

In Christ, I've Joined a Spiritual Battle

Series: Made for More (Ephesians)

Brad Bailey – June 5, 2022

Intro

Today we are **concluding our series** entitled Made for More... drawing from the Biblical Book of Ephesians.

As we've noted, the Book of Ephesians is a call to **see the big picture**... to see what God has done in Christ. When can spend our whole lives never knowing who we were really meant to be. We can spend our whole lives thinking that we have to make something of ourselves. What matters most is knowing who we were created to be...and what God makes of us.

We read...

Genesis 1:28 (NLT)

God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it.

Humanity was created to bear the very image of God... to serve as partners with God... representatives of God in caring for the world.

We were created with this great dignity... and blessed.

God blessed them. Adam and Eve didn't do anything to obtain this identity... or his blessing.

God made them. God defined them. and God blessed them. It's all God.

Our ultimate identity is never achieved, it is received. It's not something you do, it's something God does. It's not what you earn, it's what he gives.

The Book of Genesis goes on to explain how humanity become corrupted by believing it could be like god... should take the goods and claim it's own way.

The result...naked and ashamed... hiding... covering themselves up

And in conflict...violence... division... decay... death.

But God spoke of one who would come...In Christ... heaven enters creation... and provides a way to be united with God again through Christ. As was said in the first part of Ephesians...

Ephesians 1:3 (NLT)

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.

The book continues to expound upon how

Through being united with Christ ("in Christ"), a human life is rescued, destined, loved, and belongs forever with God. [1]

To be united with Christ... is to be united with ultimate authority... which the temporal world will one day be fully reconciled with.

And here is what we must understand... **this world** has been **ruled by another force**... and we must understand that if we are united with Christ.... **we have become part of a defiant spiritual force. We will be a threat to that which has ruled this world. This is what Paul describes as he comes to the conclusion.**

Ephesians 6:10-12 (NLT)

A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. ¹² For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

In every story in which there is an **oppressive ruling empire... all is well until a resistance arises... a resistance that won't be kept in its place.** This echoes in the **resistance movements** of the epic **fictional stories...Star Wars... the Divergent series... Hunger Games series... The Chronicles of Narnia....**and in the real wars against oppression.

The oppressing ruler is marked by pride... and control....until they get news that the rightful ruler is returning... and that a resistance movement is rising. Those who join the resistance become a threat.

And they are all **secondary reflections of the ultimate war.**
Today... God wants us to understand something...**the ultimate war is over YOU.**

Whole of Ephesians is to declare God's plan... who you are and can now become. But now the climatic truth of what is at hand must be raised: **there is a war over you.**

Paul's final words are a wakeup call. Often heard as a call to spiritual war... and the nature of spiritual warfare. Every one of us is **like a soldier** who has been given a post to guard....and our **lives are like a post**...we have to guard...and we need to help guard that of others. A soldier needs to hold his post.

A central truth here...is that...
We have a spiritual enemy.

We may have different reactions when we hear a reference to "the Devil" or "Satan."
When you hear the word "devil" or Satan...it may elicit fascination...fear... some cynicism. We might some find the idea of a personal force behind evil strange today.
The very word may conjure up images that seem a bit silly. In truth...most of what we have ever seen related to some image of a devil...are not something God ever declared or described. Probably because of the ways that culture began to capture this figure. Such ideas have fictionalized the existence of the evil one. The character in the red suit and pitchfork seems rather a silly character...and is just a human created character. And I have no doubt the biggest fan of that character is the very real father of evil.

And this force is personal.

- **Our enemy is a spiritual personal force**

Most of us sense that there is a **good that had been corrupted.** There is something beautiful and sacred...and something that has brought a work of death and destruction to it. We might even speak of evil...but seem hesitant to assume that there is a personal spiritual dynamic associated with such evil. [2]

Western culture has become so materialistic that we simply think only matter is real.

Yet we are drawn to horror movies...and most disturbed by that which captures the darkest of evil.

