

# **THE SOVEREIGN GOD AND THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL: A STUDY OF EPHESIANS**

## **(LESSON ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTEEN)**

### ***“STANDING IN THE EVIL DAY”***

#### **EPHESIANS 6:10-13**

*10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

*11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

*12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

*13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

We will begin our Lesson this evening with an excerpt from an article published by **Ligonier Ministries**:

“Though Ephesians was written as a summary of Christian doctrine, theological knowledge is never intended merely to satisfy our intellectual curiosity. Paul did not tell us about the gospel and the church’s purpose (**Ephesians 1-3**) so that we could sit back and relax. Instead, he taught us these things that we might obey [God’s] will in the Spirit’s power, thereby participating in the kingdom’s expansion (**Ephesians 4:1-6:9**).

Unless we know the enemy we face and how to defeat him, however, our efforts to live out the gospel are for naught. Scripture lists our main enemies as the world, the flesh, and the Devil (**1 John 2:15-17; Galatians 5:16; 1 Peter 5:8**), all of whom are formidable indeed. Ultimately, however, to fight any of these is to fight the Enemy himself. "*We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against . . . the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places*" (**Ephesians 6:12**). To stand against the world is to stand against the Evil One, the ruler of this fallen world (**Matthew 4:8-9**). To fight our sinful nature is to battle the one who introduced sin into creation (**Genesis 3:1-7**). And, of course, to war against the Devil is to fight Satan directly (**James 4:7**)."

In verse **12**, the Apostle Paul informs the believers in Ephesus that their real warfare is not being waged against human beings, but against the devil and his forces. He writes, "*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens*" (**New English Translation**).

Brothers and sisters, we are not engaged in physical warfare. We are engaged in a spiritual conflict. This spiritual conflict is not so much a **power** struggle as it is a **truth** struggle. It is the truth of God's Word that renews our mind, and determines how we think and believe, and therefore how we act and behave. As we apply the truth of the Word of God to our lives we stand firm and withstand the devil.

In **James 4:7** James writes, "*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*" Believers are **never** instructed to **flee** from the Devil but to **resist** him! We resist him by submitting to God **first**. We submit to God by submitting to the authority of Scripture in **every** area of our lives. We must resist the temptation to try special formulas or words directed at the devil or his demons. We must simply purpose to remain steadfast in the faith, living in accordance with the truth of God's Word. As we feed on a diet of **sound doctrine** and

**obey** God’s truth, the devil is “resisted.”

Paul describes the believer’s spiritual warfare as a “*struggle*,” or a “wrestling.” He says, “*We wrestle not against flesh and blood.*” The word “*struggle*,” or “*wrestle*” is a translation of the Greek word **palé**: (**pal’-ay**), which is the literal word for a wrestling contest. As such it pictured hand-to-hand combat between wrestling athletes. In the ancient world this combat was characterized by trickery, cunning and deception. Paul uses the word in the figurative sense to picture the believer’s struggle and conflict against evil angelic forces, arranged in a military like hierarchy.

Paul lists four distinct satanic orders against whom believers wrestle in spiritual warfare. These are **a.** “*principalities*,” **b.** “*powers*,” **c.** “*rulers of the darkness of this world*,” and **d.** “*spiritual wickedness in high places.*”

These enemies, who are not “flesh-and-blood” enemies, are fallen angels, or demons over whom the devil has control. They are not mere fantasies—they are very real. As believers we face a powerful army whose goal is to defeat the “Body of Christ.” The moment we were converted these beings became our life-long enemies, and they use every possible scheme to turn us away from our Lord and back to a life-style characterized by sin. Although we are assured of victory, we must engage in the struggle until Christ returns, because Satan is constantly battling against all who are on the Lord’s side. We need supernatural power to defeat Satan, and God has provided this power by giving us His Holy Spirit within us and his armour surrounding us.

In verse **13** Paul writes, “*Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*”

The **New English Translation** renders the verse as follows: “*For this reason, take up the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand your ground on the evil day, and having done everything, to stand.*”

The word “*Therefore,*” or the phrase, “*For this reason*” at the beginning of the verse, serves to connect what Paul had written immediately before with what he is now about to write. Because our struggle is against such a formidable array of powerful spiritual beings, it is critically important for us to “*take up the full armor of God.*” Like a military general addressing his troops before a crucial battle, Paul commands the believers to take up their armour.

The words, “*take unto you,*” or “*take up,*” are the translation of the Greek word, **analambanó**: (**an-al-am-ban’-o**), which means, “to take up, raise; to take to oneself.” The verb is in a construction which indicates that Paul is issuing a command to the Ephesian believers, a command given with military curtness which he expects them to obey at once and once for all. Thus, the Christian is to take up and put on all the armour of God urgently, as a once-for-all act, and keep that armour on during the entire course of his or her life, not relaxing the discipline necessary for the constant use of such protection.

