

Ready for Battle – Ephesians 6:10-18

On Thursday we will celebrate Remembrance Day, a day to honour those who fought for our freedoms: those who died doing so, those who were injured or broken because of that service, and those who continue to fight even to this day. This is not a day to glorify war, but a day to remember the terrible cost of war on those who fight the battles. And for some I am sure it is a day to remember how hard it was for them as civilians in a war zone.

This kind of conflict and bloodshed is not what God desires for people. This is why the picture of our future when Jesus reigns on earth during the millennium describes it like this:

Isa 11:9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

Sadly, we live in a world that has been infected by sin, leaving people selfish and jealous and angry and cruel and even heartless at times, which has led to all kinds of conflicts and wars. Jesus called his disciples to be peacemakers, and commanded them not to kill, so war has always posed a problem for believers.

Early church history records soldiers leaving the army when they converted to Christianity. They saw their duties as a soldier in conflict with their Christian faith. These soldiers usually served under pagan leaders, as Christians did not hold positions of power.

However, as the church grew and spread, and gained converts from the lowliest slave to the emperor of Rome, everything changed. Now Christian kings were calling men to arms. What should a Christian do? Should Christians be involved in fighting wars?

This morning we will not debate the issue of fighting to defend your country and family, but I will tell you that scripture makes it clear that if you are a child of God, if you are a born again Christian, you are already in a war. The battle has always raged around you, but when you said “Yes” to Jesus your spiritual eyes were opened and you began to see that what once looked like temptation, or troubles or challenges were actually attacks from a very powerful enemy.

The Apostle Paul has no doubt that there is a powerful enemy that must be resisted by the Christian. So intense is the battle that Paul describes the Christian in terms of a soldier equipped and prepared for war. This is the context of our passage.

The first thing we notice in our text for today is the fact that the believer is never to do battle alone. To try and take on the enemy in our own strength and power is to set ourselves up for failure. Look again to what is said in verse 20:

“Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.”

Though the enemy is strong, he is no match for God. Some people have mistakenly described the spiritual battle that we are a part of as a battle between equals, and sometimes one will win, and sometimes the other will win.

Make no mistake: God always wins.

But what about times when bad things happen to good people? Christians have suffered, have fallen from the faith, have lost in the battle. Why?

First, it could be they never called on God for help.

In Mark 9 we read about the disciples trying to cast a demon out of a young boy but failing. Jesus comes and immediately the boy is set free of the demon. When the disciples ask Jesus why they could not cast out the demon Jesus says that this kind comes out only by prayer and fasting. In other words, you can command the demons all you want, but you have no authority without Jesus. It is when you ask Jesus to help you that the battle is won.

Some people do not believe in demon possession or Satanic attacks. I was surprised to read commentators who said the demon possession happened only when Jesus walked this earth. They even claimed that the Apostle Paul does not mention casting out demons so it was not happening in the early church.

I wonder if they read the book of Acts where we are told the disciples constantly did battle with demonic forces, casting out demons and confronting evil of all kinds. According to Acts 16, the Apostle Paul ended up in jail because he cast a demon out of a girl who was given the gift of prophesy by a demon. (Acts 16:18) In Acts 19 God was working so powerfully through Paul that if he even touched a piece of cloth and it was given to a demon possessed person the demon had to leave (Acts 19:12). Paul knew there were demons still at work after Jesus was resurrected, but he also knew those demons must leave at the name of Jesus.

Second, God sometimes allows Satan to bring troubles into our lives to test our faith.

The Apostle Peter writes in his letter to the churches:

⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

In the Old Testament book of Job we read of a man who is severely tested by Satan, and though he does not know it, God has allowed these things to happen in his life. Satan could do nothing if God had not permitted it. In the end Job comes out of his testing stronger in his faith and closer to God.

It does not matter why we are under attack; the answer is still the same: call on the name of the Lord and you will be saved. Call to Jesus and he will bring the victory.

The Apostle goes on to say we must put on the armour of God. He will describe that armour as truth, righteousness, the Gospel of peace, faith, salvation and the Word of God. He describes each of these as a piece of the armor a soldier would wear to war. It is a battle. It is real. Satan is real and he still attacks Christians today.

