the meantime, though, we need to be aware that our enemy is committed against us. That he wants to damage our character. He wants to render us powerless. He wants to undermine the church.

[3 : 35] And it's an inward battle, too. God wants us to be fortified. As Satan wants to plant thoughts in our minds, God can give us an inward peace. The call to us is to be on your guard.

Paul calls us to arms. He says, this is a command. He says, stand. Finally, my brethren, he says, stand. We are to stand because standing is a position of offense.

It is a position of battle or readiness. Opposing us is a wily enemy. And we are called to stand against all the wiles of the devil.

How are we to know how to fight him? The word of God tells us how to battle this fight. General George Patton's troops and tanks were engaged in a successful counterattack of German forces under General Erwin Rommel.

And Patton is reported to have shouted out in the thick of the battle, I read your book, Rommel. I read your book. And that he did. In Rommel's book, Infantry Attacks, the famed Desert Fox carefully had detailed his military strategy.

[4 : 48] And Patton, having read it and knowing what to expect, planned his moves accordingly. Now, of course, Satan has authored no book, but God has fully exposed our enemy's tactics in his holy word.

So study the word of God and plan your defense. The key to defeating the devil is understanding how he works. And the secret to that is reading about him in the word of God.

We read, Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The enemy has not surrendered. What are we to do? We are to get dressed for battle. And one of the keys is to wait upon the Lord as we put on the whole armor of God.

We can be ready for battle. We can be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. And Isaiah 40 verse 31 tells us how we can do so. It says, But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

[6 : 01] They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. And they shall walk and not faint. I read that in Paul's day there was only one rule to winning in Greco-Roman wrestling.

The only way to win in an ancient wrestling match was to stay on your feet. There weren't some elaborate rules of points and pins. The goal was to stay on your feet and to throw your opponent to the ground three times.

If you end up yourself getting thrown on the ground once or twice, that was okay. Get back up on your feet and stay on your feet. Stay standing. Don't get knocked over again and learn from your mistakes.

And attempt to throw your opponent to the ground. We are to stand our ground in this battle because we are wrestling as in ancient wrestling. And the only way to win is to stay on our feet. The word of God demands an offensive rather than a defensive position. An offensive posture to fight the good fight of faith. As someone has put it, where does the church's offensive strategy begin?

[7 : 07] On her knees. How is the church to advance? On her knees. How are the battles fought? On her knees. Prayer is the primary business of life and God has called his people to prayer first of all.

That's E.M. Bounds. Paul says endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Roman soldiers would train from 6 a.m. in the morning through to midnight.

Before battles they would spend weeks training, getting ready for war. This is an unceasing warfare of our earthly time. So notice here the armor of the Christian's warfare.

We are given some spiritual weapons. We are given a uniform to wear. The powers of darkness are arrayed against you, intent to make you fall. The enemy is real and is coming for you. But our strength comes from the Lord.

His mercies are new every morning. So stand and fight, Christian soldier. Let's look now at the armor that we called to wear. It is possible that Paul may have had in his mind the armor of a Roman soldier, seeing as he was chained to one for about three years.

[8 : 09] Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God. The whole armor of God. Notice it says the whole armor of God. That you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.

The sense here conveys urgency and the demand to decisive action. Paul is saying do this now. Don't delay. Take on the whole armor, all of it.

All of the armor. Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Take unto you the whole armor of God. It's a comprehensive, protective covering.

And notice there's no armor for the back. We're expected to face our foe. Notice here it is the whole armor of God. He supplies it. He provides it. The whole armor of God.

That you may be able to withstand. We may be able to resist our enemy in this face-to-face confrontation. Having done all to stand.

[9 : 18] That you may be able to withstand. It goes on, verse 14. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness.

Friends, you're under attack. So stand firm. Having your loins girt about with truth, it says. The belt holds the uniform together. As a Christian soldier, we are to wear the belt of truth.

Our Lord says in John 8, 32, And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. Whatever God says is the truth. The Lord Jesus is the truth embodied.

We know that Satan is a liar. But God cannot lie. And as believers, we are to walk in the truth. As the third letter of John says in chapter 1, verse 4.

It goes on, Having on the breastplate of righteousness. What is righteousness? It's right living. It's right standing with God.

[10:18] Romans 3, 22, it says. Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all, them that believe. It's telling us here that the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to us, granted to us, reckoned to our account.

In 1 Corinthians 1, verse 30, it says, But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us, wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption.

It's telling us here that when we first believe the gospel, we are justified, declared righteous by faith. We know a positional righteousness. And then there's also a daily practice of righteousness, as we're living rightly before God and men, as we rely on the power of the Holy Spirit.

