

Spiritual Warfare - Part II – Ephesians 6:10-20

FBC Nacogdoches – Sunday, January 5, 2020 – A.M. Message

Description

- The Bible says an evil day is coming and is here! All of us will face some hard days in 2020. Maybe our days will be days of temptation, frustration, depression, hopelessness, loneliness, exhaustion, failure, or rejection. So, on those days, what will we do? The Bible says we will wage a spiritual battle that could have long-lasting and wide-ranging consequences. But the good news is, the Bible also shows us how we can overcome the evil day! In this message, we will study the Bible strategy for winning the spiritual battle and surviving those evil days.

Introduction

- Last week we were reminded through the Bible of the reality of spiritual warfare.
 - This is something that is often dismissed today.
 - But the evidence is overwhelming, and the biblical data is clear.
 - We are in a spiritual battle with evil spiritual forces that seek to ruin our lives.
- So, if we learned of the reality of the battle last week...
 - Today, I want us to learn how to fight.
 - Learn how to defeat the schemes of the devil.
- Read **Ephesians 6:11-18**.
- The center/tension/focus/climax of the passage is the phrase in **Ephesians 6:13**...
 - *“... so that you may be able to resist in the evil day.”*
- What is the evil day? What is the risk/fear/danger?
 - The evil/danger takes many forms...
 - Day of temptation...
 - Day of frustration...
 - Day of depression, hopelessness, loneliness...
 - Day of exhaustion...
 - Day of rejection or sting of failure...
 - It is on that evil day that we are most vulnerable...
 - Vulnerable to fall, compromise, quitting, forfeit our joy/peace...
- Good news...
 - There is hope...
 - The story of Elisha and spiritual warfare...
 - **2 Kings 6:15** | *When the servant of the man of God got up early and went out, he discovered an army with horses and chariots surrounding the city. So he asked Elisha, “Oh, my master, what are we to do?” (CSB)*
 - **2 Kings 6:16** | *Elisha said, “Don’t be afraid, for those who are with us outnumber those who are with them.” (CSB)*
 - **2 Kings 6:17** | *Then Elisha prayed, “LORD, please open his eyes and let him see.” So the LORD opened the servant’s eyes, and he saw that the mountain was covered with horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (CSB)*
 - Assurance from **1 John**...
 - **1 John 4:4b** | *... the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. (CSB)*
 - But we need to follow some careful instructions...
 - How does this passage instruct us?
 - Ordinarily we walk through this passage one piece of armor at a time.
 - That is not a bad or unbiblical approach.
 - I’ve done that before and will likely do that again.
 - But I think that approach misses a much simpler message.
 - The piece-of-armor-at-a-time approach is problematic because we just don’t really know how to line up each armor piece with some “task” we should undertake.
 - I read several books this week by leading scholars, recent and historic, and everyone sees a different allegory in the armor.

- Belt of truth
 - Some say: “We should speak the truth.”
 - Some say: “We should live with integrity.”
 - Some say: “We should invest our lives in studying the truth of God’s word.”
 - Some say: “We should renew our minds with the truth.”
 - Some say: “We should shore up the loose ends of our knowledge and understanding of the truth.”
- Breastplate of righteousness
 - Some say: “Life righteously; follow the rules.”
 - Some say: “Be reminded of the imputed righteousness that comes from the Lord.”
- The definition/application some Bible teachers give for the shield of faith others give the exact same definition/application for the helmet of salvation.
- Some Bible teachers will define a piece of armor one way in one book and a different way in a different book.
- This isn’t supposed to be this hard.
 - This was written for simple Christians to understand and apply.
 - And this paragraph is the conclusion of the longer letter of **Ephesians**.
 - Paul, the writer, is not adding something completely new right at the end of his letter.
 - Paul is wrapping up this important letter by reemphasizing points he had already made.
- There are really only two independent imperatives in this entire paragraph.
 - **Ephesians 6:11** says to “*put on*” the armor, and **6:13** says to “*take up*” the armor, but both of those commands are in support of the big command in **6:14** to “*stand*.”
 - *Stand* is the last word of **6:13** and the first word of **6:14**.
 - And all the “*take*” commands that follow are also in support of the “*stand*” command.
 - Stand means to stand on some truth/fact/assurance.
 - **Ephesians 6:18** gives the next independent command: “*Pray*.”
 - And this command is repeated two more times in the paragraph.
- So, what are we to do “... *so that you may be able to resist in the evil day*” (**Ephesians 6:13**)?

