

Read E 6:10-20

Did the devil make you do it? Does he influence your behavior and thinking? If so, how? The Bible teaches that the devil's schemes and the numerous forces of evil are a reality to be resisted. What does that look like in real life?

A common and popular approach to understanding your battle with evil is referred to as spiritual warfare. Spiritual warfare is a common phrase used by many to describe the view that there is a battle in your life against invading demons, the wicked spirit beings who serve Satan. There are many books and ministries that promote the view that demons must be either kept from invading your life or expelled after they have taken up residence in your life.

This view is defined by certain distinctive beliefs and practices:

- Followers of Christ cannot be possessed by evil but can be demonized or held in bondage to certain extents.
- People need a casting out or driving out experience to be free from inhabiting demons that enslave them to sexual lust, anger, low self esteem, anxiety and other ungodly behaviors.
- Demons do take up residence and in some manner take over functions of the human heart. Like unwelcome squatters, they exert some behind the scenes control.
- Demons gain access through habitual sins, occult practices, childhood experiences, sins of ancestors or sins of others against us such as abuse.

One author summarizes this common perspective with an analogy . . .

*We could use the metaphor of the human personality as a computer hard disk with demons acting as computer viruses. These viruses can overwrite and corrupt sectors of the hard disk, executing their own commands within those sectors. Such demons must be removed.*

This understanding of spiritual warfare then is viewed as virus protection software. However as we approach our text this morning we find the clear commands to be strengthened in the Lord, stand, withstand, put on and take up God's armor without any references to demonic intrusions or expulsions. The multiple commands and descriptions in this passage clearly declare two guiding principles regarding doing battle with evil: one, the devil and his host of helpers can be defeated by the follower of Christ and two, you have everything in Christ that you need to be strengthened to experience that victory.

The key concept in the appropriate understanding of spiritual warfare is that of responsibility. You and I sin because of our unbelief and self rule. The liberating news of the gospel is that in our union with Christ we have been freed from the penalty, guilt and power/enslavement of sin. The forces of evil, rather than controlling our choices, are strong in their influence, scheming, attacks, seduction, inducements, resistance, oppression and propaganda. The core function of the believer in spiritual warfare is being strong in the Lord rather than identifying and expelling demons supposedly responsible for sinful choices.

Our focus this morning falls on verse 13 and identifying 3 present dangers to your staying close to God. These dangers are far more life threatening than the most powerful demons. Let's look at the verse together with strong faith that God will use his word by his Spirit in response to our prayers to make us strong in his blessed Son, Jesus.

Be made strong: know what you are up against . . .

3 present dangers to your staying close to God:

**1. Your lack of informed judgment regarding spiritual powers.** 6:13 'therefore . . .'

'Therefore' in verse 13 connects the reader with the multiple listing of evil powers to motivate the action commanded in the rest of the verse. As you realize the dangerous power and resources aligned against you by the devil and his angels . . . take up God's armor. You neglect strengthening yourself in the Lord at great risk to your spiritual well being and health.

Evil forces are presented in verses 10-12 as personal, powerful, dark, wicked, numerous and authoritative. The presence, activity and power of these enemies stimulate a response of preparation and effort so they will not accomplish their objective of separating you from God.

Your naivety regarding spiritual powers can be reduced by remembering some of the simple ways these evil forces operate . . . Satan attacks . . .

- When the Word of God is taught to unbelievers. Lk.8:12,15
- Through opportunities to gain through greed. Acts 5:3; John 13:2
- By hindering the understanding of the gospel. 2Cor. 4:3-6; Acts 26:18
- Through false teachers and teaching. 2Cor. 11:14; 2Tim. 2:25-26
- When you are suffering. 1Peter 5:9
- When you are fighting with others. James 4:7
- When you are weak and weary. 2Cor. 12:7; Matt. 4:2
- When you have taken a stand for truth. Mark 8:27 – 33

Being influenced, seduced and attacked by demons is an everyday occurrence for God's people. If you think the only evidences of evil influence must include foaming at the mouth, seizures and violent behaviors, you are dangerously misinformed. You must strengthen yourself in Christ by taking up God's armor.

Cmp. 2Kings 6:12 ff Elisha at Dothan

1Peter 5:1-11

**2. Your lethargy regarding the days in which you live.** 6:13 'in the evil day'

Note the context of the command to stand strengthened in the Lord. It is not when you feel like it or when circumstances allow. You and I are expected to stand strengthened by the Lord actively resisting the forces of evil in 'the evil day.' You are to stand strengthened at a time when the conflict is and will be intensifying in severity. You snooze, you lose in this battle. This phrase causes us to look back at E 5:16 and Galatians 1:4 and is best understood as any combination of the following thoughts:

- 1. Your lack of informed judgment regarding spiritual powers. 6:13 'therefore ...'
- 2. Your lethargy regarding the days in which you live. 6:13 'in the evil day'

- The time between the comings of Jesus. E 5:16; Gal. 1:4; 1Cor.2:6

These are not days of morality, justice, fairness and hope in any way outside of Jesus Christ's rule and reign in our hearts.

Evil forces result in both sin and the consequences sin produces. Suffering, hardship, harm, sickness and death are all the consequences of evil.

- Critical times when demonic opposition is heightened. Peter, Jesus, Paul, Judas

- The climax of evil just before the coming of Christ. 2Thess. 2:3; 1John 2:18ff; 2Tim.3:1-9

Quickening of conflict, increase in intensity, a great crescendo

Unrelenting opposition and pressure to relax and be lulled into a false sense of security because the evil days come to feel normal and we feel at home. Standing in the evil day fights the pressure to neglect or abuse the many opportunities that these days afford the gospel soldier.

2Peter 3:1-13 – the Lord is not slow ... but patient!

### **3. Your casual commitment to spiritual victory.** 6:13 'having done all'

Spiritual victory in this passage is defined as standing against the evil forces with the strength of the Lord. Notice that spiritual victory is not the absence of suffering, temptation or hardship. The win is living in uninterrupted connection with Jesus. That connection is heavily assaulted causing you to reach for outside help in the armor God provides.

The phrase 'having done all' is a statement of commitment. It simply is inserted to remind the reader that after you have done all you can do, worked out all that you can, achieved all you are capable of achieving ... you must stand against the devil and connected to Christ!

It reminds us that ...

- Busyness should produce spiritual victory not dryness and exhaustion.
- Results should be measured in terms of spiritual victory not just physical measurements.
- Commitment to being strengthened in the Lord is productive in measurable ways.

Connection to Christ w/resulting joy. Resisting the devil w/resulting holiness.

1Peter 5:8 ... sober minded - watchful

Be made strong: know what you are up against . . . .

3 present dangers to your staying close to God:

- 1. Your lack of informed judgment regarding spiritual powers.** 6:13 'therefore . . . '
- 2. Your lethargy regarding the days in which you live.** 6:13 'in the evil day"
- 3. Your casual commitment to spiritual victory.** 6:13 'having done all'

Conclude with review of Zech.3:1-8 (794) . . . v.8 I will bring my servant the branch . . . stay close to God!