

Boot Camp for the Believer

Ephesians 6: 10-13

Even the earliest student of the Bible is familiar with the temptation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and the fall of mankind into sin as a result of their giving in to temptation. With the first of God's greatest creation, Satan was on the attack. Throughout the Bible we see his influence and tactics in an attempt to mislead and defeat the people of God. Immediately following the baptism of Jesus, as He began His public ministry, He was led into the wilderness to be tempted of Satan. Paul, the writer of the Ephesian letter, was tempted and attacked due to the influence of Satan. Satan is the enemy of God and all who follow Him.

*"If we are walking worthy of our calling, in humility rather than pride, in unity rather than divisiveness, in the new self rather than the old, in love rather than lust, in light rather than darkness, in wisdom rather than foolishness, in the fullness of the Spirit rather than the drunkenness of wine, and in mutual submission rather than self-serving independence, then we can be absolutely certain we will have opposition and conflict."*ⁱ

As I considered this passage and the desire of Paul to equip believers for the struggles they would inevitably face, I was reminded of the practice of the American military. Prior to sending troops into battle, they are trained and equipped in boot camp. There they learn all the fundamentals necessary to be successful and become instinctively familiar with their armor and weapons. Our text today could be considered the believers boot camp. Let's consider the [elements](#) of our warfare as we think on: [Boot Camp for the Believer](#).

I. The Strength of the Believer (10) – [Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might](#). After much instruction and admonition for the believer, Paul offers a final challenge in preparation for the struggles to come. If we are to endure we must be strong. Notice:

A. The Source of our Strength (10a) – [Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord](#). Paul had faced many struggles while serving the Lord. There were many occasions where he faced physical and emotional abuse. There were even times when it appeared he had suffered absolute defeat. However, Paul endured because of his strength. He was not serving the Lord in his own ability or power, but in the strength of the Lord. He had experienced the power of God and wanted believers to be familiar with and experience God's power as well.

- If we are to be successful and overcome the advance of the enemy, we must be strong in the Lord. The battle is too great for us alone. We will never endure in our power or strength. We must acknowledge and possess strength that comes from the Lord. Satan has power, that is certain, but God possesses all power!

B. The Stability of our Strength (10b) – *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.* Here Paul seeks to convey the enormity and stability in the power of the Lord. He refers to the power of His might. The *power* of the Lord speaks of “*His unlimited, sovereign power and dominion over all.*” As we face the struggles of life, we have comfort knowing our God is in control. We face nothing that He isn’t Lord over. We will never face a situation that God isn’t in control of.

- The *might* of the Lord speaks of “*His strength and force, conveying His ability to use all He has at His disposal.*” Take just a moment to consider the power and might of our Lord. He stood on nothing and spoke creation into existence. He has power over creation itself, kingdoms and nations, sickness and disease, sin, Satan, death, and hell. Our enemy is a formidable foe, but his power is limited. We face nothing our God can’t handle. We need not fear facing any situation as long as the Lord is fighting for us. We will never need more than He is able to provide!

II. The Stand of the Believer (11, 13) – Here Paul addresses an important element in any soldier’s preparation for battle, the ability to endure the fight, standing in the midst of difficulty. In order to stand, we must be clothed in armor and ready to endure. Notice:

A. The Placement of our Armor (11a, 13a) – *Put on the whole armour of God.* ^[13a] *Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God.* Every soldier knows the benefit of armor and its necessity in battle. We will look specifically at each aspect of the believer’s armor later, but here Paul emphasizes its importance. Armor is effective if it is worn properly. It does no good if it is left behind or worn improperly. We are equipped with spiritual armor, but it is up to us to keep it on, in working order, and in a proper position.

- We are challenged to “put on” the whole armor of God and we are challenged to “take up” the whole armor of God. Each of these challenges emphasizes being clothed in the whole armor of God, but they reveal two different aspects. Putting on the armor of God literally means “*to put on.*” Our armor will do no good if it is not worn. Taking up the whole armor of God has the idea of “*bearing our armor.*” Battle armor can be heavy. Soldiers at times are tempted to lay aside a particular piece of armor. Often in the battle, we feel as if we are under a heavy load. We must be willing to endure, ensuring our armor is on and positioned as it needs to be! Every piece is essential to victory. We cannot lay any of it aside, regardless of the temptation.

B. The Purpose of the Armor (11b, 13b) – *that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.* ^[13b] *that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day.* The enemy has one desire: to defeat his foe. We face a formidable adversary. He has had centuries to perfect his craft. Paul speaks of the “wiles of

the devil.” This refers to his “*methods, devices, and craft.*” It has the idea of “*trickery, craftiness, deceit.*” The enemy does not seek to fight fair. He will seek every opportunity to gain advantage.

