

ARM YOURSELVES! Part 2

ORDERS FROM HEADQUARTERS

Ephesians 6:10-13

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

Here is a letter from the United States Government notifying a person that they are being drafted into the U.S. Military:

“Greeting:

You are hereby ordered for induction into the Armed Forces of the United States, and to report at (place) on (date) at (time) for forwarding to an Armed Forces Induction Station.

(Signed by local Draft Board member)”

Ephesians 6:10-12 is a mobilization order, a clear-cut call to arms. We are engaged in spiritual warfare. If we are to be victorious against the enemies of our souls, then we must be prepared for that battle and be ready to go to war.

In concluding his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul warns the Ephesian believers to take the spiritual warfare seriously. If we are wise we too will take his alerts to heart and *“put on the whole armor of God.”*

As we continue to introduce this passage of Scripture, there are four thoughts in these verses that we must be clear minded about. These will be addressed in a general way in this message and more specifically in messages to follow.

THE COMRADES THAT PAUL ADDRESSES.

“Finally, my brethren.”

Paul includes all of the *“brethren”* in his concluding remarks about the Christian’s warfare. There are no deferments, exclusions or furloughs from Christ’s Army. If we are in His family, we are in the fight. If you are a Christian, you are in the band of believers in Jesus Christ, a member of the “Believers Battalion.”

Christians are comrades in a common cause sharing the same faith and should be involved in the same fight, remembering that *“we do not wrestle against flesh and blood”*, that is against one another but *“against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”* That is, this is a spiritual warfare, not a physical one. We do not battle one another; we battle a common enemy, the devil and his host of demons.

Illustration: When David went to take food to his brothers who were fighting Goliath and the Philistines, his older brother, Eliab, rebuked David: *“Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab’s anger was aroused against David, and he said, “Why did you come down here? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your pride and the insolence of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle.”* (I Samuel 17:28)

David’s answer is classic. He replied, *“Is there not a cause?”* (I Samuel 17:29) David recognized that the battle being waged against the Philistines was God’s Cause – God’s people were being intimidated by the Devil’s crowd. David chose to get involved in God’s Cause.

We should be jealous for the cause of Christ and His Church and unite with our brothers and sisters in resisting and repulsing our common enemy, the Devil and his hosts. Do you remember the hymn, *Onward Christian Soldiers*? The first verse goes like this:

“Like a mighty army moves the church of God;
Brothers, we are treading where the saints have trod.
We are not divided, all one body we,
One in hope and doctrine, one in charity.”

We are indeed “all one body” but we are not all actively involved in advancing the Cause of Christ Jesus, the Captain of our salvation. (Heb. 2:10) Everyone needs a cause that is greater than their life. If they don’t have it, then their life is purposeless.

It has been said that until we have something worth dying for, we have nothing worth living for. The greatness of the cause determines the degree of commitment to the cause. We Christians have a cause worth dying for. Not every soldier is called upon to die or be on the front lines, but each is to be totally involved in the war.

When Paul addressed the Christians in Ephesus, his concluding remarks began with the words, *“Finally, my brethren.”* He was including every child of God in his remarks for all Christians have the same enemy, are attacked by the same foul forces, are in the same conflict and are expected to be armed and on the alert at all times.

THE COUNSEL THAT PAUL GIVES.

“be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.”

The word “be strong” means to “be empowered.” We are encouraged to let the Lord empower us to fight the battle. My life’s verse is Philippians 4:13, *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”* The Lord has taken up residency in our hearts in the Person of the Holy Spirit and we have the Source of strength within us.

“Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” That is the supreme essential for spiritual warfare. Those are great words to enter into battle with! We are called to be strong in the Lord, to receive our strength for the battle from the Lord.

God told Joshua three times to *“be strong and of a good courage”*:

- *“Be strong and of good courage”* - I will give you the land – (Joshua 1:6)
- *“Only be strong and very courageous”* – and you will prosper – (Joshua 1:7)
- *“Be strong and of good courage”* – I am with you – (Joshua 1:9)

Throughout the Old Testament, when the Israelites would go to battle, God made it clear that He was the reason. When Gideon put an army together to fight the Midianites, he had an army of over 30,000 men. Listen to what God said to Gideon: *“The people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands, for Israel would become boastful, saying, ‘My own power has delivered me.’”* (Judges 7:2)

What was the result? God stripped Gideon’s army down to 300 men! Then, in the strength of the Lord they won a great victory over the Midianites and God received the glory. When we conquer sin and Satan in our spiritual warfare it will be by the Lord’s enablement and we must be careful to give Him the praise for it is not by our might or power but by the Spirit of the Lord that we overcome. It is *“Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the LORD of hosts.”* (Zechariah 4:6)

Paul reminds us: *“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.”* (2 Cor. 10:3, 4)

Charles H. Spurgeon said, “What a wonderful power that is! The power of flesh is weakness and the power of man is fading, but the power of God is almighty and unchangeable! And if we can be girt about with this power, there is scarcely any limit to what we may successfully attempt.” (Exposition By C. H. Spurgeon: Ephesians 6:10-24)

The song, *“Soldiers of Christ Arise”* admonishes us as follows:

“Soldiers of Christ, arise
And put your armor on,
Strong in the strength which God supplies
Through His eternal Son;

Strong in the Lord of hosts,
And in His mighty power,
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts
Is more than conqueror.”

