

The Theme Throughout Ephesians – Part 3

Ephesians 6:10-11, 13-18 [New King James] *“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” ... “Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints,”*

Our Christian experience, as we have seen, begins with sitting and absorbing God’s Word, the Christian Bible, especially the words of our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ. This leads to our walking in a new way of life day-by-day.

But our Christian life does not end with these two changes.

Every Christian has to learn to stand.

Each of us must be prepared for conflict from Satan and his human assistants.

Let us remind ourselves of the order in which Paul presents Christian life in his letter to the Ephesians and all true Christians.

It is “*sit – walk – stand*,” no Christian can hope to deal with this spiritual conflict without a knowledge of God’s Word, the Christian Bible, by regular sitting in Holy Spirit led study, [**John 16:13**] following the lead of an active Holy Spirit within our lives, the Spirit of Christ at work in us on a day-to-day basis, [**Romans 8:9**].

Any person who is deficient in either of these two will find that all the talk about spiritual warfare remains only talk, they will never know its reality. Satan can afford to ignore such a person, for they do not count for anything.

Yet the very same Christian can be made strong “*in the Lord, and in the strength of His might*,” [**Ephesians 6:10; Ephesians 1:19; Ephesians 3:16**].

It is only with the first two principles learnt and applied that a Christian can appreciate this third principle of standing.

God is allowing Satan to influence human beings in every generation since the creation of Adam and Eve, using him and his demons as a force for us to resist, [James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:6-9**].**

As we look to Jesus Christ for the strength to resist Satan, our relationship with our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ will be strengthened.

Victory over Satan and all his demons and physical servants, [**1 John 4:1-4**].

I want to deal with this matter of our warfare first in general terms in relation to our personal Christian lives and then in a more special sense in relation to the work our Saviour Jesus Christ has entrusted to us.

There are many direct assaults of Satan upon the children of God, but we must **not** attribute to Satan those troubles that are the result of our own breach of divine laws.

But there are physical attacks on God's children by Satan, upon their bodies and minds, of which we must take serious account. There are few of us as Christians who do not know something of Satan's assaults upon our spiritual life. Are we going to let these pass unchallenged?

The Greek word translated "stand" is "histēmi" with its following preposition "against" in Ephesians 6:11 really means "hold your ground."

There is an important truth hidden in this command of God. It is **not** a command to invade a foreign territory, by the modern parlance of commanding armies to march into other countries to occupy and subdue them.

God has **not** told us to do this, we are **not** to "march" but to "stand." **The word "stand" implies that the ground disputed by the enemy is really God's and therefore ours as His children. We need not struggle to gain a foothold on it.**

Nearly all the weapons of our warfare, described in Ephesians, are purely defensive; even the sword can be used for defence as well as for offence.

The difference between defensive and offensive warfare is this, that in the former I have already got the ground and only seek to keep it, whereas in the latter I have **not** got the ground and am fighting in order to get it.

This is precisely the difference between the warfare waged by our Lord Jesus Christ and the warfare waged by Christians.

Jesus Christ's was offensive, ours in essence, defensive.

Jesus Christ warred against Satan in order to gain a victory. Through the cross our Saviour carried that warfare to the very point of physical death. The ultimate power that Satan has over human beings, [Hebrews 2:14-15] and by a resurrection, Jesus Christ became victor over the whole realm of darkness and death. This ground Jesus Christ won He has given to all true Christians, we do not need to fight to obtain it. We only need to hold on to it against all challengers.

Within the sphere of Jesus Christ the enemy's defeat is already a fact.

Jesus Christ commanded Satan to go away and Satan obeyed, [Matthew 4:10-11].

The true Christian Church has been given the task to keep Satan defeated, Satan is the one who must do all counter-attacking in his efforts to dislodge us from the sphere won by Jesus Christ.

In Jesus Christ we are conquerors already.

Romans 8:37-39 [New King James] *"Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

We are overcomers who rest in the victory already given to us by Jesus Christ.

Revelation 12:10-12 [New King James] *"Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, 'Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.'"*

Note that each Christian Church mentioned in the Revelation of Jesus Christ had the goal of being an overcomer of Satan, [**Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26; Revelation 3:5, 12, 21**] and did this through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross and His resurrection from the grave.

Satan's primary object is not to get us to sin, but simply to make it easy for us to sin by getting our mind off the victory that Jesus Christ has brought to us.

Through the avenue of the head or heart, through our intellect or our feelings, **Satan assaults our rest in Jesus Christ and our walk with the Holy Spirit.**

But for every point of Satan's attack we can put on defensive armour.

We must not ask Jesus Christ to enable us to overcome Satan our enemy, but to praise Him for what He has already done.

Jesus Christ is our victory over death, our part is faith in what He has done for all humanity.

Ephesians is concerned with more than the personal side of our warfare against Satan.

It has to do with the work that God has entrusted all true Christians to do, the preaching of the gospel message to the world as yet blinded by Satan to understanding its wonderful truth, [**2 Corinthians 4:4**].

