

Spiritual Warfare Is Real, Difficult, and Dangerous

By [Jason Jackson](#)

We are in the fight of our lives. But standing at the eighteenth hole on a gorgeous spring morning, one might hardly feel in danger. This conflict, however, is very real. Paul lays emphasis on the reality of this struggle, stressing that it is both difficult and dangerous. Will we never seriously put on the whole armor of God if we do not believe that this spiritual battle is real, difficult, and dangerous? Charles Hodge expressed it like this: “Salvation, however gratuitous, is not to be obtained without great effort” (**Ephesians**, Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1994, p. 210).

Be Strong in the Lord

When Paul outlines the blessedness of the gospel in Ephesians 1-3, he intends to motivate us to live like God desires (Eph 4-6) — in the church, before the world, and within our families — regardless of the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Paul’s concluding incentive is found in Ephesians 6:10-20, and it begins with the following command: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might” (Eph. 6:10).

The term “finally” identifies a transition and a conclusion. Paul’s final thought identifies the *need* and *source* for strength.

“Be strong” translates a word that means to be strengthened, be empowered. The verb is in the present tense form, demonstrating the abiding need for this strength. The need for the Lord’s power is constant, for the battle rages.

The verb is passive, which indicates that the strength is supplied from without; it is a power beyond our own ability to muster. “Be made strong,” Paul implores.

It is also noteworthy that this term is in the imperative mood, signifying the *personal responsibility* required to utilize the divine might. This power must be appropriated; it is there for the taking by the one who sees its necessity.

“You must see to it that you continue to let yourself be empowered,” Paul says, “in the Lord.” Not merely “by the Lord,” although that is true. But “in the Lord,” which is being in fellowship with Christ, with all of the duties and blessings associated therewith. This power is to be known, and an understanding of it is something for which we should pray (Eph. 1:16-19). The more we know about the Lord, the more we value our Savior, the stronger we will be.

Put on the Whole Armor of God

Ephesians 6:11 describes how the strength — the power that corresponds to his might — is employed. “Be strong in the Lord,” Paul affirms. Then he states, “Put on the whole armor of God.” The power of which Paul speaks comes from being equipped by God for the battle. The spiritual body armor will equip the soldier so that he can stand firm in the fight (vv. 11,13,14).

Every component is important, and because it is the armor of God, it is effective. Only by using God’s armor, his strength and his power, can we persevere in the conflict. Without the divine supplies, we are fodder for the forces of evil. Without this preparedness, we cannot stand.

We must stand against the “wiles of the devil.” The word “wiles” translates the term *methodeia*. This noun is unknown in Greek literature until Paul’s use of the term in Ephesians 4:14 and 6:11. *Methodeia* “can be defined as the well-thought-out, methodical art of leading astray, what we would call ‘machinations’” (Ceslas Spicq, **Theological Lexicon of the New Testament**, Transl. and ed. by James D. Ernest, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994, Vol. 2, p. 462).

The devil has many methods as evidenced by the plural use of the word; he has “wiles.” Neither Paul, nor Peter (1 Pet. 5:8), intended for us to underestimate this infamous foe. But we “are able to stand against” his diabolical stratagems when we put on the panoply (from the Greek term for “whole armor”) of God.

The Spiritual Warfare

Paul begins the next verse with the term “for” (Grk. *gar*), explaining the conflict’s nature. The power of God is necessary because the wiles of the devil involve a spiritual struggle, reinforced by the spiritual hosts of wickedness. Paul identifies the devil’s allies when he writes, “For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against

the powers, against world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (v. 12).

This is an intense, close-quarters battle — a wrestling. While we may be tempted and tried through other human beings, Paul intends for us to identify the real source of the conflict. These enemies of God and man are described in a four-fold manner, indicating that they have a sphere of influence and a power to utilize.

These tyrants operate in “this darkness,” an allusion to their antagonism and opposition to God. They are spiritual ones of wickedness — an insinuation of their choice to pursue rebellion and evil (cf. 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Mt. 25:41).

This battle is as real as the devil himself. To deny the existence of the devil is a flat rejection of the Bible’s divine inspiration. The Lord said that eternal fire was prepared for “the devil and his angels” (Mt. 25:41). He is Satan, the adversary; he is the devil, our accuser — the enemy of God and man. He is our enemy, the serpent, the dragon, the always-tempting one, the deceiver, the father of lies, a murderer from the beginning, ruler of this world, and prince of the power of the air (1 Pet. 5:8; Mt. 13:25; Rev. 12:10; Rom. 16:20; Rev. 20:2; Mt. 4:3; 1 Thes. 3:5; Jn. 8:44; 12:31; Eph. 2:2). And he is not alone in his evil schemes (Mt. 25:41). These created beings are subject to the sovereignty of God, exercise only limited authority, are fallen and condemned, and will ultimately be defeated by the Lord (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Heb. 2:16; 1 Cor. 15:24-25). They will suffer eternal punishment (Mt. 25:41).