- I recall when the movie **"The Exorcist" came out**...I was never the same. It wasn't that I kept expecting to see a girl with a green face contorting leap out at me...but **something in the eyes that represented something very real.**

The truth is that evil is a force that surrounds us in a million subtle ways... always seeking to hide it's face.

Jesus spoke regularly of a personal adversary...the devil...not just a force...but an entity at work. [3]

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. - John 17:15

Paul is quite clear...that there is that which is at work beyond the human element.

For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. - Ephesians 6:12 (NLT)

Paul says... your **real enemy is never flesh and blood.**

Other people are more like **fellow captives**...who like us...had **willfully given ourselves** to our captor. But it is that captor and those forces that seek the destruction of all that is good.

Modern lives tend to try and ignore such evil.

I suppose we resist this for the same reason we resist truly believing in God.... **we want to consider ourselves our own masters.** We've become **so enamored with our own sense of independence**...with being our own person...making our own choices...that we simply **refuse to accept that we should submit to God** or that **we are under the dominion of an evil ruler.** (Of course if we get in trouble for the independent choices we make...then we might say "The devil made me do it.")

The result is that it shouldn't surprise us that the modern western cultures see less outward manifestations of such spiritual power.

Why would one seeking to rule over human souls show themselves to those who think they are free?

Those who don't realize they need to be delivered are already on a side.

What we need to understand is that...

- **Our enemy is actively pursuing our destruction.**

As another of the central followers of Jesus explained...

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. - 1 Peter 5:8-9

He says... "Be sober, be watchful." He does not say, "Be terrified, obsessed, and fascinated." Jesus never blamed every hardship on a demon...BUT he was powerfully sober and alert ... steady in his awareness....and in his resistance.

When **Jesus taught us to pray**... he concluded with the climatic line: “**Deliver us from the evil one.**” It reflects placing ourselves in sphere of dependence upon God to be delivered and rescued from a force that seeks to destroy us.

Most of human history understood enough about the power of evil to join this prayer....many still do today. But as lives shaped by our modern Western culture... this may sound a bit dramatic.

We might think it's more appropriate to pray for **a little help** with our problems. We may think that we simply have some unfortunate behaviors which need **behavior modification**... some **low self-esteem** that **needs lifting**...**but deliverance from evil may sound a little extreme.**

But the truth is that our souls exist in a world ruled by a force that is set on their destruction.

We need deliverance because there is an enemy set out to destroy us...to draw us out into the darkness.

Why?... we can get a sense of this hatred from the next point...

- **Our enemy is rooted in pride... a demand for glory.**

It is this pride that helps us to best understand our adversary. [4]

He sought to make himself equal to God and aspired to be worshipped.

And to those created in God's image.... He would seek to rule them by offering them what he has to offer...PRIDE... as Genesis depicts him as saying to Adam and Eve...“you can be like the Most High...like God.” [6] His devious offer to Adam and Eve in the Garden is an echo of his challenge against God. This exercise of his pride separated him from God.

> The devil...declares in essence: “I am bent on my own glory....and I will turn the God bearing creatures from reflecting God's goodness...that they may be cast out into the darkness where I rule.”

If we join the way of self-ruling pride... we may never sense much spiritual conflict.

But at the moment of surrender... of glorifying God...we become that threat.

- **Jesus in wilderness:** When the ministry of Jesus began... we are told how the Spirit came upon him and the voice of God the Father could be heard saying This is my son...in whom I am well pleased... whom I love. There is the identity and blessing that Jesus will now walk out of. But we are told immediately that he was led into the wilderness where the devil came and sought to tempt him.... To redirect him away from that identity. It was at the very moment in which Jesus was to move against the devil.... That the devil becomes most manifest... and seeks t keep him from standing firm.
- **My experience**

How we experience such times may be different...but we shouldn't be surprised.

So what will help us stand?

Our strength lies in God.

Ephesians 6:10 (NLT)

Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

It may sound like a basic idea...but it defies how we often operate. So often we think of OUR strength...and we may feel strong in mind, heart, body...and feel strong...or we may feel weak in mind, heart, and body and feel weak. The point we need to grasp is that our own strength or lack of is not what matters. We need a strength and power that lies in God.

