8-25-19

Ephesians 6:10-13 (2)

As we read these verses, we see words like “armor”, “stand”, “struggle”, and “resist”. It sounds like a fight, it sounds like a war; and indeed, it is. These words are directed to us, as Christians; so, we get the idea that we are in a war. We are in this war whether we want to be or not; hiding from that fact will get us killed. Picture standing in the middle of a battle field while the battle is raging all around you. If you choose to ignore it and read a book, you won’t last long. In order to survive this battle, even more, to be victorious, we need to know what is going on.

Paul is telling us what is happening and what we need to do about it. All the doctrine we have studied in the book of Ephesians has given us the foundation and framework for this battle. Each of the applications Paul has given show us how to fight and survive. In these next eleven verses, we are given specific instruction, armor, and weapons; these are important for dealing with other human-beings, but more importantly, they are necessary for spiritual combat.

One of the most important things to know when fighting in a war, is who’s battle it is. Because we are people, we tend to focus on ourselves and think that we are the center everything. Because we are involved in this fight, we tend to think that it is about us. We must learn that it is not about us. The battle is God’s, and it is against satan. To be sure, this is not some great cosmic battle between two equally matched foes, such that we are waiting for the outcome. No, God is infinitely more powerful than satan whom He created. Satan has already been defeated at the cross by Jesus Christ. Yet the battle continues; and it will continue until all the purposes of God are complete.

It is natural to ask then, “If the battle is between God and satan, why are we involved?” In the first place, human-beings are God’s creation and when God made us, He declared us to be good. The devil cannot attack God directly, so he attacks His creation. He tries to destroy everything that God has made. Additionally, as Christians, we are special to God and precious in His sight. This makes us even more of a target for satan. Being as we are called by God to spread the Gospel and bring others into the kingdom of heaven, we are plundering satan’s house; now this makes us his enemy.

Satan uses us as pawns in the battle, and God uses us too. But God does not use us as pawns, He uses us to show His glory before the principalities and powers of darkness. We are weaker than these forces of darkness, so when we, by God’s strength, do not succumb to their temptations, they are defeated by what they consider nothing more than pawns. Truthfully, this is hard on us. It is not easy to resist temptation; it is not easy to deal with the hard things of this life: death, sickness, betrayal; All the things satan and his demons throw at us.

We need to step back from ourselves and look at what we get to do. We are being used to glorify the almighty God of the universe. There is no higher calling; there is no more meaningful or magnificent task that we could have, than to glorify our God, and our Saviour, Jesus Christ. We owe God glory just for who He is; add to that what He has done for us. God the Son became a man and died on our behalf and paid the infinite penalty for our sins. We who deserve eternal death in hell will receive eternal life in heaven through absolutely no merit of our own. What an honor to serve in Christ’s army.

Here is an amazing thing; no matter how miserable things get, we can’t lose. Even if it costs us our life, we can’t lose. This is because God has already won, and He takes care of us.

John 10:27-30

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”

What comfort we have here. God has us, no one is more powerful than God. Satan’s house may be plundered, but not God’s house. And we must always remember that once life on earth is over and we are in the presence of God, every tear will be wiped away and our joy will be so great that anything bad in this life will no longer be worth remembering.

To fight this fight, Paul tells us to “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.” Well, how do we do that? First, let me mention what we don’t do. There is a very common teaching that we must be careful of. It is, ‘*Let go, and let God*.’ This sounds very pious; it sounds like a way of using the Lord’s strength. It is passive; we don’t fight, we let God do it. The first question we must ask is, “If we are to let go, and let God, then why do we need to put on the full armor of God, which also includes weapons, and why do we need to be concerned with standing firm?

There are other Scriptures which show that we need to be active in the things of God. For example: In Philippians 2:12, “work out your salvation with fear and trembling”; also, in James 4:7, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” See how we are required to be active. It is activity in the strength of Christ and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, but we are to be active.

There is a very subtle problem with the idea of “*let go, and let God*.” The problem is, that it actually depends on ourselves. That part that says “let go” is something we have to do; and it is something we have to do without dependence on God. We are calling upon ourselves, in our own strength, to let go of whatever temptation or problem we are dealing with. That is different from dealing with the problem in God’s strength.

Now, can we hand something over to God? Yes; There are some things in life that are too big and are way beyond our ability to deal with. We can take these things to God in prayer and ask Him to take care of them. In this, we are still active; we are praying, which is one of the most important spiritual activities we can take part in. There is a beautiful example of this in the Old Testament. I invite you sometime to read 2 Kings 18 and 19. This is an account of king Hezekiah who tried to follow God’s commands.

