

# There's A Battle Over You

Series: Becoming Who We Are (Engaging Ephesians)

Brad Bailey - March 30, 2014

## Intro

This season I have been getting a review of history... one of my High School sons has a World History class and we have a ritual going over his notes a few times each week before a test. I've been struck by the extent of wars... sobered by the loss of lives...1,000 here...10,000...often a million lives...and some even the tens of millions. At root most often was the desire to take control over certain territories. [1]

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.

## **Ephesians 6:10-20 (NLT)**

A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. <sup>14</sup> Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. <sup>15</sup> For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. <sup>17</sup> Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. <sup>18</sup> Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere. <sup>19</sup> And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. <sup>20</sup> I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God's ambassador. So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should.

## **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.

**Paul understands** that it is **hard to stay strong**... Our spirits rise up to more than we may see physically...so regardless of our physical strength... it can be hard to keep our spirits intent and upright.

I think many of us know how **spiritually worn down** we can feel at times...choosing to go in a direction that is **often against the current**.

You may share the feeling that: I had a moment of realizing what is true... a moment of connection with God... a moment of surrender...when I knew who I was and how my life should be...but it's been hard to stay in that place.

So his final word is about how to be strong...and it really is about "who" more than "how."

> Be strong **"in the Lord"**...in **"His mighty power"**. [2]

The first and central point in being prepared to stand, is that....

## 1. 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.

This becomes clearer when you know what you are actually up against.

Do you know who is trying to destroy you?

We need to know that it's **not just us and God**. There's a **third variable** that we absolutely have to factor into everything, and that is an **adversarial force in the spiritual realm**... referred to as "the devil" as in this translation...as well as other terms such as Satan.

Ephesians 6:12

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.

Most people don't like having enemies. Most of us want to avoid eliciting hatred from someone. Sometimes we might feel strong in the face of a little opposition...but if someone really HATES you... is set on destroying you... and has vast authority over others... you would be worried.

> 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.

Do you know you have an enemy?

Do you know you're not loved by everyone and everything?

Do you know you're hated, despised, and opposed?

**So we need to realize...**

## 2. Someone is Really Against You

We may have a different reaction 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**.

**The very word may conjure up images that seem more sort of 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.**

- **Evil is real**

**It is not inherent to creation.** God did not create evil... for ‘evil’ is merely the negation of the ‘good’ that was created. God created good...and that good included freedom.... freedom to rebel.

**God created a world to enjoy his glory...his goodness.** Evil is that which seeks it’s glory and submission to itself.

**God provides order that serves us with peace...Evil disorders life and destroys peace.**

**God is the essence of love... Evil is the very essence of hatred...contempt...of disdain...it abhors love.**

**God created life... Evil seeks our death...eternal death.**

**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. [3]

**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.

**And this force is personal.**

- **Evil involves a personal force**

**Jesus spoke regularly** of a **personal adversary**...the devil...not just a force...but an entity at work. [4]

**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.

**Why might some find the idea of a personal force behind evil strange today?**

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.**

**Paul has no illusion** that we can see the powers of evil.

**Ephesians 6:12 (NLT)**

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.

**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.

Somewhere we may catch a quick look at it’s reality it... in what happens to us... or within us.

When someone takes a trust and outright hurts us with it... or takes a life from us in a selfish act.

Then we begin to feel how evil evil can be.

**But usually we want to ignore such evil. Again...we have our human caricatures that just don't seem real...we are more comfortable with our materialistic sense of knowing and controlling the world.**

**But even more deeply,** 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...

- **Evil is actively pursuing our destruction.**

1 Peter 5:8-9 (NIV)

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

We need to awaken to something that is actively at work.

**Our souls exist in a world ruled by a force that is set on their destruction.**

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.**

**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...

**3. At the root of our adversary is pride.**

It is this pride that helps us to best understand our adversary. [5]

**God is defined by love...**and relates with self-sacrificial grace to save us justly. **Satan is defined by pride...**and relates with self-serving jealousy to destroy.

The Scriptures give glimpses into the nature of the personal forefront of evil – they speak of **one referred** to as Satan or the Devil as **originally a powerful angelic being... wise and beautiful ...** named Lucifer.

Pride led to a rebellion (described in Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:11-17.) Lucifer **became proud** because of his wisdom and beauty and he declared,

**Isaiah 14:14 (NIV)**

I will ascend... I will make myself like the Most High."

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

Well...this angel was cast from heaven and would subsequently be known as the Hebrew name **Satan which means "adversary."** Satan is **also called the devil (from the Greek word diabolos)** with the meaning of **slanderer or accuser.**

The angels who joined Satan in his rebellion against God are commonly referred to as evil spirits or demons. The Book of Revelation tells us that one-third of the angelic population were bound with the fallen angel and cast out of heaven with him. Revelation 12:4, 9)

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."