A man was filling out one of those job application forms. He stopped, confused, by the blank after the item: "**Person to Notify in Case of Accident**". He thought for a bit and then wrote "The Paramedics". (So it is we wisely need God.)

We must strengthen that which unites us with God.

Ephesians 6:13 (NLT)

Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil.

Whose armor? God's.

Paul is writing this from prison... awaiting trial...and was guarded there by a Roman soldier...possibly even tied to them. And this may have served as a means to look closely at what Rome provided them. [5]

Belt of truth

"Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth...." - Ephesians 6:14 (NLT)

What's the opposite of the truth? Lies. Jesus says that Satan is the father of what? Lies

Garden... Did God say... surely you won't die.

Paul starts here because it is the source of weakness. If a ruler wants to gain control over the masses... creating a false belief... a false narrative... is by far the most powerful form of gaining influence.

Put on truth... it's not something we can assume we already have intact. We need to put it on.

When the stories are told of how some predator was able to keep control over some young life ... it is often heard how that life believed that they were special...or were the only one who cared about them.

Breastplate of righteousness

"... and the body armor of God's righteousness." – Eph. 6:14 (NLT)

A Breastplate is a piece of metal running from the neck to the waist, usually made out of brass to protect the *Vital Organs* of the upper body. In the armor of a Roman soldier, the breastplate served as protection for some of the most important parts of the body....especially the heart.

Just as our physical heart is the most vital... so the Scriptures tell us to protect our inner hearts... our inward dispositions. When we hear someone say.... "I lost my heart"...we know the gist of what they mean... they mean they lost that fortitude. They may have become discouraged... afraid that they just didn't have it.

The truth is that we don't have it all. We are not lively fully right with God...but he has extended the rightness of Christ to us.

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. - 2 Corinthians 5:21

Shoes of peace

"For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared." - Ephesians 6:15 (NLT)

This is what keeps you **steady...sturdy**. Roman soldier's feet were **fitted with sandals** called caligae. These sandals were made to help protect soldier's feet during their long marches into battle. They had **extremely thick soles** and wrapped perfectly around their ankles in a way that protected against blistering. Caligae **also had spikes on the bottom** to help them **stand firm** as they traveled. This helped them have a firm foundation.

Believers also have a firm foundation in the news that God so loved the world that he gave His Son... Christ... to all who will receive him... so that they would never perish.

Peace that is beyond understanding... beyond circumstances.

Prison was hard...but Paul was at peace with God. He was more stable than the guard.

Good news that there is peace with God. That is what will keep your feet firm.

Shield of faith

"In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil." - Ephesians 6:16 (NLT)

It says to wear "the shield of faith." This is to "extinguish flaming darts." Most of us have seen films even in recent years...of battles during the ancient times...when they would use Arrows, and **what's at the end of the arrows?** Fire. What happens if you don't have something to catch that and extinguish it? So, what they would do is they would take shields and they'd be soaked in, oftentimes, water. You'd catch the arrows and extinguish the fire. [6]

We should note that these fiery darts would seek to strike the wood, hay, and straw of structures that would then be destroyed. In the same way...he attacks what can be vulnerable in us. Your adversary's power can only attack what is in you.

Helmet of salvation

"Put on salvation as your helmet" - Ephesians 6:17 (NLT)

> God's saving work protects you.

Sword of the Spirit...the word of God

"... and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." - Ephesians 6:17 (NLT)

Not our words but God's Word.

All of these are facets of being bound in God's strength and power. So naturally Paul concludes with one theme that draws them all together.

Prayer

"Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere." - Ephesians 6:18 (NLT)

Prayer is really about **living centered and dependent on God.**

That is why some of us wonder why it seems hard to pray... why there may be an inner resistance. We enjoy feeling strong in ourselves. We don't want to face our false selves.... And our utter lack of control of life.

> That is the power of staying turned towards, connected, and depending on God. Prayer is that which brings us into the orbit of God...to revolve around Him. When earth is in proper orbit... it bears life.