How to Survive the Evil Day

I. Embrace the truth of who you are in Christ.

- I mentioned earlier that these two instructions reemphasize what Paul has already taught in **Ephesians**.
- The first and primary message of **Ephesians** from the beginning is who we are in Christ.
 - **Ephesians 1:4** | *For he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in love before him.* (CSB)
 - **Ephesians 1:5** | *He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,* (CSB)
 - **Ephesians 1:7** | *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace* (CSB)
 - **Ephesians 1:13** | *In him you also were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed.* (CSB)
 - **Ephesians 2:5** | *made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace!* (CSB)
 - **Ephesians 2:8–9** | *For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift—not from works, so that no one can boast.* (CSB)
 - **Ephesians 3:12–13** | *In him we have boldness and confident access through faith in him. So then I ask you not to be discouraged over my afflictions on your behalf, for they are your glory.* (CSB)
- Who are we in Christ?
 - If you are a child of God...
 - You are forgiven and saved from the penalty of sin by the grace of God through Christ.
 - You are a beloved child of God.
 - God deeply loves you in a way that is only hinted at when you see the love of a parent for a child.
 - It pleases God to be in fellowship with you.

- God could not love you more than he does.
- God has sealed you in with the Holy Spirit and personally guarantees that your relationship with him will never change.
- How do we see this in the armor?
 - The armor is defensive.
 - I know the sword is often an offensive weapon but that's not really the case in this context.
 - In this passage, the sword is listed as a part of the "*armor*" of God.
 - **If you knew a violent thief was about to break into your home, you might grab a gun.**
 - **That gun would be for the purpose of self-defense, hence a defensive weapon.**
- Elements of the armor...
 - *Belt of truth*
 - Remember the truth of who you are in Christ.
 - *Breastplate of righteousness*
 - Remember that you stand as perfectly righteous before the Father because of the work of Christ.
 - *Shoes with readiness for the gospel of peace*
 - Remember that we have peace not because of circumstances but because of the gospel.
 - *Shield of faith*
 - When the devil shoots his flaming arrows, we should remember that we trust the Lord to keep us, guard us, protect us.
 - *Helmet of salvation*
 - Remember that we belong to God.
 - We have been saved, forgiven, adopted, sealed, secured.
 - *Sword of the Spirit which is the word of God*
 - Remember that we get our reality from God's word not from the deception of the devil.
- When the *evil day* comes...
 - When we are tempted, frustrated, depressed, or struggling because of some failure...
 - That is when we must STAND!
 - Stand fully armored by the truth.

II. Pray like crazy.

- Prayer has been a theme from the beginning of **Ephesians**.
 - **Ephesians 1:16** | *I never stop giving thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers.* (CSB)
 - **Ephesians 1:17** | *I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.* (CSB)
 - **Ephesians 1:18** | *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints,* (CSB)
 - **Ephesians 3:16** | *I pray that he may grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power in your inner being through his Spirit,* (CSB)
 - **Ephesians 3:17** | *and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. I pray that you, being rooted and firmly established in love,* (CSB)
 - **Ephesians 3:20** | *Now to him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us—* (CSB)
- And so, when Paul talks about how to survive the "*evil day*," he says...
 - **Ephesians 6:18** | *Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints.* (CSB)
 - **Ephesians 6:19** | *Pray also for me, that the message may be given to me when I open my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel.* (CSB)
 - **Ephesians 6:20** | *For this I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I might be bold enough to speak about it as I should.* (CSB)
- Listen, church...
 - There are just some battles that can only be fought with prayer!
 - In **Ephesians 6**, the only true offensive weapon is prayer.
 - Listen to what Jesus said in when the disciples couldn't solve problem that had presented to them...
 - **Mark 9:29** | *He told them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer."* (CSB)

- Let me read you a story that drives this point home...
 - **Exodus 17:8-13.**
 - What do we learn?
 - We need to do more than prayer.
 - But we will not know victory apart from prayer.

Conclusion

- An evil day is coming...
- The evil day is here...
 - Stand...
 - Pray...

Discussion Guide

Connect

- We are talking about spiritual warfare today, what do you think are Satan's most effective weapons/schemes?