Righteousness, it speaks of our heart, of our will, of our standing and our state. But also it is our walk. The Holy Spirit does this work in us. If we're not living righteously, there are easy targets for the enemy's darts.

Verse 15, it says, And have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Christians are at peace with God, because we have been justified by faith, as it says in Romans 5, verse 1.

[11:42] The gospel is the good news of God's plan. And we're called to a preparation, it says. In other words, to be in a state of being prepared, being ready, so that wherever our feet take us, we take the gospel.

It goes on in verse 16, Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith he shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. It goes on that, Without faith it is impossible to please him.

For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them, that diligently seek him. We are being bombarded from every direction, but we have our shield.

We have a shield. Our faith is the one who is named Faithful and True. Now we know that the Roman soldiers would carry a shield that was alike to a door.

It was large and oblong. Quite large. In fact, after one battle, there's records in history that show that there's one shield that had 220 darts sticking into it.

[12:48] Imagine that. The devil sends his fiery darts of temptation, of fear, of discouragement, but God is our shield. We believe in him. Our confidence is in him.

We trust in his promises, his plan, his truth. And our faith and trust is not in ourselves. We rely upon him. Without Christ we can do nothing, as he says in John 15, verse 5.

Our sufficiency must be of God. We must let go of our own self-sufficiency, because without him we are powerless. Notice it says that the shield is able to quench all the fiery darts, all the fiery darts of the wicked.

All of them. All the fiery darts of doubts, of fears, of worries, of temptation, and of discouragement. Then it goes on, verse 17, and take the helmet of salvation.

Take the helmet of salvation. How do we get salvation? Ephesians 2, it says, from verse 8, For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.

[13:58] The gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. The world is deceived in its thinking, but we can have a knowledge, an assurance, a certain knowledge, that we can know God.

Not a hope so, think so kind of salvation, but a know so salvation. We can know, that we know, that we know, that we are saved. And Paul says in 2 Timothy 1.12, as he speaks to Timothy, he says, We have the unfailing promises of God in his word.

The next item of the armor is the sword of the spirit. It tells us to take the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. The word of God declares his will. It is given us by the spirit of God.

It is inspired by the spirit, employed by the spirit, and we stand on God's unchanging word. The spirit of God applies the word in our lives. And by this weapon, we can not only repel the enemy, but we can also attack him.

Three times the devil tried to tempt the Lord Jesus, and each time, the Lord Jesus used the word of God. And the best defense against temptation is a good offense.

[15:19] And the offensive weapon is the sword of the spirit, of the word of God, the Bible. Show me a worn out Bible, and I'll show you a strong Christian. The Bible is like a compass for us.

It gives us direction. It always points the believer in the right direction. The word of God, it's living, and it's powerful. Verse 18 we read, Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

As E.M. Bounds has said, what the church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use, men of prayer, men mighty in prayer.

The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but upon men. He does not anoint plans, but men, men of prayer. We are called to pray, to pray in the spirit, to pray through, to pray spiritually.

May we pray, as did Daniel in the lion's den, in the midst of the battle zone, what better place than to pray, to depend upon our Lord. And notice we are called to a perseverance, a perseverance.

[16:33] When the coal truck arrived at a little house in London, there was a ton of coal delivered on the footpath, and this little London girl came out with a small shovel and began to carry the coal into the basement, the storage.

And when a neighboring man was watching, he spoke to her. He said, You'll never be able to get it all in. She replied, Oh, I will, sir, if I work long enough.

Perseverance. Perseverance is much needed. It's been said that the test of a person's character is what it takes to stop him. Some people retreat as soon as the first shot is fired, while others fight through, battle after battle, with no thought of giving up.

Satan will try every means to discourage and to deter us, reminding us of defeats and dangers, and sending every possible object in our way to destroy our assurance in Christ. So we must persevere, saints.

Pray and keep on praying. Keep watching with all perseverance. Notice it says, to wear all the armor. You shall be able to quench all the fiery darts, praying always, with all prayer, and with all perseverance.

[17:45] So, saints of God, as Timothy was exhorted by Paul, in 2 Timothy 4, verse 7, Paul says, If you are one who loves the appearing of the Lord, and looking forward to his returning to this planet to take his people home, then you are granted that same assurance, that same joyful expectation of that crown, that crown of those who love his appearing.

Paul says, In closing to Timothy, he says, Fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life. Friends, we must wear the armor.

Persevere. Press on. Fight on. Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. This spiritual warfare is not some theory or concept that is not engaged in life.

It is the everyday walk of the Christian. And we have the assurance of victory as we know that he has won the battle. And he is with us.

He is our shield. And he will hold you safe and sure through every battle that you face ahead. God bless you. Amen. Thank you.