The warfare is clearly understood through the devil’s actions throughout history. In the garden of Eden, he brought upon mankind the curse of death. In Bethlehem, he hoped to kill man’s Savior — the infant Christ. In the wilderness, he tempted the Lord to abandon his mission, and in the garden of Gethsemane, he hoped betrayal would demoralize and deliver him. On Calvary, he hoped to isolate him, but on the resurrection morning, the devil’s head was stomped, and his days are numbered. Put on the armor of God, and Satan cannot defeat you (Eph. 5:13; 1 Jn. 5:18), for our great God and Savior the Lord Jesus Christ has been victorious, having conquered him who had power over death, that is the devil (Heb. 2:14). Christ Jesus has the keys of death and hades (Rev. 1:18).

The Armor of God

Paul rehearses that which the child of God must *put on, keep on, and rely on*. The soldier of Christ must gird his waist with truth, put on the breastplate of righteousness, have his feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, take up the shield of faith, take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Eph. 6:14-17).

The adversary plans to deceive the *mind*. How easy it is to get someone to go along with something, as long as they think it is alright. “You will not surely die,” the devil lied (Gen. 3:4). And he is still lying, convincing people to question God’s word. We need, therefore, to fasten on the belt of truth, by having a love, knowledge of, and belief in the truth (2 Thes. 2:10; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Thes. 2:13).

The tempter will attack the *will* as well as the mind. We cannot continue in sin, but we must wholly dedicate ourselves to righteous living in order to have the protection available with the breastplate of the righteousness of God (Rom. 6:1ff).

The devil hopes to weaken our resolve, but the *gospel that provides peace* equips us with firm spiritual footing.

The evil one wants to destroy our hope and diminish our convictions, but the shield of faith will quench all his fiery darts. But we must lift it up. We must believe what God reveals and do what the Lord requires. *This is biblical, shield-like faith.*

Satan would tempt us to minimize the importance of salvation. He would like for us to think of it as a past experience only. Paul encourages us, however, to recall and consider the meaning of salvation today. We are saved by the grace of God through faith, and therein we stay. We have had our access by faith into the grace in which we abide, and *we must remain in it* (Rom. 5:1-2). If, at any time, we rely on our own merit, we are severed from Christ and fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4; cf. 1 Jn. 1:7-9).











If we fail to spiritually develop, Peter says that it is because we have forgotten the cleansing of our old sins (2 Pet. 1:9; Acts 2:38). Salvation! Receive it and be moved by the great love wherewith he loved us, and salvation constantly appreciated will be your helmet.

The sword of the Spirit is the word of God. The Spirit supplies the cutting power, because these are the words of God (cf. Heb. 4:12). The Christian should not underestimate the power of this weapon. It is indispensable. It is, in reality, the source from which all these spiritual attributes are obtained. It is how we learn the truth. It reveals God's plan of justification and righteousness. It unfolds the gospel plan, and thereby is the source our faith (Rom. 10:17). Through it, we are saved (Jas. 1:21).

By reading four to five chapters a day, one can read through the Old Testament once and the New Testament twice in a year. Only by giving it our time and affection will we be like an unmovable, beautiful, fruitful tree (Ps. 1). Or, in the metaphor of Ephesians 6, one must wield the word of God, or die the second death.

Every preacher, elder, deacon, mother, father, and teenager — every member of the Lord's church who neglects the word of God, needs to repent and ask the Lord's pardon. Put your eyes on the book and the book in your heart, "that I might not sin against thee" (Ps. 119:11). This battle is real, difficult, and dangerous. We ought to take our sword and armor very seriously, and be made strong in the Lord.

Related Articles

-  [Satan: Everything You've Always Wanted to Know, But Were Afraid To Ask](#)
-  [Crushing the Serpent's Head: The Meaning of Genesis 3:15](#)
-  [Is There Not A Cause?](#)
-  [May a Christian Address Christ in Praise or Prayer?](#)
-  [The Temptations of Christ](#)
-  [A Realistic Look at Sin](#)
-  [Does God Send Delusions? Can a Person Harden Himself Beyond Hope?](#)
-  [Who Controls the Kingdoms of This World?](#)
-  [The Christian and Depression](#)
-  [Be Confident of Your Salvation – Studies in 1 John \(Part 2\)](#)

Scripture References

Ephesians 1-3; Ephesians 4-6; Ephesians 6:10-20; Ephesians 6:10; Ephesians 1:16-19; Ephesians 6:11; Ephesians 4:14; 1 Peter 5:8; Jude 6; Matthew 25:41; Matthew 13:25; Revelation 12:10; Romans 16:20; Revelation 20:2; Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5; John 8:44, 12:31; Ephesians 2:2; 2 Peter 2:4; Hebrews 2:16; 1 Corinthians 15:24-25; Ephesians 5:13; 1 John 5:18; Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 1:18; Ephesians 6:14-17; Genesis 3:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:10; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Romans 6:1; Romans 5:1-2; Galatians 5:4; John 1:7-9; 2 Peter 1:9; Acts 2:38; Hebrews 4:12; Romans 10:17; James 1:21; Psalm 1; Ephesians 6; Psalm 119:11

Cite this article

Jackson, Jason. "Spiritual Warfare Is Real, Difficult, and Dangerous." *ChristianCourier.com*. Access date: March 12, 2021.
<https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1211-spiritual-warfare-is-real-difficult-and-dangerous>

Publisher

Fortify Your Faith
P.O. Box 11746
Jackson, Tennessee 38308
Phone: (731) 256-7280 – Fax: (731) 256-5152