- Understanding the devil’s tactics, Paul knew we needed the whole armor of God to stand against the enemy. This too has a two-fold application. We are to **stand against the wiles of the devil**. Simply we are to *resist his advance*. Stand firm in the face of adversity. The armor enables us to **withstand in the evil day**. This is a military term which has the idea of “*holding a critical position when faced with attack.*” We must not abandon our post. We must stand strong when the enemy advances. **Jam.4:7b – Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.** (Resist is translated from the same Greek word rendered withstand in our text.) Being equipped with the armor of God will enable us to hold our position while facing the enemy’s attack.

C. The Perseverance in our Assignment (13c) – **and having done all, to stand.** At the end of the day, the battle is often won by those who endure. Having the armor of God will not ensure victory if we refuse to stand in the fight. We need those who are committed to enduring till the end. There is no place to give up or abandon our post. There may be a lull in the fight, but it will return sooner or later. We must continue to stand, even if others do not! *Some...years ago three men conducted evangelistic campaigns together in Ireland and saw much fruit from their labors there. Years later an Irish pastor who was converted in those meetings asked about the three men. He was told that only one was still faithful to the Lord. Of the other two, one had become apostate and the other had died an alcoholic. Some believers **have done everything** well in the Lord's work, but they do not continue to **stand firm**. The issue is not in what a believer has done, but, when the battle is over and the smoke clears, whether he is found standing true to the Savior.* ⁱⁱ

III. The Struggle of the Believer (12) – **For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.** Here Paul offers detailed information about the struggle we are engaged in and the nature of the enemy. Successful campaigns require in depth knowledge of the enemy. Paul speaks of:

A. A Proper Identification (12a) – **For we wrestle not against flesh and blood.** In order to be victorious, they needed to know exactly who the enemy was and who he was not. They were not fighting against mere flesh and blood, mortal men, the world we see and know.

- We too need to understand and properly identify the enemy. Often we never engage the enemy and gain spiritual victory because he initiates fruitless skirmishes over matters of little, if any, eternal significance. Mistaken identity can result in friendly fire and other devastating effects.

We must understand the struggles we face are not with each other, or the world around us, but with the prince of darkness.

B. A Powerful Opposition (12) – For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*.

As I have said, we face a formidable foe. We need to understand the power of our enemy.

Consider:

1. Their Nature – We face an enemy of spiritual nature. Much of the conflict we face is not necessarily seen or experienced in the physical realm, but it is real nonetheless. Opposition of believers is orchestrated and empowered of Satan himself. They are relentless in their pursuit of those who seek to live righteously. Their attacks are unannounced and can be devastating.

- We must understand the origin of our opposition and the spiritual realm in which the enemy operates. We cannot overcome such struggles by conventional means. Spiritual struggles require spiritual weaponry. We must be clothed in the whole armor of God, walking close by His side, using the Word as our battle plan.

2. Their Number – You may have noticed I have referred to the enemy in a plural sense. I have done so purposely because that is what the Bible teaches. Our opposition is numerous. Satan is the source, the orchestrator, but he uses many avenues and has many factions at his command. I will admit this verse is beyond my ability to fully comprehend, but it is evident there is a satanic hierarchy at work among us. Satan is the great imitator. He wants to be God. In the end times we see the anti-Christ seeking the role of Christ the Lord. The false prophet seeks the role of the Holy Spirit. He has hoards of demonic minions at his disposal.

- That ought to challenge us considering the nature of the conflict. There is much at stake in this struggle. However, it should not create fear in our hearts. Satan has power, but we can overcome and remain victorious in Christ our Lord. If God be for us, who can be against us. Greater is He that is in me, than he that is in the world!

Conclusion: This is a challenging passage that reveals truth about the struggles we face. We are engaged in spiritual warfare. The enemy has perfected his tactics. He seeks our defeat. This battle will continue until the Lord's return. We cannot escape it, but we can be strong in the battle and equip ourselves for the battle.

Are you struggling spiritually today? Do you feel ill equipped for the struggles you face? God has the strength and armor you need. Why not seek Him today?

Maybe you are here and you have never been saved. Satan is pleased with your current position. He would like to keep you right where you are. He likes to deceive, seeking to hinder as many as he can. He desires all to die in their sin, apart from God. He wants humanity to suffer the same fate that awaits him in hell. You don't have to spend eternity with Satan. Jesus can save you and set you free. Come to Him in salvation if He is calling you!

ⁱ MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.