Discover

- Which statement or experience stood out to you from the worship service?
- Read Ephesians 6:10-13.
 - When it says the devil has schemes, that means he has an organized and personal attack plan. In what ways have you seen that to be true in your life?
 - We are warned that our struggle is not with flesh and blood but against evil spiritual forces. What are some ways we get this confused in our daily lives? How would things be different if we could remember and embrace that people around us are not our enemies or our problems?
- Read Ephesians 6:18-20.
 - Paul, the writer, gives several instructions for how to pray in this passage. What are those instructions?
 - How important did Paul believe it was that the people in the church of Ephesus pray for him? How critical were there prayers for his success?
 - How and why do we sometimes fight spiritual battles without this strong focus on prayer?
- Read 2 Kings 6:13-17.
 - Why was the servant fearful in verse 15? How are we often fearful for the same reasons?
 - What did Elisha mean in verse 16? How does that apply to our situations and bring us encouragement?
 - We can't know exactly what spiritual forces are arrayed around us, but verse 17 sparks our imagination. How do you imagine the spiritual forces are arrayed around you?
- Read Exodus 17:8-13.
 - Who had the most important role, Joshua or Moses? Why?
 - What would have been the outcome of the battle without Moses' prayer?
 - What do we learn from Aaron and Hur helping to hold up Moses' hands?

Respond

- How can knowing who we are in Christ (putting on the armor of God) help us when difficult times of temptation, depression, or failure come our way?
- If some problems can be solved only by sustained prayer, how can you be more faithful to pray in the days to come?

Bonus for Thinkers

- What does Paul mean in Ephesians 6:18 when he says to "Pray at all times in the Spirit..."

Thoughts...

- One view...
 - Realize
 - Stand prepared (for the day is evil)
 - Pray

- What is the evil day?
 - Temptation
 - Frustration
 - Depression
 - Exhaustion
 - Rejection
 - Failure
- You can test the spiritual maturity of a man by what it takes to move him off center.
- Outline idea...
 - #1
 - What if you knew an attacker was coming?
 - Evil day...
 - Five ways he may attack you this year...
 - Paul says we need to...
 - Know some things...
 - Or prepare...
 - Or be reminded...
 - Do something...
 - #2
 - What to do?
 - A. Embrace the truth of who you are in Christ.
 - B. Pray like crazy.

Armor Parts

- Belt of truth
 - We have to be plugged into the truth to avoid deception.
 - Renewing our minds...
- Breastplate of righteousness
- Shoes with readiness for the gospel of peace
- Shield of faith
- Helmet of salvation
- Sword of the Spirit

Notes on Ephesians 6:13

- Evil day...
 - **“in the evil day”** This could refer to (1) a day of temptation; (2) the whole evil age in which we live; or (3) a day of adversity (cf. **Ps. 49:5ff**).¹
 - Here **the evil day** is the day of trial.²
 - The day referred to here is the definite day when the enemies previously mentioned make their assault. This, however, is not to be understood with special, much less with exclusive, reference to the last great conflict with the powers of darkness which is to take place before the second coming. The whole exhortation refers to the present duty of believers. They are to put on their **armor** at once and always be prepared for the attacks of their formidable enemies.³
 - Every day since the Fall has been an **evil day** for mankind, and every day will continue to be evil until the usurper and his forces are thrown forever into the bottomless pit. In the meanwhile the Lord makes us **able to resist in the evil day** as we take advantage of the **armor** He supplies.⁴
 - Here *the evil day* is the day of combat with the spiritual forces; it is not the last day, the final battle between the forces of God and the forces of evil, but the day, any day, when the Christian has to go into combat against the forces of evil.⁵

References

- **Psalm 41:1** | *Happy is one who is considerate of the poor; the LORD will save him in a day of adversity.* (CSB)
- **Psalm 49:5** | *Why should I fear in times of trouble? The iniquity of my foes surrounds me.* (CSB)

¹ Robert James Utley, *Paul Bound, the Gospel Unbound: Letters from Prison (Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon, Then Later, Philippians)*, vol. Volume 8, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 1997), 139.

² Charles Hodge, *Ephesians*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 215.

³ Charles Hodge, *Ephesians*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 215.

⁴ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Ephesians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 343.

⁵ Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 160.