

Ephesians #14 – SJGC
“Spiritual Warfare – Part 1”
 Ephesians 6:10-13

PATTI

Paul says at the beginning of the last chapter of Ephesians, **“Finally ...”**

Up to now Paul has been talking about the constructive side of the Christian life. The blessings Christ has won for us through the cross, and what it means to change – to put off the old life and put on the new...

He told us what it means to be filled with the Spirit, and how to work out that fulness into every area of life, especially in our relationships; in marriage and family and work.

But instead of signing off, “Sincerely, Your Friend, Paul,” he says, **“Finally...”** Because it’s important for us to know that **we’re going to be doing all this in ENEMY TERRITORY, in the context of powerful forces who are out to get us.**

I think we all know what Paul is talking about when he introduces the term, “SPIRITUAL WARFARE.” There are some days that are just evil...

days in which we sense there is some power that’s shadowing us – some force that’s taunting and jeering at us and undermining us and making us feel guilty and tempting us.
 Did you ever feel like something was out to get you?

What should you do about that?
 A lot of people just shrug it off and dismiss it as just a series of coincidences. And sometimes maybe it is... but other times, maybe not.

Another way to approach this is to get paranoid, and say, “My life is going so badly because of this person or that person.

It's the Republicans, or the Democrats.
You blame it on somebody.

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The other possibility is to start to feel bad about yourself.
"The reason everything is going wrong is that
I must be a bad person. I must be a failure.
I should have anticipated this."

But if it ever seems like someone or
something is out to get you,
maybe you're not being paranoid after all.

If you blame the problems in your life strictly on
your own failures or on other people,
you'll either hate yourself or you'll hate the world.

The most psychologically healthy thing you can do
to avoid bitterness and unnecessary guilt
is to say, "There's more to this than meets the eye."

Paul says,
**"On the evil day, put on the full armor of God,"
Realize you're struggling with more than
flesh and blood, and you will stand."**

There are three things this first verse tells us.

1. Real Christianity is a fight

You can tell a genuine Christian as much
from the warfare and conflict in their life as
from the inner peace.

The Bible is just as insistent that when you become a Christian,
warfare has started. New conflicts have begun.
Because when you go into a war by allying with
one person, you immediately make enemies
of all the people who are arrayed against your new ally.

So the way you know you're a Christian is
not only through peace, but also through conflict.
Real Christianity is a fight.

And all true saints are soldiers.

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In Matthew 11:12, Jesus says,
 “And from the days of John the Baptist until now,
 the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence,
 and the violent take it by force.”

A modern translation might say:
 “The kingdom of God advances through violence,
 and the violent take it by force.”

The Lord also said to Peter, upon his confession of
 of Jesus as the Christ, “Upon this rock I will build my
 church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.”

These verses and others like them tell us that
 there is an urgency about spiritual realities because...

Sin is like a narcotic that puts you to sleep.
 Sin makes you say, “Well, there’s always tomorrow.”
 Sin makes you think, “Moderation in all things.”

Real Christianity wakes you up to the seriousness of the situation.
 The Scripture says the way you know you’re really a Christian
 is there is a fight going on.

If you’ve been a Christian for any length of time,
 in the beginning, maybe you said,
 “I’m going to fight against this habit.
 I’m going to fight against my laziness.
 I’m going to pray more and read the bible
 every day...”

“I’m going to find one thing in that Bible reading
 that I’m NOT doing. I’m going to break bad a habit
 or start a new good habit. I’m going to be thankful
 rather than complaining.”

But that doesn’t come easy, right? Because it’s a fight!
 Think about all the times Scripture says,
 “Strive to enter in. Press on. Watch. Stand. Be strong.
 Endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Fight the good fight of faith.”

Are those things happening in your life?

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2. The battle is on many fronts

“We wrestle not with flesh and blood.”

Of course we wrestle with people sometimes.

What Paul means is we don't only wrestle with flesh and blood.

Maybe not even primarily.

Which is why sometimes when Patti and I have a strong disagreement, and things maybe become contentious because we both have strong personalities, one of us will say,

“I'm not the enemy. You're not the enemy. But there is an enemy.”

For those who are married, you're welcome.

Try that this week.

See, as long as you look at your personal challenges and the problems of the world strictly in terms of flesh and blood, you're going to continually be defeated.

It's like a general who thinks there are two divisions of enemy troops out there, and he implements a strategy based on that assumption. But what if there are four divisions instead? Inevitably there will be a defeat.

We have to stop being so simplistic about what's going on out there. Everybody fights over what we should do about our cities or about race relations.

The liberals say, “We need this, and the conservatives say, “no, we need that.” All our problems are reduced to flesh and blood.

Why am I messed up? **There's evil within me,** because I'm dishonest with myself, and

I'm clinging to things I shouldn't be clinging to.

There's evil outside of me.

My parents maybe sinned against me,
my friends sinned against me,
or this particular group sinned against me,

but then there's evil above me.

There is a hierarchy of supernatural evil that
aggravates, coordinates, and manages the evil
within you and outside of you.

Yes. If you believe God is real,
then you should have no problem
believing in a personal face of evil.

And if you like what Jesus says about loving your neighbor
the golden rule and all those things,
then you have to believe Jesus when he says,
"I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning".
You can't pick and choose.

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3. The fight against Satan is God's, but the battling is ours

We see that the fight against Satan is God's.
We see it when Jesus is tempted in
the desert and in the book of Revelation
when the dragon is thrown into the abyss.
The fight is the Lord's.

Yet we are to **"... be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power."**

Imagine you're a soldier, and you're on the front lines.
A great commander comes down to you and says,
"Tomorrow, what we're going to do is attack that fort.
What I want you to do is stand up, run and charge."

