

The Church, God's Plan for This Age: Appropriating God's Power for a Supernatural Battle

Ephesians 6:10-13

February 14, 2021

Paul urges us to a greater dependence on the Lord for the divine empowerment we will need in order to face our enemies and live the kind of lives God has called us to live.

1. Appropriate God's power – "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (10).
 - a. God's people are commanded to "be strong."
 - i. 2 Timothy 2:1 "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."
 - ii. God commanded Joshua to be strong and possess the land (Joshua 1:6-9).
 - iii. The difference now is that God's people face more powerful enemies than mere human opponents.
 - b. God's people are commanded to "be strong in the Lord."
 - i. Paul is calling his readers to a relationship of dependence and not urging them to draw on their own internal fortitude and strength.
 - ii. Believers find empowerment over our demonic enemies through our relationship with the resurrected and ascended Christ (cf. 2:6).
 - iii. We have no power outside of "the power of his (Christ's) might" (cf. 1:19-20).
2. Recognize the supernatural nature of the battle (11). Paul now explains how believers are to gain strength and spiritual power from the Lord. In addition to drawing on our present dynamic relationship to the risen Christ, we are also called to appropriate a set of divine gifts and cultivate some important virtues that will assist us in our conflict with hostile spiritual forces.
 - a. The comparison of God's power to weaponry – "Put on the whole armour of God" (11a)
 - i. When we put on the new self, we are putting on the armor of God (cf. 4:24).
 - ii. Knowing the truth of who we are in union with Christ, cultivating the virtues of this new identity, and using the resources available through this new relationship are at the heart of what it means to put on the armor of God.
 - iii. "The whole armor" implies a full set of armor that a soldier would wear into battle, rather than just taking hold of a few weapons.
 - b. The strategies of the devil – "that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (11b).
 - i. Believers need God's empowerment because they will face a variety of well-planned attacks by a supernatural opponent.
 - ii. "May be able" (dunamai, a derivative of dunamis) is better understood as carrying the full sense of enablement, strengthening, or power.
 - iii. We must seek God's supernatural enablement to have the strength to stand against our enemy.
 - iv. "To stand against" – We are to take a stand offensively and defensively against the enemy.
 - v. "The wiles of the devil" – The devil is an intelligent being that carefully strategizes plans against the church, God's plan of redemption, and individual believers.
 - c. The nonphysical nature of the struggle (6:12a)
 - i. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood" – The warfare believers experience can also be likened to wrestling, but not an engagement with human enemies.
 1. There was a tradition in the ancient world of the advantage a fully armed soldier had if he was also a trained wrestler.
 2. There was a widely attested tradition regarding an Ephesian wrestler who used magic to help him defeat his opponents.
 3. This allusion may have proved an effective way of communicating to the Ephesian converts that they should no longer use magical amulets, but should now put on the complete armor of God.
 4. Our fight is not against those in government or others who would want to do us harm. There are greater forces behind those who oppose Christ and His church.

- d. The range of spirits opposing the church (6:12b-e). There are powerful, invisible, spirit beings that attack believers with the intent of hurting them, causing them to lapse into sin, or making them ineffectual for God's kingdom purposes.
 - i. "But against principalities" – Rulers
 - ii. "Against powers (exousia)" – Authorities
 - iii. "Against rulers of the darkness of this world" – The pagan deities of Paul's day were animated by demonic spirits who "ruled" over the worshippers of these pagan deities.
 - iv. "Against spiritual wickedness in high places" – These unseen wicked spirits inhabit the spirit world of spiritual reality.
 - v. There has been a widespread misconception that modern science has utterly disproven the existence of spirits. This is a question that science is incapable of judging. In fact, the international community of mental health professionals recognizes a disorder they label "Trance and Possession Disorder," a particularly common diagnosis in non-Western cultures.
 - vi. Satan strategizes with his demonic cohorts to identify effective ways to hurt believers or cause them to fall into sin. Here are just a few of his strategies:
 1. Interjecting an image into our minds of something enticing but sinful (Matthew 4:8-10).
 2. Exploiting a sinful tendency, such as anger, and causing it to flare out of control (Eph. 4:27).
 3. Inspiring others to create a principle, teaching, or idea that sounds plausible, but is wrong and dangerous to our souls (2 Corinthians 11:3, 15).
 4. Afflicting us with a physical illness or condition (2 Corinthians 12:7).
 5. Sending a horrible dream or demonic manifestation during the night that produces fear (Job 4:13-16; Psalm 91:5).
 6. Enticing us to lie (Acts 5:3).
 7. Instigating a series of horrible calamities such as the death of a loved one, loss of home, or destruction or loss of property (Job 1-2).

3. Embrace the need for God's power to resist the supernatural enemies (6:13).
 - a. Reiteration of the need for God's power "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God" (13a)
 - i. Because of the supernatural enemy we face, we must take up God's supernatural armor.
 - ii. We cannot fight a supernatural foe with human resources.
 - b. The goal and time of the battle – "that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day" (13b)
 - i. The goal is to withstand, or stand against, the evil one.
 - ii. The time of the battle is now, the evil day (cf. 5:16).
 - iii. The difficulties of the present age will only intensify as the coming of the Lord draws closer.
 - iv. The devil is constantly "sifting" the saints, which must be combated through prayer (Luke 22:31-32).
 - c. The preparation for battle (13c)
 - i. Preparation for the battle does not take place once it begins, but well in advance.
 - ii. Christians must prepare well in advance for inevitable attacks.
 - iii. Because of the certainty that believers will face concerted demonic attack at various intervals it is imperative to grow deeper in a knowledge of God's gifts and cultivate the practices essential to dependence on the unsurpassed power of God.
 - iv. The goal of the preparation is to stand – to keep from falling into sin and to advance on enemy territory to bring the good news of deliverance to those who are oppressed.

Conclusion:

1. In what ways do you show a habitual reliance upon God's supernatural power?
2. Can you identify the strategies that the devil is using against you, your family, your church, our nation?
3. How are you preparing yourself to withstand and stand against the devil?
4. Are you standing against the devil, or are you being swept away?