

Read E 6:10-20

Strength is measured by resistance to opposing forces. The Bible commands us as followers of Jesus Christ to strengthen ourselves in him to the point that we can resist, stand against and oppose the Devil himself.

Here is the question for this morning. Let's trust God together to have our hearts and minds enlightened regarding this simple concept. How much force does it take for you to live your life independently of Jesus practical authority? What are the concerns, circumstances, responses, news, settings or relationships where the ownership of your life is up for grabs? Something else rules your heart in place of God. You are listening to something else other than God. You believe something else in place of God.

Let me illustrate the concept of spiritual warfare from the life of Peter. Matthew 16:21-23 records a time when Jesus lifted the curtain on a seemingly understandable reaction by Peter. Rather than listening and following the words from Jesus mouth that spoke truth, Peter subjected Jesus words to his judgment, followed his impressions and openly contradicted what Jesus said. Jesus turns and calls Peter 'Satan' – the adversary. He tells Peter to go away, calls him a hindrance and exposes his true values. What Peter did and said made sense and most every person in the room would have said and done the same thing. Jesus makes it clear . . . this was not misplaced enthusiasm or a sincere attempt to do the right thing; it was an act of war. Peter had given his ears and heart to another master.

Our text this morning explains why you and I need to put on the armor that comes from God. You must strengthen yourself in the Lord because you have an enemy that is powerfully determined to separate you from your creator God and his love.

Let's consider two thoughts from the text that will help us make ourselves strong in the Lord. Remember we have learned that you need strength and that the strength you need comes from a source outside of yourself. Anything less than complete dependence on and abiding in Christ will not make you strong. You will be as fruitful as a branch cut off from the vine.

First, you must know your enemy.

Second, you must take your stand.

**1. To increase your resistance to ungodly influences you must know your enemy. 6:11-12**

Note the direct reference to the devil as the one whose schemes you must resist. His associates are listed along with their unique assignments in verse 12. Your enemy is the enemy of God. The one responsible for sin entering the world. He has hosts of evil angels organized and powerful to promote the grip of darkness, wickedness and death on people.

Your life is described as a battle of strength with the devil in a similar manner as someone wrestling an opponent and withstanding a significant force. Your marriage, job, family and church relationships are not spiritually neutral or somehow off limits because they are Christianized in some way. You are at war with the prince of darkness. You are wrestling a monster.

To know your enemy and his ways well, let's turn to Genesis chapter 3 where he first appears on the scene to disrupt the relationship between people and God.

Genesis 3:1-7 (2)

- Your enemy's ways. 1-4 Did God actually say? God's Word attacked.

Suggestion rather than argument. God's words/ways are subject to your judgment.

Exaggeration 3 debate nuances and magnify God's harshness

Contradiction 4 judgment of God questioned – your word against his

Cmp. 2Cor. 2:11 11:3

- Your enemy's lie. 4-5 For God knows . . . God's goodness attacked.

God's love for you appears distorted – he is holding back.

Service to him appears as slavery – you could do better.

Rebellion against God appears to be the way to life – you are in control.

Cmp. Lk.22:53 Heb.2:14

- Your enemy's patterns. 6-7 see, desire, take, give God's authority attacked.

Listen to and follow the creature rather than creator.

Trust your impressions and feelings.

Make self fulfillment your goal.

Cmp. Mt. 13:19 2Cor. 11:13-15

Quotes from church of satan website . . .

*To us, Satan is the symbol that best suits the nature of we who are carnal by birth-people who feel no battles raging between our thoughts and feelings, we who do not embrace the concept of a soul imprisoned in a body. He represents pride, liberty, and individualism—qualities often defined as Evil by those who worship external deities, who feel there is a war between their minds and emotions.*

*Since the Satanist understands that all Gods are fiction, instead of bending a knee in worship to – or seeking friendship or unity with-such mythical entities, he places himself at the center of his own subjective universe as his own highest value. We Satanists are thus our own "gods," and as beneficent "deities" we can offer love to those who deserve it and deliver our wrath (within reasonable limits) upon those who seek to cause us-or that which we cherish-harm.*

*But such self-deification is not for everyone, since it requires total responsibility for one's choices and actions, and the realization of a social contract which makes for a civilized state of being. So Satanism is not meant to be "The Way" for all people, since we consider it a sad truth that only a small percentage of our species has the intelligence, adherence to reason, and self-discipline to handle our perspective.*

1. To increase your resistance to ungodly influences you must know your enemy. 6:11-12

## 2. To increase your resistance to ungodly influences you must take your stand. 6:11-12

Taking up a position of resistance and opposition to the forces of evil includes putting on the Lord's armor . . . to be described in consequent verses. Note the terms in these verses from Ephesians 6. Stand (11, 13, 14), withstand (13), wrestle (12) and against (5x v.12) all emphasize the posture of your life. You are either standing and leaning into the opposition or being tossed and carried about as described in E.4:14.

The core issue of standing has to do with your union with and remaining in Christ. Let's follow a thread of truth in Ephesians that will help us take a consistent and strong stand against the multiple forces of evil that seek to terrorize you into independent living. The key phrase to follow on this truth trail is 'in the heavenly places. The thread ends in 6:12 by describing that all of these ungodly forces that oppose you are in the heavenly places.

The picture that ought to dominate our imaginations begins to be described in E 1:3.

- Your spiritual blessings are located 'in heavenly places.' 1:3

The truth is that the greatest and most valued treasures you own are securely located in the heavenly realm, the presence of God.

Your election, adoption, redemption, forgiveness, inheritance, and hope are all in Christ in the heavenly place.

- Your Lord Christ is seated in the place of ultimate authority 'in heavenly places.' 1:20

The truth is that your most cherished and respected savior and Lord is securely positioned on the throne of the universe in the heavenly realm, the presence of God.

Everything has been placed under his authority and he is the head of the church. Your master and ruler is in heaven.

- You, if God saved you, are seated with the Lord Christ 'in heavenly places.' 2:6

You are completely identified with Christ as one who is with him in heaven. All that is separating you from being with him is this brief journey here in your body.

Your ultimate experience of grace, joy and life is with Christ in his presence.

- Your job in this body is to tell the truth to the inhabitants of the 'heavenly places.' 3:10

You are wired by God to be most satisfied when you make much of him. Whether it is the unsearchable riches of Christ to the gentiles or the wisdom of God to the spiritual realm.

Your grand purpose for being alive reaches and influences the heavenly realm.

- Your enemies are alive and active in the 'heavenly places.' 6:12

Your enemy is positioned to separate you from your greatest treasure, which is located in the heavenly places.

Col. 3:1-4 standing = seeking

James 4:7 standing = submitting

## **Take Aways**

1. Who is ruling your life this morning? Who are you listening to? Take a stand against the forces of evil . . . gladly repent and submit your life to God.
2. How have you been deceived by Satan? What has God said that you are arguing with, exaggerating or contradicting? Repent of allowing the evil one to drive a wedge between you and God's great love for you. Rom.8:38
3. Where is your greatest treasure located? Has your perception of God, his love and his gift of new life been distorted by the activity of the evil beings in the heavenly places? Repent of your upside down evaluation of God's blessings in Christ in your life and seek after him hard for restoration of value and joy.