

Slide 1

The Struggle In Which We Are Engaged

Ephesians 6:10-18

Introduction

1. Prior to His death, burial and resurrection our Lord responded to a question asked by His disciples.
2. He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, when “the disciples came to Him privately” and said, “Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3b)
3. One of the things He told them in response was that they would hear of “wars and rumors of wars” (Matthew 24:6).
4. He added “nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes (Matthew 24:7).
5. As many of you well know, world history is riddled with battles and wars which have taken place on almost every continent.
6. Most of us can name the various wars which have taken place in this country alone, since its founding:
 - a. Revolutionary War (April 19, 1775 - September 3, 1783)
 - b. War of 1812 (June 18, 1812 - February 18, 1815)
 - c. Civil War (April 12, 1861-May 13, 1865)
 - d. Spanish-American War (April 21 - December 10, 1898)
 - e. World War I (July 28, 1914 - November 11, 1918)
 - f. World War II (September 1, 1939 - September 2, 1945)
 - g. Korean War (June 25, 1950 - July 27, 1953)
 - h. Vietnam War (November 1, 1955 - April 30, 1975)

- i. First Gulf War (August 2, 1990 - February 28, 1991)
 - j. Second Gulf War (March 20, 2003 - December 18, 2011)
7. There is one war or struggle in which all of us are presently engaged.
 8. It is as real as any of these other wars which I have mentioned even though we cannot see our enemy.
 9. It is a spiritual battle with evil in which there is no truce, no quarter is given.
 10. If we seek to obtain our heavenly reward, it is a struggle in which we must be victorious.
 11. Tonight, as we finish our study of Paul's letter to the Christians in Ephesus, I would like you to consider three things which the apostle writes about this contest:
 - a. Its nature
 - b. The opponents we face
 - c. What is required for us to be victorious

[First, let us consider . . .]

Slide 2

I. The Nature of Our Struggle (Ephesians 6:12)

A. IT IS A STRUGGLE WHICH IS . . .

1. *Supernatural* - It exists in the realm above and beyond that which we see with our eyes. It "is not against flesh and blood" (v. 12a).
2. *Personal* - The word which Paul uses for "struggle" indicates a hand-to-hand fight, or as the Spanish say, "*mano a mano*."
3. *Futile if fought in and by our own flesh*
 - a. We are all involved in a superhuman battle in which conventional tactics will accomplish nothing.
 - b. Our enemies are such that no human power can withstand them.

Slide 3**B. OUR STRUGGLE IS AGAINST . . .**

“against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (6:12b).

1. Four times, Paul uses the word “against” to identify our opponents — “For our struggle . . . is against . . .
 - a. “The rulers”
 - b. “the powers”
 - c. “the world forces of this darkness”
 - d. “the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places”
2. Our opponents are a vast organized hierarch operates in the spiritual realm.
3. Earlier, in Ephesians 2:2, Paul called Satan, “the prince of the power of the air.”
3. In 2 John 19, the apostle John said, “We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”
4. In Daniel 10, we find Daniel seeking an answer from God concerning a recent vision in which he had seen a great conflict.
 - a. Because an answer did not initially come, Daniel spent 3 weeks in mourning and fasting.

Slide 4

- b. Finally, the angelic messenger arrived, and explained the reason for the delay:

“Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. But

the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.” (Daniel 10:12–13, NASB95)

- c. This “prince of the kingdom of Persia” which withstood God’s messenger “for twenty-one days” was not a physical prince, but like Michael, the archangel (Jude 9), who was a prince of Israel, this was most likely a high-ranking fallen angel of Satan.
5. Paul’s point is that you and I face a great demonic enemy with a defined and disciplined chain of command, not some little man running around in a red suit with a pitch fork.