What you have to realize is that behind you,
over you, around you, and through you is going to
come immensely superior air power.
There is going to be all kinds of air power

and artillery power that's going to come over, around, and through you.

It's vastly superior to your enemy.
So if you do what I tell you, you will win."

This is what believers are engaged in when it comes to the powers of darkness. When we draw them out, they will be beaten. Your job is to get up and charge, even if you're outnumbered.

You have to fill your mind with the Power that is above and beside and around and within you .

Philippians 2 says,
"Work out your salvation in fear and trembling, for it is God at work within you both to will and to do his good pleasure."

The power of the Lord comes as you step out.

To illustrate:

Mothers carry their infants because they can't walk yet. Of course, the mother's whole goal, eventually, is to put the child down.

One day, you realize this child is ready to walk. So you stand the child up and step back, and say, "Come to me."

And the child feels like, for the first time, there's no mother. There's no parent. There's nobody here. She's teetering and tottering. She's ready to fall right on her face. How could my parent do this to me?"

Yet, the mother, the parent is saying, "I'm right there. I'm not going to let you hurt yourself. If you start to totter, I'll grab you, but the point is you have to come to me. You have to step out, or you'll never learn."

Right now, in some cases, that's how you may feel. You may feel like God has withdrawn. You may feel like there are overwhelming temptations around.

Or you're being asked to do things you've never been able to do,
and you don't feel God right at your side.

You don't feel him holding your hand.
You don't feel his power, and you say,
"God, why can't you pick me up and carry me?
Why can't you send the squadrons over top first?"

Paul says, "... be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power."
That means stepping out, filling your mind
full of the things he has promised.
You obey, and his power comes in through you.
You obey, thinking about his greatness.
Are you ready to do that?

Your Parent is there. Your General is there.
The power of your Parent will come over and around you.
The power of your General will come through you.
He will not let you fall.

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4. The Devil is mighty yet vulnerable

The Scripture actually teaches here that
there are really only two kingdoms.
There's the kingdom of **darkness** and
the kingdom of **light**.
And everybody belongs to one or the other.

Once, when Jesus was arguing with the Pharisees, He said,
"You're talking like your father the Devil,
because he's the father of lies."

The Pharisees get really upset.
They say, "We're children of Abraham."
But Jesus says, "No. You are children of darkness."

Because there are only two kingdoms,
there are therefore only two humanities or races.
There's the race that's **under the influence of supernatural evil**,
and there's the race that's **under the influence of supernatural good**.

Think of it this way. The Bible tells us when

the Devi rebelled against God, he said,
 “I will ascend. I will be as the Most High. I want to be first.”
 As a result, he fell from heaven, and Jesus says,
 “I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning!”
 Because he wanted to go up, he fell down.

Look at Jesus, though. The heart of Jesus was,
 “I will descend. Not my will but thine be done.”
 The Bible says he humbled himself,
 and, therefore, he was exalted.
 The attitude of Satan was he wanted to exalt himself,
 and, therefore, he came down.

Those are two different spiritual strands of DNA.
 Two different chromosomes, and one or the other
 is working in every single human being, and may even
 be a clue to what it means to be born again!

This means if you think you’re living for yourself,
 you’re actually falling.
 If you say, “I’m going to be my own master.
 I’m the only one who can decide what’s right and wrong for me.
 I’m the only one who can decide what to live for.
 I am independent,”

the more you decide to live for yourself,
 the more you become like your father
 because you’re giving in to that spiritual DNA. “
 I will ascend ... I will be like the most High.”

Many of the great fairy tales go along these lines.
 A witch comes and gives a child several wishes.
 She knows the more he uses those wishes f
 or selfish purposes, the more he actually
 falls under her control.

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This is a theme in fairy tales, because the more
 you live for yourself, the less control you have.
 But when we really die to ourselves and live
 for Christ, we find ourselves.

You and I are no match for the Devil.
Because he is powerful.
But also vulnerable.

If you put on the full armor of God, which we will discuss in detail next week, eventually, you will stand. Stand means to triumph. The book of Revelation tells us that Satan is on a chain. If you're a Christian, his power over you has been broken.

In the book, [The Pilgrim's Progress](#) by John Bunyan, there's a place where Pilgrim, whose name has been changed to Christian, sees lions. They're chained, and they're on both sides of the road he's supposed to walk down in order to get to the Celestial City.

Pilgrim, of course being a Christian, looks and says, "There's no way. If I walk down that path, these lions that are on both sides of the highway are going to come rushing right into the center, they'll claw me, and they'll grab me."

The advice Pilgrim gets is, "If you walk right down the center, turning not off to the right or off to the left, watch and see what happens."

Pilgrim, when he starts walking down that center, doesn't go off it an inch. All the lions come rushing to get him. Their chains pull them back. They reach out with their claws, and, sure enough, their claws on both sides can only reach up to about half an inch from him. So he walks down trembling with these claws thrashing on both sides of him.

What was John Bunyan trying to illustrate?
If you belong to the Jesus, you've been translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. Satan no longer power over you unless you veer to the right or the left.

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How do you give him power?

Demonic forces can only aggravate you.
They can play the piano, but you have to
give them the strings.

They can work on you. They can accuse you,
but only if you give them a foothold can they
master you or defeat you.

They only have the power
that you give them.

The Devil is mighty, but the Devil is vulnerable.
Are you ready for the fight?

Put on the full armor of God ...

**" Be strong in his strength,
and you will stand.**

PRAYER:

Father, help us respond to the urgency of this passage. Some of us realize that we've made peace with things in our lives that we ought to be fighting against. Some of us realize that we're not consistently putting on the armor of God or stepping out in obedience or trusting in your power. Make us bold in faith and totally dependent on your presence and promises. In Jesus' name. Amen.