

6

We Stand Together in Spiritual Battle



QUESTION 1:

When have you been surprised by something totally unexpected?

THE POINT

We stand strong
with God's armor and
the support of others.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

A friend of mine recently prepared his house for sale. He cleaned, painted, and tastefully staged it. Pride of ownership was gleaming in every room. Buyers flooded the home and boasted of its beauty. Everything was going great until the home inspection revealed a significant problem: an army of termites was damaging the structural integrity of the floor. No amount of paint and redecorating could erase the unseen threat hidden deep beneath the visible surface. My friends eventually did sell their house. But they learned a valuable lesson

in the process: things aren't always what they seem on the outside.

Spiritually, things might look OK to the outside world, but below the surface a war rages. No one is immune to this conflict. It's not a physical war; it's a spiritual battle. Christians might not always think in those terms, but the battle is still there. Only by realizing we are in this fight can we stand against Satan and his wiles. Thankfully, God does not send His children into battle ill equipped. He provides spiritual armor by which we can engage the enemy and stand strong.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

EPHESIANS 6:10-13

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 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. 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.

A lot of people, both inside and outside the church, view the Christian life as an effort to be better people, help others, and be good neighbors. But Jesus didn't save us to make us better people; He saved us to make us new people. Jesus wants to radically transform everything in our lives. The life Jesus has called us to live is not a leisurely stroll down the religious boardwalk. The Christian life is a spiritual battle; it's open warfare for our allegiance.

In this battle, we fight against a shrewd enemy—the devil. The “devil's schemes” (v. 11) describe his tactics of craftiness and deception. Satan is cunning in the way he deals with God's children. He knows how to spin things to his advantage and our demise. And, he does it subtly—behind the scenes—primarily by twisting God's truth. He tries to convince us that God's way is not best. His

goal is for us to conform to the ways of the world rather than submit to Christ and allow Him to conform us to the character and plan of God.

In the garden of Eden, Satan declared war on God's people by twisting His word and asking, “Did God really say?” (Gen. 3:1). The enemy has been using that same devious strategy ever since. The battle is fought over our allegiance and worship. Will we believe God or believe the world? Will we live for self or live for Christ?

QUESTION 2:

Where do you see spiritual battles raging in the world today?

Christians are most assuredly involved in a war of eternal proportions, but it's an invisible fight. Throughout church history, Christians have mistakenly taken up arms against all sorts of people in the name of Jesus. But our fight is not a fight against people of other religions. Neither is it a political fight against governments or political parties. And it's not a provincial fight against another country. The fight we face is not a visible, physical war; it's an invisible spiritual battle.

If anyone could feel justified in fighting against people, it would be Paul. He had faced "prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again" (2 Cor. 11:23)—all at the hands of people. But this battered and bruised apostle pointed away from physical attacks against other people; he called us to be vigilant in a spiritual battle.

Allegiance to God requires vigilance, but thankfully we're not alone. The power of the gospel empowers us to stand.



EPHESIANS 6:14-17

¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Spiritual warfare certainly warrants an appropriate level of seriousness, but Christ-followers have no reason to be afraid. God hasn't deployed us into battle wearing flip-flops and holding a broomstick. In addition to informing us that we are in a spiritual battle

where the stakes are monumental, Paul also revealed that God equips us and protects us. Therefore, we can stand firm with no fear.

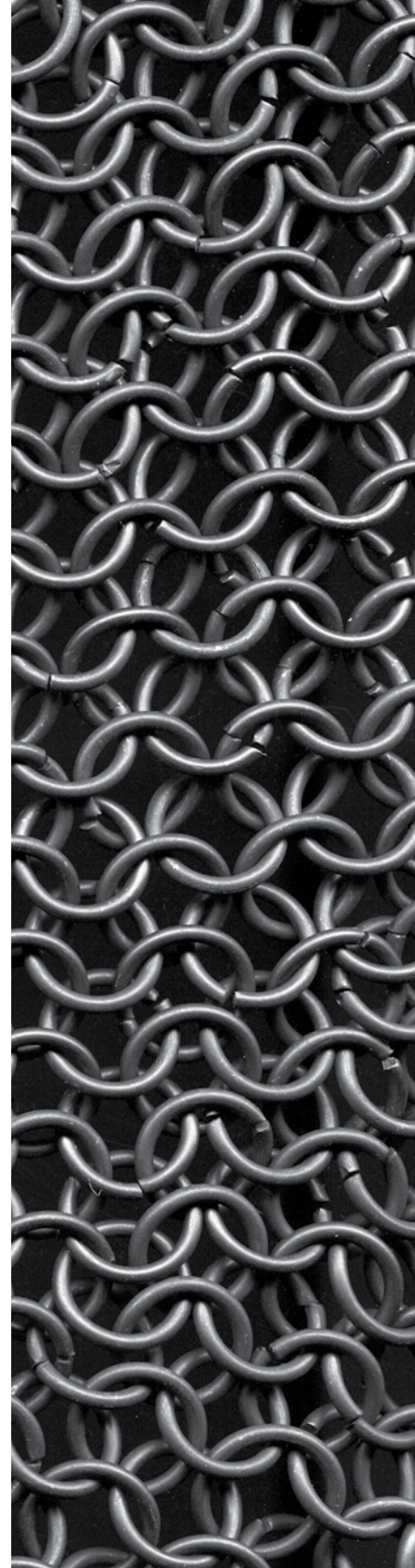
Since our battle is not a physical struggle, no physical weapon will do. Spiritual battles