Slide 5

II. What Are These Realities Meant To Teach Us?

A. SATAN IS TERRIBLY POWERFUL

1. While he does not possess anything near the power of God, for the present time he dominates and drives the world, which is separated from God.
2. Through the “spiritual forces of evil” which serve him, the devil wields power over the whole world — “the whole world is under the control of the evil one” (1 John 5:19).
3. In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Paul wrote, “the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” (2 Corinthians 4:4, NASB95)
4. In Revelation 12:9, the apostle John wrote that “the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan . . . deceives the whole world.”
5. And as Paul said earlier in this letter, “the prince of the power of the air,” the devil, “is now at work in the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2, ESV).
6. In Acts 26:18 we find that Jesus commissioned Paul “to open their eyes so

that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God . . .”

7. Satan has no conscience, no compassion, no remorse, no morals.
8. He feeds on pain and anguish and filth.¹
9. This is the spirit with whom you and I wrestle.

Slide 6

B. SATAN IS SUPREMELY CUNNING

1. It is the devil’s “schemes” (“wiles”), *lit.* “*methods*” against which we must stand.
2. The devil has been developing his skills for thousands of years.
3. One of his most effective means of deception is that *he disguises himself as an agent of God* (2 Corinthians 11:14,15).

“No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.” (2 Corinthians 11:14–15, NASB95)

- a. He mixes just enough truth with the lies he tells to make them seem believable.
- b. This is what he did with Eve in the garden.
4. Another of his methods is *sensuality*.
 - a. How many do you know who have made accommodations in their morality because of his enticements.
 - b. When the Israelites were still in the plains of Moab, Satan used the women of Moab to entice the men of Israel to sin, thus bringing about the death of 23,000 in one day (1 Corinthians 10:8; cf. Numbers 25:1,2).
5. One of the devil’s most effective methods is to *instill doubt about God’s*

¹ Hughes, R. Kent. *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), p. 216.

goodness.

- a. “Why would a loving God allow bad things to happen to good people?”
- ❑ The bottom line is that Satan is too powerful and too cunning for us to stand alone against his schemes. So what are we to do?

Slide 7

III. We Must Seek Strength From God

A. “BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN THE STRENGTH OF HIS MIGHT” (v. 10)

1. You and I cannot fight Satan ourselves.
2. Any effort we seek to put forth on our own will be of no use, he is too powerful.
3. It is only through the Lord’s strength that we can be victorious.
4. In the beginning of this letter, Paul prayed that the brethren in Ephesus, and by extension, we as well, might come to know this power (*Ephesians 1:18-21*).

Slide 8

“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is **the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe**. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, **far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.**” (*Ephesians 1:18–21, NASB95*)

Slide 9

B. “PUT ON THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD” (vv. 11)

1. This armor includes “truth” — “righteousness” — “the gospel of peace” —

“faith” — “salvation” — “the word of God” — “prayer.”

2. It is God’s armor which He offers to us:

a. *His truth and righteousness*

“for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth),” (*Ephesians 5:8–9, NASB95*)

Slide 10

b. *The good news of His peace* — both the peace we have with Him, and the peace He grants to our souls.

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” (*Romans 5:1, NASB95*)

“So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.” (*Romans 14:19, NASB95*)

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (*Philippians 4:7, NASB95*)

Slide 11

c. *His (helmet of) salvation* — “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit” (*Titus 3:5*).

Slide 12

d. *His Word* — the sword of the Spirit, our only offensive weapon

1) Which “is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (*Hebrews 4:12, NASB95*)

2) Which is truth

“Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.” (John 17:17, NASB95)

- 3) It is only through this truth that we can discern the lies of the deceiver.

“Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44b).

Slide 13

- e. *Prayer* — grants us access to His very presence

“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:15–16, NASB95)

- 1) To whom do our children run when they are threatened or afraid?
- 2) Is it not to us their parents?
- 3) To whom should we turn when we are weak and struggling with temptation?

Conclusion

1. Are you trying to fight a battle which you cannot win on your own?
2. Are you willing to surrender everything to Jesus and let Him save you?
3. If you are a Christian today, are you trusting fully in the Lord’s strength?
4. It is only in the Lord and in the strength of His might that we can be victorious.
5. There is no other way to arrive safely on Heaven’s shore.