Samuel Chadwick said [7],

"The one concern of the devil is to keep saints from prayer. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray." - Samuel Chadwick

Closing:

Challenge us to embrace the significance of the spiritual force that transcends the material. The material world is but the manifestation of the spiritual.

Jesus... stood firm in who he was...but also was empowered by the Spirit of God that came and worked through him.

Next week...begin a new series ... launch the start of summer...Empowered Life... wait for the Spirit.... We need to understand who the Holy Spirit is. We need to understand the Holy Spirit's role. We need to understand how we engage with the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Today... it begins with the opportunity to join the resistance... and re-enlist. And in doing so... embrace that there is a war over a particular territory...and that territory is you.

Notes:

1. Our previous weeks in the series noted..

1. In Christ I am Blessed - 1:3-14
2. In Christ I am Destined -1:15-23
3. In Christ I am Rescued - 2:1-10
4. In Christ I Belong - 2:11-22
5. In Christ I am Loved - 3:14-21
6. In Christ I am Essential - 4:1-16

2. There is no part of life that is not touched by evil. It has ruined our circumstances, it has marred our character, indeed it has affected the whole of God's creation. According to Romans 8:22-23

“We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”

3. Scriptures which refer to the “evil one.”

Matthew 13:38 (NIV)

The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one,

John 17:15 (NIV)

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

Ephesians 6:16 (NIV)

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

2 Thessalonians 3:3 (NIV)

But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.

1 John 2:13 (NIV)

I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father.

1 John 3:12 (NIV)

Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous.

4. Many Biblical scholars find Satan's fall described in Isaiah 14:12-14 and Ezekiel 28:12-18. Jewish interpretation of these verses state that in Isaiah the verses are about the King of Babylon, while in Ezekiel the verses are about the prophecy against the King of Tyre. However, many but not all Christians see a double reference in these verses and believe they describe both the ancient kings and the fall of Satan. Read more at <http://www.beliefnet.com/Inspiration/Angels/2006/09/Angel-Faqs-The-Fall-Of-Satan.aspx#AuoDcYdtUgy55faH.99>

One of the few references to the nature of the devil focuses on the pride. Regarding qualifications for elders, we read in 1 Timothy 3:6 (NKJV) says...” not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.”

We also find, that in two clear warnings... we are called to avoid pride in conjunction to resisting the devil- James 4:5–8, 1 Peter 5:5–10. In both of the passages we are warned to forsake pride and humbly submit ourselves before God in order to resist the Devil.

As Proverbs 16 would declare...

“Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.” (Proverbs 16:18)

5. Acts 28:16, 20. Some also note the connection between Isaiah 59:17-18 and Paul's comments on our spiritual armor in Ephesians 6:10-17. In that passage, Paul calls that armor the whole

armor of God, and it is God's armor in the sense that it belongs to Him – after all, He uses it here in Isaiah 59:17-18 – and He allows us to use it to fight for Him.

6. The fiery darts of the enemy will seek something in us to catch fire.

[Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary](#) – “The word "quench," here, means only that they would be "put out" by being thrown "against" the shield, as a candle would by being thrown against anything. "The fiery darts" that were used in war were small, slender pieces of cane, which were filled with combustible materials, and set on fire; or darts around which some combustible material was wound, and which were set on fire, and then shot "slowly" against a foe. The object was to make the arrow fasten in the body, and increase the danger by the burning; or, more frequently, those darts were thrown against ships, forts, tents, etc., with an intention to set them on fire. They were in common use among the ancients. Arrian (Exped. Alexan. 11) mentions the πυρφορα βελη purphora belē, the fire-bearing weapons; Thucydides (ii. c. 75), the πυρφοροι δίστοι purphoroi oistoi, the fire-bearing arrows; and Livy refers to similar weapons as in common use in war; lib. xxi. c. 8.”

Gill's commentary – “they may be said to be "fiery", because they serve to inflame the mind, and excite to sin, as lust, anger, revenge, and the like; and were they not repelled, would be the occasion of bringing into everlasting burnings. The allusion is to , "the fiery darts", cast by enemies into towns, and upon houses, in order to burn them (p).”

7. From - Verwer, "Come, Live, Die", 1972, p.83