

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

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

### ***“HAVING DONE ALL, STAND”***

#### **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.*

In verse 13 of our text 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.”*

In this verse, Paul issues a command to the Ephesian believers, a command given with military curtness, which he expects them to obey at once and once for all. The command is for them to take up and put on all the armour of God urgently, as a once-for-all act, and to keep that

armour on during the entire course of their lives, not relaxing the discipline necessary for the constant use of such protection.

Regarding the phrase, “*the evil day,*” 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.’”

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 own strength. We can only do so in the supernatural strength provided by the Holy Spirit. 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 the last clause of verse **13** Paul writes, “*And having done all, to stand.*” The words, “*having done,*” are the translation of the Greek word, **katergazomai: (kat-er-gad’-zom-ahee)**, which means, “to perform, accomplish, achieve; to work out, i. e. to do that from which something results.” The idea is of engaging in an activity involving considerable expenditure of effort, in order to achieve a desired end. It means to work out fully and thoroughly, to finish or carry something to a successful conclusion.

The word “*all,*” is a translation of the Greek word, **hapas: (hap’-as)**, which means, “all things, all without exception, everything.” In this context it means to leave nothing undone that will enable the believer to “*fight the good fight of faith, [and] lay hold on eternal life*” (**1 Timothy 6:12**).

In “*A Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians,*” **Robert Bratcher** and **Eugene Nida** explain that, “In this context it would seem that the writer is talking about a constant series of battles with the enemy...In

this view, the participial phrase would mean that after fighting each battle to the end the Christian warrior will still be on his feet, ready for the next battle."

The **Message** renders **Ephesians 6:13** as follows: "*Be prepared. You're up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it's all over but the shouting you'll still be on your feet.*"

"*Having done all*" includes both clothing oneself in the whole armour of God, and resisting Satan, with the understanding that he will attack again and again. It means, "having done everything that is required in the crisis." Brothers and sisters, we are not being called upon to do merely as well as our fellow believers are doing; we are being called upon to do **ALL!**

The Anglican clergyman **William Gurnall** (1616–1679), wrote, "In heaven we shall appear, not in armour, but in robes of glory. But **here** these are to be worn night and day; we must walk, work, and sleep in them, or else we are not true soldiers of Christ...We must not confide in the armour of God, but in the God of this armour, because all our weapons are only 'mighty **through God.**'"

The Greek word translated "*Stand*" is **histémi**: (**his'-tay-mee**). It is the same Greek word that is translated, "*stand against*" in verse **11**. It means, "to make to stand, to stand; to make firm, fix, establish; to cause a person to keep his or her place, or a thing to keep its place." **Histémi** was a military term for holding one's position and therefore not yielding an inch of territory to the enemy. The sandals of Roman soldiers had spikes on them so they could dig in and hold their ground and not be knocked off course. The word conveys the idea of standing one's ground, as opposed to taking flight. In this passage on spiritual warfare, the word "*stand*" (**histémi**), is clearly a very important word. Paul uses it in verses **11**, **13**, and **14**.

Brothers and sisters, it is important for us to understand that any teaching on spiritual warfare which restricts itself to **Ephesians 6:10-18**, will at best provide only a partial view of truth on this crucial topic. It is vital for us to know **who we are in Christ** before we can stand firmly. We must therefore, “*stand*” firmly on the truth of the doctrines which Paul had expounded in the earlier chapters of his letter to the Ephesians.

Let us remind ourselves of some of the doctrinal truths explained by Paul in the first two chapters.

We must “*stand*” firmly on the truth of our being, “*blessed...with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ*” (**Ephesians 1:3**).

We must “*stand*” firmly on the truth of our being chosen by God in Christ, “*before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him in love*” (**Ephesians 1:4**).

We must “*stand*” firmly on the truth of God, “*predestining us to adoption as his legal heirs through Jesus Christ, according to the pleasure of his will*” (**Ephesians 1:5**).

We must “*stand*” firmly on the truth that, “*In Christ we...have been claimed as God’s own possession*” (**Ephesians 1:11**).

We must “*stand*” firmly on the truth that, when we believed in Christ, we were, “*marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit, who is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of God’s own possession*” (**Ephesians 1:13-14**).

We must “*stand*” firmly on the truth of, “*the wealth of [God’s] glorious inheritance in the saints*” (**Ephesians 1:18**).

We must “*stand*” firmly on the truth of, “*the incomparable greatness of [God’s] power toward us who believe*” (**Ephesians 1:19**).

We must “**stand**” firmly on the truth that Christ is seated, “*far above every rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come,*” and that God has, “*put all things under Christ’s feet, and gave him to the church as head over all things*” (**Ephesians 1:21-22**).

We must “**stand**” firmly on the truth that, “*by grace [we] are saved through faith, and this is not from [ourselves,] it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so that no one can boast.*” (**Ephesians 2:8-9**).