But note what God says to us through the Apostle Paul in verse 11. We put on the armour so that when Satan attacks we can stand up against his schemes. In verse 13 we read:

13 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 your ground, and when the battle is done, you are still standing! That is what God has in mind for his followers. He has provided victory for us through our faith in Jesus and the victory he has already won on the cross of Calvary and the empty tomb. There Satan was defeated once and for all. And Christians know this and stand not on their own ingenuity or strength, but on the victory of Jesus.

As Paul writes to the Corinthians:

14 Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. (2 Corinthians 2:14)

Finally, the Apostle identifies our enemy. In verse 12 he says.

12 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.

Charles B. Williams translates it: “For our contest is not with human foes alone, but with the rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers of this dark world; that is, with the spirit forces of evil challenging us in the heavenly contest” (WMS).

This 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 (Rev. 12:4), and Daniel wrote that Satan’s angels struggle against God’s angels for control of the affairs of nations (Dan. 10:13–20). A spiritual battle is going on in this world, and in the sphere of “the heavenlies,” and you and I are a part of this battle. Knowing this makes “walking in victory” a vitally important thing to us—and to God.¹

Make no mistake, God is telling us through the Apostle Paul, you are at war. The enemy is real, and he is crafty, deceptive, and seeks only to destroy lives. The good news is we follow Jesus who came that we might have life, and have it more abundantly.

Sometimes we forget that the evil all around us has a source. Yes, it often comes from the hearts of evil people. We have a drug problem in every community across the land because there are wicked men and women who produce those drugs to make money off of addicted peoples. But who makes men and women so evil that they will produce and sell products that destroy lives? That is the work of Satan and his demons. This is a spiritual problem that has become a physical mental and social problem.

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [*The Bible exposition commentary*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 57). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Governments do things that harm people, rather than helping them. They promote agendas that are contrary to the Word of God and then wonder why the nation is struggling financially, why there is so much anger and mistrust, why depression and suicide is out of control. They do not realize it but they are pawns being used by Satan to bring destruction into the nation. This too is a spiritual battle before it is a political one.

Even the work of terrorists, murderers, and gangs finds its source in Satan. There are people convinced today that there is a conspiracy by a few powerful people to destroy society as we know it so they can implement their agendas. Scripture has been telling us that there is such a conspiracy all along, and the source of that deception is Satan.

So many people want to fight governments and authorities and big business. That may be fine, but they are not getting to the root of the problem. As Christians we wrestle not against flesh and blood ... we know the source of the problems is not the people. They are tools being used by a greater foe. Our battle is a spiritual battle.

And it must be fought with spiritual weapons. You may write letters, protest, boycott, and sign petitions, but real change comes when God's people realize they are fighting a spiritual battle.

Some Christians deny there are demons in Canada. Some say, like the Bible scholars I read, that demon possession was a New Testament problem but not an issue today. Some Christians have bought the lie that psychology and medicine will fix what ails us. Some simply don't want to think about it, hoping all the evil will go away if we ignore it.

That won't work. God is saying to the church today, "Wake Up!"

In the 1980's God used a fiction novel called "This Present Darkness" by Frank Peretti to wake many people up to the reality of demons around us. The story is of a sleepy little town held under the power of demons until believers started to pray. Then the demons had to flee.

Through that book God reminded people that demons are real and that Christians have been given the authority in Christ to overcome their attacks. Christians were reminded that –

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. (2 Corinthians 10:4)

This past week a man walked into the book store where Lise works, high on drugs and demanding money. Looking in his eyes she could see the evil resident there. This man, though violent and out of control, was to be pitied because demons were oppressing him. It is real.

That heaviness you feel may not be just a physical thing, but an attack from the enemy. That confusion you feel may be because you may also be under attack. I believe the church is being called to remember we are still at war – and will be until the day Jesus comes to take us home.

Knowing that Christ has already conquered Satan, and that the spiritual armor and weapons are available, by faith we accept what God gives us and go out to meet the foe. **The day is evil, and the enemy is evil, but "if God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31) Amen?!**