Your enemy **hates you.**

He **lied to destroy you.**

**You represent the glory he seeks...** as you join him seeking your own glory...you glorify him.

In being restored to God...you represent what declares his foolishness and fate.

It all is centered on the glory of God...

> He hates you...and he knows that

As Proverbs 16 would declare...

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

So if we say..."Hey, I love the Garden...I'll take it from here." We are already in the enemy camp whether we realize it or not.

If we think: "I am a strong person...I can stand up to whatever spiritual forces may be at hand." Our enemy may consider this self-reliance as "Mission accomplished."

**4. Our sources of spiritual strength...are that which bind us to God**

**If there are spiritual powers that seeking to destroy us... we should seek the ultimate spiritual power to be with us.**

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.)

**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.

The detailed description of the armor (given in Eph. 6:14–17) may stem from Paul's being tied to a Roman soldier while in prison awaiting trial (cf. Acts 28:16, 20).

- **Belt of truth**

**Ephesians 6:14 (NLT)**

Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth

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

All of these can be strategies to destroy us by turning us from God. The Scriptures tell us he is the Father of Lies (John 8:44)

Satan is going to lie to us. Satan lies all the time. And something need not be true to be powerful. Have you noticed that? So much of our lives is governed by lies. That's why Jesus says, "You'll know the truth, and the truth will"—what? "Set you free." So, the truth gets you out of your captivity.

- **Breastplate of righteousness**

**Ephesians 6:14 (NLT)**

... and the body armor of God's righteousness.

- **Boots of the Gospel's peace**

**Ephesians 6:15 (NLT)**

For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared.

Good news that there is peace with God. That is what will keep your feet firm. [7]

- **Shield of faith**

**Ephesians 6:16 (NLT)**

In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil.

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. [8]

**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**

Ephesians 6:17 (NLT)

Put on salvation as your helmet

> God's saving work protects you.

- **Sword of the Spirit...the word of God**

Ephesians 6:17 (NLT)

... and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

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.

## **5. The greatest connection to strength is prayer.**

Ephesians 6:18 (NLT)

Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion.

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.

Paul gives us an example. He then says "pray for me"... "I am in this battle...pray for me."

He wants them to pray for him to be strong.

> That is the power of staying turned towards, connected, and depending on God.

### **Closing:**

Prayer is that which brings us into the orbit of God...to revolve around Him. When earth is in proper orbit... it bears life. I am going to first give us an opportunity to pray...to re-align yourself with God.

Then...if you have felt "sifted" by the enemy... a desire to restore your strength and resolve....come down for prayer.

**Resources:** Troy Lacey on “The First Sin”, Mark Driscoll

**Notes:**

1. Statistics of wars can be found at:

<http://filipspagnoli.wordpress.com/stats-on-human-rights/statistics-on-war-conflict/statistics-on-violent-conflict/>

Since the beginning of recorded history, around 3600 BC, over 14.500 major wars have killed about four billion people, a number that not so long ago equaled the whole of humanity. The wars that took place in the 20th century killed around 200 million people; in the Second World War, 66 million died, compared to 15 million in the First. Since the Second World War, there have been on average about 30 armed conflicts ongoing every year. 90% of casualties in these conflicts have been civilians, compared to 50% in the Second World War and 10% in the First. 128 armed conflicts since 1989 have resulted in at least 250,000 deaths each year.

From: [http://www.ppu.org.uk/learn/infodocs/st\\_war\\_peace.html](http://www.ppu.org.uk/learn/infodocs/st_war_peace.html)

SINCE THE END of the Second World War in 1945 there have been some 250 major wars in which over 50 million people have been killed, tens of millions made homeless, and countless millions injured and bereaved.

In the history of warfare the twentieth century stands out as the bloodiest and most brutal - three times more people have been killed in wars in the last ninety years than in all the previous five hundred

2. The Greek word for “be strong” (ἐνδυναμοῦσθε, endynamousthe) means to be “empowered” or “strengthened.” Paul uses the same word in the beautiful parallel to this verse in [Phil 4:13](#), “I can do everything through him who gives me strength.” He also uses this word to encourage Timothy to “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” ([2 Tim 2:1](#)).

“and in his mighty power.” Literally, “in the power (κράτει, kratei) of his strength (ἰσχύος, ischyos).” Barth puts it briefly, “God is their power in person.” Apart from their Lord, Christians can do nothing at all ([John 15:1-5](#)).

3. 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.”

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. Genesis 3:4-5 (NIV)

"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

7. I tend to share the idea that this verse does not speak of the spreading of the gospel, for Christians are pictured in vv. 10-16 as standing, not advancing. Instead this refers to a believer's stability or surefootedness **from the gospel** which gives him **peace** so he can stand in the battle.

8. 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 bele, the fire-bearing weapons; Thucydides (ii. c. 75), the πυρφοροι οπιστοι 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)."