In 1836 **Charlotte Elliot** wrote,

*“Christian! seek not yet repose,  
Hear thy guardian angel say;  
Thou art in the midst of foes;  
Watch and pray.*

*Principalities and powers,  
Mustering their unseen array,  
Wait for thy unguarded hours;  
Watch and pray.*

*Gird thy heavenly armor on,  
Wear it ever night and day;  
Ambushed lurks the evil one;  
Watch and pray.*

*Watch, as if on that alone  
Hung the issue of the day;  
Pray that help may be sent down;  
Watch and pray.”*

As is the case with all the imperatives (commands) of God, we need to depend continually on the Holy Spirit’s empowerment in order to obey. When we obey in the strength that He provides, we will be supernaturally strengthened to withstand the enemy even in the fiercest battle.

Brothers and sisters, **every** battle is crucial! In **2 Samuel 11:1-5** we read the following:

*1 In the spring of the year, at the time when kings normally conduct wars, David sent out Joab with his officers and the entire Israelite army. They defeated the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed behind in Jerusalem.*

*2 One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of his palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. Now this woman was very attractive.*

*3 So David sent someone to inquire about the woman. The messenger said, “Isn’t this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?”*

*4 David sent some messengers to get her. She came to him and he went to bed with her. (Now at that time she was in the process of purifying herself from her menstrual uncleanness.) Then she returned to her home.*

*5 The woman conceived and then sent word to David saying, “I’m pregnant.”*

If David had gone to battle with his army as he should have, he would have avoided the battle with the lust of the flesh. The loss of this latter

battle resulted in serious and lifelong consequences for David and the members of his family (**2 Samuel 12:10-12**). Brothers and sisters, none of us know when that critical battle or “*evil day*” might occur in our life. We must therefore ensure that we are “*filled by the Spirit*” (**Ephesians 5:18**), in order to “*take up the full armor of God.*”

As we learned when we considered verse **11**, the phrase, “*the whole armour of God,*” is a translation of the Greek word **panoplia**: (**pan-op-lee’-ah**), which refers to the complete set of instruments used in offensive and defensive warfare.

Brothers and sisters, this armour is not something that we have to purchase or manufacture. It is God’s armour and is supplied by Him. In fact He Himself is our divine sufficiency! It is our responsibility however to take up God’s armour and put it on. We need to be fully attired in every article of our divine equipment. If we take up the “*whole armour of God,*” we can be assured that we will enter into battle with everything we need for victory over our enemy.

The English nonconformist Puritan preacher and author, **Thomas Brooks** in alluding to the “*whole armour of God,*” wrote that the four primary things for a believer to search out and make a study of, were **1 Christ, 2 the Scripture, 3 his or her own heart, and 4 Satan’s devices**. He went on to say that, “If any cast off the study of these, they cannot be safe here, nor happy hereafter. It is my work as a Christian...to do my best to discover the fullness of Christ, the emptiness of the creature, and the snares of the great deceiver.”

In verse **11**, Paul exhorted the Ephesian believers to “*put on the whole armour of God,*” because that is the only way that they would be, “*able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*” In verse **13**, he urges them to “*take unto [them] the whole armour of God,*” because that is the only way that they, “*will be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*”

The phrase “*will be able*” is a translation of the Greek word **dunamai**: (**doo’-nam-ahee**), which means, “to have power by virtue of inherent ability and resources.” The word is in a construction which indicates that this is an internal enablement **provided by an outside source**. The outside source in this context is, of course, the Holy Spirit.

The Greek word translated “*withstand*,” or “*stand your ground*,” is **anthistémi**: (**anth-is’-tay-mee**), which means, “to set against; to set oneself against, to withstand resist, oppose.” The idea is of being arranged in battle against an opponent and therefore pictures a face-to-face confrontation. It speaks of firm resistance by actively holding one’s ground against opposing pressure or power. It involves not only a psychological attitude but also a corresponding behaviour. Paul does not recommend that believers hunt down, or actively pursue our spiritual enemies. What he exhorts them to do is to stand their ground, remaining steadfast and immovable, clothed in God’s full armour.

It is imperative that believers take up the full armour of God in order to stand their ground on the “*evil day*.” What exactly is the “*evil day*?” The word “*evil*” is a translation of the Greek word **ponéros**: (**pon-ay-ros**), which means, “full of labours, annoyances, hardships; bad, of a bad nature or condition, evil, wicked.” It refers to evil in active opposition to good.