require spiritual resources. Not just any spiritual resource will do either. We need God's resources for the battle at hand. As Christians, we can be confident that our God abundantly supplies spiritual resources. He promises to supply everything we need to fight the wiles of the enemy. And He promises to protect us from spiritual harm until we see Him face to face. Let's take a deeper look at some of the resources with which God supplies us.

- ▶ **God supplies His protection.** Using a Roman soldier's armor as a metaphor, Paul wrote that God sufficiently clothes us for battle through the spiritual resources Jesus provides. Paul didn't tell us to put on *our* armor; this is God's armor. Rather than shrinking back in fear before the enemy, we can stand in confidence because God protects us with His armor.
- ▶ **God supplies His people.** From this passage, we can infer another resource God provides His people for battle—one another! God doesn't deploy us into spiritual battle alone. We should not expect much success in winning the spiritual battle by ourselves. We need one another—the body of Christ—standing together against the schemes of the enemy.
- ▶ **God supplies His power.** Let's circle back to the earlier verses and remember that undergirding all the resources God has given us is His power. Nowhere was the power of God more evident than on the cross where Jesus died and in the tomb where Jesus was resurrected. Now consider this: through the power of the gospel, the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the grave also lives inside of us! The same power that raised Jesus from the grave both saves your soul and empowers you to stand in the face of the enemy. You can stand against the enemy because Satan has already lost. Jesus won the battle the day He rose from the grave!

QUESTION 3:

What can we learn from these verses about our role in spiritual battles?



EPHESIANS 6:18-20

¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. ¹⁹ Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

QUESTION 4:

What are some practical ways we can prepare for spiritual battle?

Since the Christian life is a spiritual battle for our allegiance, that truth compels us to unite together through prayer. We see several truths in verses 18-20 about the way we should pray.

- ▶ **Pray all the time.** Prayer isn't something we do only on Sunday mornings or before meals. We are to pray "on all occasions" (v. 18). Christians should set aside a time every day that they devote entirely to prayer. But we also should pray throughout the day.
- ▶ **Pray in the Spirit.** We pray "in the Spirit" because prayer is a form of worship, and God desires that His people worship Him in Spirit and in truth (John 4:24). The Spirit of God lives inside us enabling us to know God, worship God, and pray to God.
- ▶ **Pray with engaged minds.** As we pray we are to "be alert and always keep on praying." One way to engage our minds in prayer is by keeping a prayer journal.

Praying through different categories on different days engages our minds during prayer.

- ▶ **Pray for the church.** Paul also told us to pray "for all the Lord's people." We have a responsibility to pray for the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- ▶ **Pray for the gospel's advance.** Whether it's for our church leaders, church members, or missionaries, we should pray for them as Paul asked the Ephesians to pray for him.
- ▶ **Pray for the persecuted.** At the moment of his writing, Paul was in prison, "an ambassador in chains" (v. 20). Believers all over the world today experience similar suffering. Paul wanted boldness to speak regardless of his situation. As the body of Christ, praying with and for one other is the greatest support we have to give.

QUESTION 5:

How have you seen our group make a difference in a spiritual battle?

POWER, PROTECTION, AND PEOPLE

Think about a struggle in your life. It might be a sinful habit, an anxiety, or anything else that's keeping you from experiencing God's desire for your life.

Based on what you've learned in this session, answer these questions:

What power can I access to deal with this?

What protection has God given me to fight this?

Who is fighting this alongside me?

*“He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.”*

ISAIAH 40:29

LIVE IT OUT

What will you do to stand with the body of Christ in the face of spiritual battle? Choose one of the following applications:

- ▶ **Take your stand.** Through prayer, commit yourself anew to standing firm in the strength of the Lord in spiritual battle.
- ▶ **Stand with your church.** Take spiritual ownership of your church by praying regularly for your pastor(s), teacher(s), and fellow church members. Begin a prayer journal as a guide to help you pray.
- ▶ **Stand with the nations.** Research the global church including missionary needs, unreached people groups, and persecution. The following websites are valuable resources to help shape your mind and your prayers: imb.org, joshuaproject.net, and operationworld.org.

When we come to Christ for salvation, He gives us a new identity and a new family in His church. In that family, we pray, support, encourage, and strengthen one another as we stand together in spiritual battle.