

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT!

Ephesians 6:10-13

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This is a timely passage for us because we live lives of relative ease and comfort. Warren Wiersbe rightly said, “The Christian life is a battleground, not a playground” (Wiersbe, *Be Rich*, 163).

Big Idea: Live as a soldier of Jesus Christ because every one of us is on the front lines of a spiritual battle.

There are two main parts of vv. 10-20. The first part, vv. 10-13, is the reality of war. The second part, vv. 14-20 is the equipment for war. War is serious business. There have been many sobering moments in our own nation’s history. On March 19, 2003 at 10:16pm EST our nation heard these words, “My fellow citizens, at this hour, American and coalition forces are in the early stages of military operations to disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger. On my orders, coalition forces have begun striking selected targets of military importance to undermine Saddam Hussein’s ability to wage war. These are opening stages of what will be a broad and concerted campaign” ([Source](#)).

When we view the Christian life, we need to view it through the grid of warfare. I like how *The Message* paraphrases v. 12, “This is for keeps, a life-or-death fight to the finish against the Devil and all his angels.”

There are a series of commands in 6:10-20 that will guide us as we move through this section. In vv. 10-13, we find three of them:

1. “Be strong” (v. 10). You will not be able to fight the good fight on your own. Martin Luther expressed this truth in “A Mighty Fortress is our God,” “Did we in our own strength confide/our striving would be losing.” Have you discovered this yet? This power comes from an external source, namely God (cf. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 820). We need to be strong “in the strength of his might.”
2. “Put on” (v. 11). We’ve already crossed paths with this word in 4:24. It has the very accessible idea of putting on clothes. Notice that we are called to “put on the *whole* armor of God.” We cannot leave off even one piece (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:8). Doesn’t the call to “put on the whole armor of God” imply that we need to be ready for *anything* because the Devil is willing to use *everything*?

In the hymn “Soldiers of Christ, Arise” Charles Wesley uses the phrase “The Panoply of God.” The word “panoply” is a synonym for armor and comes from the Greek word translated “armor” in v. 13, *panoplia*. It is only found three times in the NT (Luke 11:22; Ephesians 6:11, 13). The word means, “the complete equipment of a heavy-armed soldier” (BDAG, 754). Here Paul is drawing imagery from the physical realm and extending it to the spiritual life.

Why should we put on the whole armor of God? The purpose is stated: so that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the Devil. The Devil’s wiles (KJV; NKJV), tricks (CEV), strategies (AMP), tactics (HCSB), craftiness, methods. The Greek word is actually where we get our English word “method,” *methodia*. Paul tells the Corinthians church in 2 Corinthians 2:11, “so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.” (Incidentally that is used in the context of a lack of forgiveness. A similar idea is found in Ephesians 4:27.) What are some of Satan’s tactics?

- We know Satan *deceives*. He doesn’t play fair. We see this from the get-go in Genesis 2.
- We know Satan *ambushes*. 1 Peter, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” The element of surprise to the unexpected.
- We know Satan *masquerades as an ally*. He presents himself as an angel of light. 2 Corinthians 11:14 says, “And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.” It is a reminder of the famous account out of Virgil’s Latin Poem, *The Aeneid* about the Trojan horse. In one version, after a fruitless 10-year siege, the Greeks constructed a huge wooden horse, and hid a select force of 30 men inside. The Greeks pretended to sail away, and the Trojans pulled the horse into their city as a victory trophy. That night the Greek force crept out of the horse and opened the gates for the rest of the Greek army, which

had sailed back under cover of night. The Greek army entered and destroyed the city of Troy, decisively ending the war” ([Source](#)). What Trojan horses does Satan use to get into your heart and mind? See John Bunyan’s, *Holy War*.

We need the whole armor of God to fight our enemies. Who are they?

Who are not our enemies? Our opponents are not people in the physical realm. They are not “flesh and blood.” This is important for us to understand. Are our battles on the social or political front? Some would view President Obama as the arch enemy. Are they on the educational or intellectual front? Others might view public schools or men like Stephen Hawking as the chief enemy. President Obama, the public school system, and Stephen Hawking are not our enemies. John Calvin was right when he said, “Our natural disposition would lead us to direct all our exertions against the men themselves; but this foolish desire will be restrained by the consideration that the men who annoy us are nothing more than darts thrown by the hand of Satan” (Calvin, *Commentaries*, 21:335; cf. Judas in Luke 22:3 and John 13:27).

So then who are our enemies? Our enemies are forces of evil in the spiritual realm. Notice our level of engagement: “we wrestle.” The Greek word for “wrestle” is only found here in the entire NT. It means “to struggle against” (BDAG). The word points to hand-to-hand combat, not a water balloon fight at a family reunion. It is real. It is up-close and personal.

We discover that the commander is the Devil in v. 11. Devil means “slanderer” (diaboloV) (cf. Matthew 4:1; Ephesians 4:27; 6:11; Jude 9). Jesus was keenly aware of Satan’s work in the world. He faced Him at a time of temptation (Matthew 4:1). Satan does whatever he can to thwart the effects of God’s word (Mark 4:15). He’s after Christians too. Jesus told Peter Satan would sift him as wheat (Luke 22:31) and he was behind Job’s suffering (Job 1). While there is some mystery as to his origin, there is no mystery concerning his activity (Wiersbe, *Be Rich*, 165). He wants to thwart the purposes of God and destroy Christians. Yet the Devil is not an unconquerable foe. We are told in James 4:7, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

We learn the different infantries of the Devil in v. 12. Cf. Daniel 10:13; Revelation 12:4

- The rulers.
- The authorities. “Powers of the spirit world” (BDAG, 353, 5, c).
- The cosmic powers over this present darkness. This phrase refers to “the rules of this sinful world” (BDAG, 560).
- The spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. The phrase can be understood as “evil spirits” (BDAG, 837).

Again a reference to Luther’s “A Mighty Fortress is our God,” “And though this world, with devils filled/should threaten to undo us/we will not fear, for God hath willed/his truth to triumph through us.”

3. “Take up” (v. 13). This requires immediate action (Rogers and Rogers, *Exegetical Key*, 446). We need to be swift and decisive about our battle-readiness because life and death hangs in the balance.

There is no danger too terrible, no fight too fierce; no enemy too great that with God’s help the Christian cannot win in the day of battle (cf. Calvin, 21:337). What a great note of victory! Jesus already gave Satan a fatal blow to the head as Genesis 3:15 promised. Jesus already had the victory on the cross in Colossians 2:15.

The first and most important battle every person must discover is he or she is at war with God. Every sin is a hand grenade we maliciously cast at heaven; every wrong we commit is a round fired off at God. But Jesus has made it possible for us to be reconciled to God (Ephesians 2:16) so that we can have peace with Him (Romans 5:1).

These are your marching orders Christian soldier. So fight the good fight in 2011. Fight the good fight in 2012, 2013, 2014 and so on. Be battle ready! Live as a soldier of Jesus Christ because every one of us is on the front lines of a spiritual battle in 2011 and as long as God gives you breath.