The Greek word translated “*day*” is **hémera**: (**hay-mer’-ah**) which literally refers to the time space between dawn and dark or the whole 24 hours. In the present context, the word is used to speak of a specific point in time, or a period of time. The Greek New Testament scholar, **Kenneth Wuest**, explains that, “The definite article before ‘*day*,’ marks it out as a particular day, probably, as **Expositors** says, ‘the day of violent temptation and assault, whenever that may come to us during the present time.’”

The phrase “*the evil day*” implies that not all days are evil. Some days, as we have all experienced are worse than others. One commentator

describes “*the evil day*” as, “**evil in its day of power.**” Satanic opposition seems to occur in waves, advancing and receding. Even after our Lord’s temptation in the wilderness, the devil left Him for a season (**Luke 4:13**). “*The evil day*” refers to any time when the enemy comes in against us like a flood.

**Ray Pritchard** notes that,

“While every day has its share of evil, not every day is the “evil day.” There are moments in life when we feel the heat of battle in a big way. In those days temptation flares up, tempers grow short, friends turn against us, discouragement sets in, and we feel like giving up.”

There are seasons in our lives when pressures are more intense, and when problems, trials, and temptations seem to gang up on us all at once. Surely these would classify as “evil days.” This phrase probably does not signify a literal twenty-four-hour day, for it could be a week, a month, or even years in length. But by the mercy and grace of God, thankfully not all of life is a relentless, excruciating trial. So while every day is not an evil day, we have to agree that, in general, life is an unrelenting struggle. The struggle varies in intensity from time to time, but it extends from the cradle to the grave.

It is my opinion that the calamities that fell upon Job so suddenly and so devastatingly, are a perfect example of what Paul refers to as the “*evil day.*”

Brothers and sisters, it is vitally important for us to recognize that we are not able to “withstand, or “stand our ground” on the evil day in our strength. We can only do so in the supernatural strength provided by the Holy Spirit. The only way that we will be able to resist the unseen spiritual forces of evil is by continually relying on the unseen Spirit of God. Enabled by the Holy Spirit we can stand our ground, but we need to **make the choice** to do so. The Holy Spirit will not **force** us to resist. The **power** to resist is God’s, not ours, but the **choice** to resist is ours.

In **Philippians 2:12-13** Paul writes,

*12 So then, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence but even more in my absence, continue working out your salvation with awe and reverence,*

*13 for the one bringing forth in you both the desire and the effort—for the sake of his good pleasure—is God.*

**(New English Translation)**

This passage clearly indicates that it is the Holy Spirit Who gives us, not only the **power** to resist, but the **desire** to resist. So there is a sense in which, in and of ourselves, we are unable to even choose to resist! But it is also true that when the Holy Spirit gives us the desire to resist, we still have to carry it out by making the right choice.

All of us have had the experience of being sorely tempted and being able to resist the temptation. We were able to resist because of the power of the Holy Spirit working in us, but we still had to make the choice to resist. But all of us have also had the experience of being tempted and yielding to the temptation, thus committing sin. We failed, because we did not rely completely on the Holy Spirit, Who was supplying the desire and the power to resist the temptation. On the occasions when we have failed to resist, we allowed our fallen adamic nature, the “flesh” to override the Spirit, and we therefore, did not make the correct choice. Whose fault was that, ours or God’s? It was our fault of course! This is why it is absolutely necessary for us to “*take up the full armor of God,*” so that even when the battle is at its fiercest, we, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, will be able to **stand our ground** against even the most determined enemy assault. In so doing we will discover that when the attack is over, we have not yielded even an inch of territory to the enemy.

We will conclude our Lesson with an article from “*Our Daily Bread:*”

"In an article for Youth Ministries magazine, a 14-year veteran of the Navy **SEALS** describes the color-code system they use to indicate levels of combat readiness. Each stage has a parallel in spiritual warfare.

### **Condition White**

The soldier is relaxed and daydreaming, unaware of his surroundings. A Christian in this condition is easy prey for Satan.

### **Condition Yellow**

The soldier is relaxed physically but alert mentally. A believer at this level may sense trouble coming, but he's not ready to confront it.

### **Condition Orange**

The soldier is physically prepared, mentally alert, and ready to fight. A believer at this stage has on the full armor of God.

### **Condition Red**

As in condition orange, the soldier is ready to fight. The difference is experience. A battle-seasoned Christian knows quickly what to do because of his experience and familiarity with Scripture.

Wherever we as followers of Christ happen to be-at work, in the mall, on a business trip, even among fellow believers-we need to know about Satan's methods and be prepared to resist. He always seems to attack at our most vulnerable moments. But if we stay alert and armed, we can fend off his most powerful attacks."