Paul has already mentioned this to the church in Ephesus and to all true Christians, [**Ephesians 3:1-13**] and **for this work we are armed with the sword of God's word and prayer.**

Ephesians 6:17-20 [New King James] *“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints, and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”*

I want to say more about this warfare in its relation to our work for God, for here we may encounter a difficulty.

It is true, on the one hand, that our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ is far above all rule and authority, [**Ephesians 1:21-22**].

Clearly it is the light of His complete victory over Satan and all evil that we are to continually praise and thank Jesus Christ, [**Ephesians 5:20**].

Yet on the other hand we have to admit that we do not yet see all things subject to Jesus Christ. There are still hosts of wicked spirits in heavenly places, acting as dark evil powers behind this world's rulers.

How far are we correct in calling this a defensive warfare?

When, therefore, and under what conditions, are we justified in occupying what is outwardly under the enemy's control and then holding on to it in the name [authority] of our Lord Jesus Christ?

None can be saved from death without knowing the name of Jesus Christ, and none can be effectively used by God without knowing the authority of that name.

John 16:23-24, 26 [New King James] *“And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” ... “In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you;”*

The apostle Paul makes it clear that the “name” of which Jesus Christ alludes to recorded by John is not simply the name by which He is known while here among human beings, it is the title and authority given to Him by God the Father after He had become obedient unto death, [Philippians 2:6-10].

Our eyes must be opened to see the mighty change wrought by the ascension of Jesus Christ back to sit on the right hand of God the Father on His throne, [Matthew 28:16-20].

Even the Jewish leaders recognised that there could be this kind of significance in a name, when they inquired of the disciples concerning the healing of the lame man, [Acts 3:1-16; Acts 4:1-11].

We must note in scripture the recurring expression “in the name,” that is to say, the use to which the apostles in fact put that name and the power and authority behind it, [Acts 4:12 note “given among men.”]

The power of the name of Jesus Christ works in three directions.

In our preaching it is effective to the salvation of all human beings, [Acts 4:10-12] through the remission of their sins, and through their cleansing, justification and sanctification [setting apart] for God to use, [Luke 24:47; Acts 10:43; 1 Corinthians 6:11].

In our warfare the name of Jesus Christ is mighty against the Satanic powers to bind and bring them into subjection, [Mark 16:17; Luke 10:17-19; Acts 16:16-18].

God has committed Himself to work through His servants, true Christians, as they take action “in the name,” making it clear that they do nothing of themselves.

Equally clear, no other name, whether their own or that of an apostle, will have the same result; **only those who are authorised to use that name.**

God the Father looks at His Son at His right hand, **not** at us here on earth. It is because of the power and authority that God the Father has given Jesus Christ that we can use that name with power for effect.

Acts 19:11-17 [New King James] *“Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, ‘We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.’ Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, ‘Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?’ Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.”*

The power and authority is not something we can take lightly or use without being authorised and to draw attention to ourselves.

All the praise and thanks must be directed to Jesus Christ.

Are we in such a union with our Lord Jesus Christ that He will commit Himself to what we are doing?

Ephesians 4:10-16 [New King James] *“He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth*

in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

This is true today as it was in the days of the apostle Paul.

It is a question of the identification of my purpose and spiritual work with the eternal purpose of God.

Ephesians 1:9-12 [New King James] *“having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, in Him. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.”*

We have to seek from God a revelation to our hearts by the Holy Spirit to know His will for us personally.

All work that is going to be effective in divine purpose must be conceived in the first place by God.

God’s name can never be a “*rubber stamp*” to authorise work that is ours in conception, there can be no “*in His name,*” alas only our name.

We have to learn that if God does not move we dare not move.

1 Corinthians 3:5-9 [New King James] *“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? **I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.** Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labour. **For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building.**”*

This is a guideline as to what we are seeking to do for our Saviour and Lord is within His will and plan. Has God given the increase?

We have to also learn, even where God has initiated a work, if we are trying to accomplish it in our own power God will never commit Himself to it.

John 15:1-5 [New King James] *“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; **for without Me you can do nothing.**”*

When what we are involved in is on a spiritual level it must be the work of the Holy Spirit in and through us.

John 16:7-8 [New King James] *“Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:”*

These are all the work of the Holy Spirit in us as He flows through us in acts of love and compassion for other human beings.

Read and meditate on the following scriptures showing how God works in and through us by the active indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 5:1-5 [New King James] *“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”*

The cleared translation of **verse 5** is “... poured out **through** our hearts by the Holy Spirit.”

John 7:37-39 [New King James] *“On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”*

“Living water” is referring to eternal life.

John 3:8 [New King James] *“The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”*

Jesus Christ tells us that the work of the Holy Spirit is only seen by what it influences in us and other people.

John 16:13 [New King James] *“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”*

Holy Spirit guides us into all truth.

John 14:26 [New King James] *“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”*

Brings God’s Word to remembrance when needed.

Luke 12:11-12 [New King James] *“Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”*

Inspires all we say when a witness for Jesus Christ is needed.

Acts 5:32 [New King James] *“And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.”*

Obedience to the words of Jesus Christ is essential.

It is **only** when these facts are truly understood and applied that God can use us in His work.

For there is **no** room for personal glory in a person involved in the true work of God.