THE CONFLICT THAT PAUL HIGHLIGHTS.
“we wrestle..... stand therefore....” (vs.12 & 14)

Paul reminds us that there is a struggle going on between Satan and his Kingdom and God and His Kingdom. Believers, as citizens of God’s Kingdom, are right in the middle of the conflict. We are to take our stand for God and His cause.

A. The Struggle In Which We Are Engaged. “we wrestle” (v.12)

Have you ever wondered why you have such a difficult time living an overcoming life for the Lord? Why there are times and situations in which you are overcome and struggle to be all that you know you ought to be for the Lord and accomplish all you want to accomplish for the Lord Who loved you and gave Himself for you? Did you ever consider that the resistance you experience and the struggle you are having is because the Christian life is a warfare?

Jude writes of this conflict as follows: “*contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*” (Jude v.3) The words “*contend earnestly*” is one word in the Greek language. This word does not occur anywhere else in the New Testament. It is a word used in the Grecian athletic games. It means to struggle for or about anything; to put forth earnest effort; to agonize as one does who is engaged in strenuous physical effort. The reference here, of course, is only to contention by argumentation and reasoning, not by physical encounter.

Our struggle is not against flesh and blood. People are not really our enemies. Sometimes we think that the incorrigibles, unprincipled, unrestrained, immoral people, who advocate evil are really our enemies. No, they are just dupes. They are just pawns. They are just people that the devil uses that belong to his kingdom.

We’re not struggling against flesh and blood but against spirit beings, the rulers, powers, spiritual forces that reside in the heavens around us. Christians are engaged in a real struggle and our struggle is not with humans, but with supernatural forces, a hierarchy of demons that operate in the atmosphere around us.

The Christian life is not a spectator sport. When we identify with Jesus Christ we become a target of Satan and we are engaged in a battle. The Christian life is a battleground, not a playground! There is no way of contending for the faith without fighting against error. There is a fight to be fought. Paul said, “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*” (II Tim. 4:7)

Let us all be aware that we are in a conflict that will never end as long as we are upon this earth. There is a spiritual warfare in which every genuine Christian must be engaged. “*We wrestle*”, we struggle. This is par for the Christian life. And the Devil sees to it that it is so.

B. The Stand That We Must Take. “stand therefore” (v.14)

So, what are we to do? Give in and stop wrestling and struggling against the forces of evil and the devil, the foe of our souls? No! We are dressed up in the armor of God and we are to take our stand against everything that is anti-God.

“Standing firm” is a military term that means, “to hold on to a position, to not lose ground gained.” We are told we are to put on the full armor of God so that we will be able to “*stand*” firmly against the schemes of the devil.

We have heard the clique’: “If you don’t stand for something, you’ll fall for anything!” As Christian soldiers we must stand up for Jesus! Every one who is Christ’s is either standing up for His Cause or is a by-stander!

We do not have to understand all that is happening in the holy warfare. We are not expected to understand but we are commanded to “stand”. Never question God. We do not have to understand in order to stand. We who have placed our trust and hope in God leave the outcome to Him. Therefore, let us ask ourselves:

- Am I standing firm in the faith? 1Cor.16:13 - *“Watch, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”*
- Am I standing in Christian liberty? Gal. 5:1 - *“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free....”*
- Am I standing for the truth? Eph.6:14- *“Stand therefore having girded your waist with truth.”*
- Am I standing against evil? Eph. 6:11 - *“Stand against the wiles of the devil.”*
- Am I standing aggressively? Eph. 6:13 - *“Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”*
- Am I standing in Christian unity? Phil. 1:27 - *“Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”*
- Am I standing in the Lord? Phil. 4:1 - *“Stand fast in the Lord.”*
- Am I standing in the will of God? Col. 4:12 - *“Stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.”*

J. H. Jowett wrote: “There are some people who never seem to take a stand. They are always changing their ground. They shift and they budge, they slip and they slide. Life is just a dodging of difficulties and never a magnificent facing of the foe.”