We must “**stand**” firmly on the truth that, “*we are his creative work, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works that God prepared beforehand so we can do them*” (**Ephesians 2:10**).

We must “**stand**” firmly on the truth that in Christ Jesus, “*we have boldness and confident access to God by way of Christ’s faithfulness*” (**Ephesians 2:12**).

We must “**stand**” firmly on the truth that God, “*by the power that is working within us is able to do far beyond all that we ask or think*” (**Ephesians 2:20**).

From a practical standpoint believer’s “**stand**” by living Holy Ghost-filled, Word-saturated lives (**Ephesians 5:18, Colossians 3:16**). In order for a believer to successfully stand, He or she must continually be controlled by the Holy Spirit, or, to say it another way, he or she must have “*the word of Christ dwelling in them richly.*” We may say that, as believers, we stand by living the obedient, Scripture–dominated, Spirit–empowered life.

As we stated in an earlier Lesson, the greatest weapon we have in our spiritual arsenal is not what we **say** to the devil but how we **live** the “in Christ life.” Obedience to God and His Word, is the key to waging successful spiritual warfare. It is not in **binding** the forces of darkness but in **bowing** to the God who is light, that we consistently live overcoming lives and become a fortress against the enemy.

Remember that victory is not something that we are fighting to **win**; victory is something that we are fighting to **maintain** in our lives. The war has already been won for us by the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary.

Paul's exhortation in **Ephesians 6:13**, is similar to our Lord's exhortation to the church at Thyatira in **Revelation 2:25**: "*But that which ye have already hold fast till I come*" (**King James Version**). The church at Thyatira was to actively hold onto the good things they had until the coming of Christ. They were to be held fast in the face of active opposition by the world, the flesh, and the devil. This is the theme throughout Scripture for those who seek after God. The believer who is consistently being **disobedient** is probably also being **deceived**, and a person who is deceived is unaware of his or her true spiritual condition. He or she is therefore, a prime target for defeat! That is why it is so important for us, when we fall into sin, to heed the Lord's exhortation to the church at Ephesus in **Revelation 2:5**: "*Therefore, remember from what high state you have fallen and repent! Do the deeds you did at the first*" (**New English Translation**).

We must bear in mind that even though God has "*delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of the Son he loves*" (**Colossians 1:13**), we can still choose to place ourselves under the influence of the power of darkness.

In a sermon entitled, "***The War Against the Soul and the Glory of God***," **John Piper** made the following remarks:

"We must cultivate the mindset of **exiles**. What this does mainly is sober us up and wake us up so that we don't drift with the world and take for granted that the way the world thinks and acts is the best way. We don't assume that what is on TV is helpful to the soul; we don't assume that the priorities of advertisers is helpful to the soul; we don't assume that the strategies and values of business and industry are helpful to the soul. We don't assume that any of this glorifies God.

We stop and we think and we consult the Wisdom of **our own country, heaven**, and we don't assume that the conventional wisdom of this age is God's wisdom. **We get our bearings from God in his word.** When you see yourself as an alien and an exile with your citizenship in heaven, and God as your only Sovereign, you stop drifting with the current of the day. You ponder what is good for the soul and what honors God in everything: food, cars, videos, bathing suits, birth control, driving speeds, bed times, financial savings, education for the children, unreached peoples, famine, refugee camps, sports, death, and everything else. Aliens get their cue from God and not the world."

It is my opinion that many of us have wrong ideas about spiritual warfare. We think of the Church as constantly assaulting the kingdom of darkness. We even sing songs about going to the enemy's camp and taking back what he has stolen from us. I think that this view is based on a misunderstanding of our Lord's words in **Matthew 16:18**: "*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*" (**King James Version**). It is not difficult, from a cursory reading of this verse, to appreciate how persons could come to the conclusion that the Church should always be bombarding the "gates of hell" with a view to plundering and conquering it. The problem is that this view is not consistent with the rest of Scripture. Nowhere in the Bible do we read of the Church assaulting or conquering hell in this way.

It is important for us to understand what is meant by the phrase "the gates of hell." In the ancient world, the gate complex of an ancient city was more than a mere passage into the town, or a defensive military structure. It was the civic forum, the heart of the city. It was there that the town's elders oversaw legal procedures, kings publicly sat and took counsel, and prophets proclaimed their messages. Townspeople came and went, bought and sold, worshipped their gods and were tried and executed at the gates of the city. Indeed, most of a town's civic life was centered on the gate complex. For hundreds of years, gate complexes stood as an institution central to the very identity of ancient societies,

influencing how they interacted with their neighbours, how they governed themselves, how they went to war, and how they perceived themselves. In short, it was the place where the life of the city was planned, organized and strategized.