The kings of Assyria had already conquered the northern tribe of Israel and carried them off captive. The Assyrian king Sennacherib attacked the southern kingdom of Judah. He destroyed most of the cities of Judah and sent an army to surround Jerusalem. Sennacherib’s officers spoke defiantly against God. In response, Hezekiah tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and entered the house of the LORD. By his act of submission and prayer to God, the armies left, due to a rumor. However, the commanders sent a letter to Hezekiah promising to return and further blasphemed God. Hezekiah’s response is recorded in 2 Kings 19:14,

Then Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it, and he went up to the house of the Lord and spread it out before the Lord.

He then prayed to God. Again, he handed it over to God, but still he was active in prayer. The result was that the angel of the LORD went out and killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers and king Sennacherib was assassinated. Sometimes we are faced with something beyond us: a loved one who refuses to believe, a spouse who had decided to leave, this nation’s fall from God’s morality. We do not try to “let go” of these things, but we do hand them over to God in prayer.

Now, to what we must do. What do we do in order to “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might”? The first thing to do is be submissive and accept that we need the strength of the Lord. We are not to go off on our own until we get in trouble and then turn to God. We don’t try to decide if what we are facing needs the Lord or if we can handle it ourselves. First and foremost, we depend on the Lord no matter how something appears to us.

We cannot match satan and his demons in anything in our own strength. They are stronger than we are. In Mark 5, we read of the man possessed by Legion who had been bound by chains and shackles but had broken both to pieces. In Acts 19, we read of the seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish priest, who tried to use Jesus’ name as a magic pronouncement to cleanse a demon possessed man. The demon “leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded”.

They can deceive us. In 2 Corinthians 11:14 we are told that satan can “disguise himself as an angel of light”. Our natural eyes and ears cannot detect this disguise, it must be spiritually discerned. The Bible shows us time and again where satan deceived people through temptation and lies. He outsmarts us; he has been practicing this for many thousands of years. The fact that we overcome such a powerful enemy is to God’s glory because we do it in His strength. So, we must understand that we are to “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might”.

So far, we are to be secure in the knowledge that we are safely in our Father’s hands, and we must realize that we need His strength. Next comes food and drink. Just as our body needs food and drink to grow and be strong, so does our spirit. In the Gospel of John, chapter 6, and starting at verse 22; Jesus tells us about how to feed our spirit so that we become strong in Him. This is a long section, so I ask you to read it on your own sometime. Jesus tells those gathered around Him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves.” Jesus also told them “I am the bread of life”.

Many people who heard Jesus say this stopped following Him; they didn’t understand what Jesus was saying. There is also the false teaching that the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper actually becomes His body and blood. Those who take these words as literal flesh and blood miss something Jesus said that is very important. It is verse 63: It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. When Jesus talks about consuming His flesh and blood, His words are spiritual.

How do we consume Him in this spiritual manner? The Bible is a spiritual book and it is the word of God. Remember that Jesus is also called “the Word”. He is the word of God manifest in flesh. The idea is to consume the Bible, read it, study it, learn it, pray it; make it a part of your very being. This is how we eat the flesh of Christ. In Hebrew thought, the life of something was in its blood. To drink the blood of Christ is to drink His life, the eternal life that He offers. It is the Holy Spirit who gives life, so when we seek the Holy Spirit and His increasing guidance in our lives, we are consuming the blood of Christ.

This is how we nourish our souls with spiritual food and drink. As the branch gets its nourishment from the vine and is part of the vine, so we get our nourishment from Jesus and we are part of Him. In this way, we become “strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might”.

There is more, but we will cover those next time. For now, dwell on these things: Assurance of our safety in God’s hands, admitting our weakness and need of God’s strength, and proper food and drink to nourish our spirits.

Prayer

Almighty God, how honored we are that You have chosen us to be the instruments that bring You glory. And we know from Your word that in so doing, we also will be rewarded with perfect everlasting life. Thank You for this privilege and Your blessings.

We know, Lord, that we are far too weak to deal with the enemy that we must face. We ask for the strength provided by the Holy Spirit that we may not fail You. May He illuminate the Scriptures for us that we are nourished by them, and continue to feed from the true vine which is Jesus Christ.

We ask for wisdom to discern those battles that we must turn over to You in prayer, and which we are to fight while depending on Your might. Thank You for the sure salvation provided by Your Son, Jesus. Even in battle, we rest in Your hands.

These things we pray in Jesus’ name

Amen