To “stand fast” does not mean for us to sit back and wait to be attacked, it is a military term meaning “to carry out all that your duty requires of you to have victory.” We are to do our duty and God will do His part. We have examples in the Bible of people standing firm such as David, Joshua, Gideon, Daniel, Stephen and Paul, etc. All these stood their ground and gained ground in the face of evil.

The steadfast devotion of Martin Luther to the Lord Jesus and his faithfulness to the Word of God set for us an admirable example. Luther, at the Diet of Worms, unflinchingly championed the cause of Christ and the truths of grace. “Here I stand,” he said, “I cannot do otherwise, God help me. Amen!” Boldly he challenged the influential and corrupt powers of the Church and State, and undaunted went on to win a mighty victory! Find your place on the fighting line, not on the side lines!

“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 army shall He lead,
Till every foe is vanquished, and Christ is Lord indeed.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus, the trumpet call obey;
Forth to the mighty conflict, in this His glorious day.
Ye that are brave now serve Him against unnumbered foes;
Let courage rise with danger, and strength to strength oppose.”

THE CULPRIT THAT PAUL WARNS ABOUT.

“against the wiles of the devil.”

One of the first rules of warfare is: “know your enemy.” It is the enemy, the devil, highlighted in Ephesians 6. It is Satan’s kingdom in opposition to Christ’s kingdom. Kingdom’s in conflict! We are in a spiritual warfare and if we are not properly prepared, we are sitting ducks.

A. The Devil, Our Foe.

We are all soldiers in God’s army. We are in a battle. Before our salvation we were at war with God, rebelling against Him. After we were saved we became enlisted in another war, the war for truth and righteousness. The enemy, the devil, is now our arch enemy. We must understand that the devil not only hates God and His cause, but he hates all who are God’s and seeks their defeat.

The title “Devil” means *“slanderer, accuser.”* We get our word “diabolical” from it. His name reveals his character. Since he made his first appearance upon the pages of the Bible, the devil has been in the business of lying, slandering and accusing the people of God. (Gen. 3:1-6; Job 1, 2.) Sometimes he goes about as roaring lion and is very obvious, *“seeking whom he may devour”* (I Peter 5:8); at other times he appears in a more subtle way as an *“angel of light”* but he never ceases to resist us. He is constantly at war with truth and righteousness and seeks to hinder the spiritual progress of God’s children. Those who have not put on the *“whole armor of God”* are his prime targets.

The word *“wiles”* in verse 11 is the same word from which we get our English word *“method”*. It refers to craftiness and trickery. He is a shrewd enemy. The devil is called deceiver, liar, murderer, accuser, tempter, destroyer, the evil one. His methods of working are described by such words as *“wiles”* (Eph. 6:1), *“devices”* (II Cor. 2:11), *“snares”* (II Tim. 2:26). Jesus calls him the father of lies in John 8:44 - *“You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”*

B. The Devil, His Forces.

Notice verse 12 - *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*

In this verse, Paul describes other spirit enemies. He had already mentioned the “devil” but he has many allies called, *“spiritual hosts of wickedness.”* There are various divisions of evil beings in Satan’s kingdom. There are ranks of evil beings: principalities, powers, world rulers of darkness, spiritual hosts of wickedness, in heavenly places.

The devil has a very organized system. These rulers and powers are rankings of demons. They’re all structured like the holy angels. We are told of Michael “the archangel” (Jude v.9) and there are lesser angels, etc.

Believers are told to give him no place (Eph. 4:27), to resist him (I Peter 5:9; James 4:7), and to stand against him (Eph. 6:11). Therefore, beware! We must not forget that we are not home in heaven yet and in the meantime we are in enemy territory.

Satan is this world's god (2 Cor. 4:4) and his purpose is to oppose our Savior and make life miserable for His followers. He cannot rob us of the destination of heaven when we die, but he tries to rob us of heavenly blessings that God wants us to enjoy here and now on the earth. Therefore, we must always be on guard. Know your enemy, prepare to fight him. Don't give up ground; do not be seduced by his lies.

Conclusion

These are orders from headquarters. "A headquarters is the entity at the top of a corporation that takes full responsibility for the overall success of the corporation, and ensures Corporate Governance." (From Wikipedia) Our governance comes from God. When we ignore or disobey His orders we show disrespect and disregard for Him. We serve a good, just and righteous God and we can trust Him. Also, we can obey by being a good soldier in His army. We are on the victory side! We are not fighting *for* the position of victory, we are fighting *from* the position of victory! The Captain of our salvation has already won the victory for us. All we have to do is dress up in the armor, stand firm for Christ, resist the devil and he will flee from us. (James 4:7)

"Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus going on before.
Christ, the royal Master, leads against the foe;
Forward into battle see his banners go!"

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