It is in this sense that Jesus speaks of the “gates of hell” in **Matthew 16:18**. He is saying in effect that no satanic strategy, no plot from principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, or spiritual wickedness in high places, will ultimately succeed against the Church. Instead of picturing the Church actively seeking out and attacking demonic fortresses, we are to have the mind-set that Jesus demonstrated in His ministry. Our Lord did not patrol around, looking for demons to conquer. If He had operated in this manner He would have been allowing the forces of darkness to set the agenda for His ministry. Instead, Jesus knew what His Father wanted Him to do and He set about doing it. He dealt with satanic opposition when it arose. When satanic opposition raised itself, Jesus stood against it and was not moved.

Brothers and sisters, God has given us a mission to fulfill. Satan will do his best to prevent us from doing so. When he attacks us and tries to intimidate us, we are commanded to “**stand**.” It is this idea that Paul is emphasizing in **Ephesians 6:11** and **13**. The Church’s mandate is to advance the Kingdom of God so vigorously that it shakes the powers of darkness, but we must never allow principalities and powers to set our agenda. We must be committed to pursuing the agenda of the Kingdom of God and to standing against every hint of spiritual opposition.

Brothers and sisters, God has given to every believer a glorious standing “in Christ” and it is our responsibility to “*put on the whole armour of God, that [we] may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*” We must, “*take...the whole armour of God, that [we] may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*” In other words, we must stand firm in our standing!

We stand in **grace (Romans 5:2)**



We stand in **the gospel (1Corinthians 15:1)**.

We stand in **the faith (1Corinthians 16:13)**.

We stand in **Christian liberty (Galatians 5:1)**.

We stand in **Christian unity (Philippians 1:27)**.

We stand in **the Lord (Philippians 4:1)**.

On October 31, 1517, **Martin Luther** declared his opposition to the Roman Catholic Church's corruption by nailing his **95 Theses** of Contention to the door of the Wittenberg Church. Three years and six months later, Luther stood before the imperial Diet of Worms. The newly elected Holy Roman emperor, Charles V, had summoned Luther to this place for a hearing regarding his teachings.

On April 17, 1521, in the presence of the emperor, the electors and princes of the church, Luther was asked two questions. "Do you, Martin Luther, recognize the books published under your name as your own?" And, "Are you prepared to recant what you have written in these books?" In an almost inaudible voice Luther acknowledged that the writings were his, but since they involved faith, salvation and the Word of God, he asked for additional time to consider a response to the second question. The assembly agreed and Luther retreated in seclusion.

Left with only twenty four hours to either recant his body of work or face the discipline of the Roman Catholic Church as a heretic-a sentence that meant certain death- Luther poured out his heart in prayer. His prayer reveals the soul of a terrified man, alone in his room, prostrate before God, desperately seeking assurance and courage to do the right thing. **R.C. Sproul**, in his book, "***By Faith Alone***," wrote, "It was Luther's private Gethsemane." It was his "evil day." Listen to his plea for help:

"O God, Almighty God Everlasting! How dreadful is the world! Behold how its mouth opens to swallow me up, and how small is my faith in

Thee!...Oh! The weakness of the flesh, and the power of Satan! If I am to depend upon any strength of this world - all is over...The knell is struck...Sentence is gone forth...O God! O God! O Thou, my God! help me against the wisdom of this world. Do this, I beseech Thee; Thou shouldst do this...by Thy own mighty power...The work is not mine, but Thine. I have no business here... I have nothing to contend for with these great men of the world! I would gladly pass my days in happiness and peace. But the cause is Thine...And it is righteous and everlasting! O Lord! help me! O faithful and unchangeable God! I lean not upon man. It were vain! Whatever is of man is tottering, whatever proceeds from him must fail. My God! My God! dost Thou not hear? My God! art Thou no longer living? Nay, Thou canst not die. Thou dost but hide Thyself. Thou hast chosen me for this work. I know it!...Therefore, O God, accomplish Thine own will! Forsake me not, for the sake of Thy well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ, my defence, my buckler, and my stronghold.

Lord - where art Thou?...My God, where art Thou?...Come! I pray Thee, I am ready...Behold me prepared to lay down my life for Thy truth...suffering like a lamb. For the cause is holy. It is Thine own!...I will not let Thee go! no, nor yet for all eternity! And though the world should be thronged with devils - and this body, which is the work of Thine hands, should be cast forth, trodden under foot, cut in pieces,...consumed to ashes, my soul is Thine. Yes, I have Thine own word to assure me of it. My soul belongs to Thee, and will abide with Thee forever! Amen! O God send help!...Amen!"

The next day, when he was again asked whether or not he was prepared to recant his writings, Luther replied:

"Since your Majesty and your Lordships ask for a plain answer, I will give you one...Unless I am convinced by Scripture or by right reason (for I trust neither in popes nor councils, since they have often erred and contradicted themselves)-unless I am convinced, I am bound by the texts of the Bible, my conscience is captive to the Word of God, I

neither can nor will recant anything, since it is neither right nor safe to act against conscience. *God help me. Amen.*"

When Martin Luther stood before the Diet of Worms he took his stand upon the word of God, and thus he stood firm. Every believer who is faithful to God's Word cannot do otherwise than stand firm.