

Spiritual Warfare – Standing against Schemes

Ephesians 6:10–12

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Early in my ministry, while still very young and inexperienced I meet a person fighting a spiritual battle. This individual was working long hours in a hostile environment. There were two young, energetic boys were in the house. The family barely had enough money each month. This person told me there was an oppressive cloud hanging out above and around. At first this seemed like a psychological problem. The more we talked the truth became clear. This was a spiritual attack.

We went together to the Senior Pastor. After listening to the testimony of an oppressive cloud hanging above and around, he called together several spiritually mature leaders in the church. They laid hands on this person, praying for deliverance, the removal of the source of oppression, the renewal of a right spirit. The person left empowered, encouraged, and freed from the oppression.

This was my first real experience in spiritual warfare. It is the battle in the spiritual world of unseen powers over the things that are seen. For many people, including Christians, they aren't aware of this battle. The battle can only be won through Christ Jesus as we wear the full armor of God.

Ephesians 6:10–12 (ESV) Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Plans are being made and you need to know the enemy. I don't know how much the devil knows, but I believe he has evil planned for each one of us. Some people including Christians believe this is bad luck or a psychological problem. Then there are Christians who see the devil in everything that happens. This results in others not trusting and believe their counsel.

The devil knows our weaknesses, often times gets in our heads. I don't want to give him too much credit. He deserves just enough credit so we will be aware of what he's doing. We can tell him where to go in Jesus' name.

There are battles we aren't aware – the unseen battles. We know how to win the victory: Proclaim God's Word, Believe His Promises, Believe God for the Impossible, Mark your spiritual victories, Be completely faithful.

We also need to know how to fight the battles. The moment by moment stuff, that at the time seems more like a nuisance than a battle. That's how it starts, being a nuisance. It's like kids who pick at one another, until the fight starts. The small choices we make don't seem like a big deal at the time. It's like telling your kids not to swear, but they hear you swear when something bad happens. The battle might look like the things we hold in our hands or see with our eyes. It's the pickle jar that nobody can open, the driver behind you riding your bumper, the screaming kid at Earl's Ice Cream. All of them push your buttons making you want to explode. The battle is trusting Jesus or giving into your frustration.

The devil seems to be perceptive enough to recognize my weaknesses. He knows what buttons to push. He knows when to push them. He does it. He doesn't need for me to be an axe murderer. He needs me to loose my temper a little bit at a time. He needs me to swear a little bit more in each situation. He needs me slowly stop calling upon Jesus. He recognizes that the battles don't have to be huge drawn out events. He's okay with playing the long game. He's willing to lead me off God's path one step at a time. He slowly blinds me to his schemes. He keeps grinding away at me.

I can't fight that battle alone. I don't have enough protection. I don't have enough ammunition. I need help. You aren't any different than me. You need help.

Ephesians 6:11 (ESV) Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

We plan against what we see, but we need to plan against what we don't see. You wake up in the morning and start to formulate a plan for your day. Bathroom, breakfast, workout, news, clean the bathroom, mow the yard, wash the car, lunch, do laundry, clean the bedrooms, supper, put the laundry away, scroll through Facebook, then off to bed. Same thing different day. It's not really a plan, but a routine. You're busy taking care of all the things you can see. But stuff is happening that you can't see. You have no plan for it. Your routine doesn't make room for it.

Lonie and I have a plan. In the next three years we will pay off the mortgage and be debt free. Then we'll sell the mansion and buy something smaller with no debt. We can see it. We know clearly what it is. We know how to execute the plan. I can't see the tornado that blows through and knocks it down. I can't see the pipe in the wall that breaks and floods the house. I can't see the lightening bolt that strikes the house and burns it to the ground. What else can't I see? What else doesn't have a plan? How else can our plan fall apart?

The devil, who we can't see, is scheming against you and your relationship with Jesus. Once the devil pushes a button and gets a reaction, he keeps pushing that button and probing more buttons that get a reaction. With each reaction he schemes ways to make me sin. If one thing makes me mad, then he brings more situations just like it to make me sin. This works because I'm an idiot that doesn't pay attention to what's happening. Then after months and years of his abuse, I fall apart. My top blows, my fists fly, my legs kick and I'm in a full blown tantrum. The devil scores in a big battle.

Through all of this I kept trying to do things my way. I kept making excuses that it wasn't that bad. I make promises that I won't do it again. I stomp my feet, shake my fists declaring never again. But, it doesn't last. My defenses are no match. My eyes have been distracted. My senses have been dulled. I don't have a plan. The plan I've had I didn't follow. I can't resist. Old patterns and habits are too hard to surrender. I need a way out. I need a new plan. I need help.

Ephesians 6:11 (ESV) Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

When we know the enemy and His schemes we know how to fight. We fight with the whole armor of God. We fight with the Truth. Our defense is being a Right relationship with God. We are able to stand at Peace in the midst of the battles. Our Faith is in the God of the impossible who makes us strong.

We are empowered because we are Saved. The Word of God of defeats our enemies. We have more than enough to win every battle. No matter what the devil brings against us we have all that we need. We don't need to give into temptations. We don't have to be overwhelmed by our circumstances. We are empowered.

The problem isn't the just the devil, the problem is us. We don't see the armor given to us by God. We don't think we need God's armor. We don't think the devil is really out to get us. There is an enemy who schemes against us. There is an enemy that wants to bring us down. There is an enemy that is already defeated.

Though the devil may keep acting we are prepared for the fight. We need to see ourselves as the victors and not as the victims. The devil might be out to get you, but you in Christ Jesus we have already won. We need to see ourselves in the full armor of God. That means we are in the army of the God of heaven. We are soldiers in the army of the creator of all the earth. All the power is on our side.

We can't be too pride to wear God's armor. We need it. Just like the firefighter wears a uniform, we need God's armor. Just as the deputy, the police officer stands behind the badge, we need God's armor. Just as the warrior puts on their armor, we need God's armor.

We can't get lazy about putting on God's armor. We need it every day. That is every moment. Just when we might think we are safe we need God's armor. The devil's schemes are just that, subtle sneak attacks when we least expect it.

I don't know that will happen when I walk of this building today. I've got plans, things I want to do. The devil is looking for the moment to catch me off guard. That's when he tries to spring his trap against. We don't need to be afraid of what we can't see. The devil might be working in the shadows because he's afraid of the light of Jesus Christ. With Jesus on our side, we will overcome. We will face battles with the armor of God. We will defeat the enemy.

Ephesians 6:11 (ESV) Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

Cast off all of your protection and weapons using God's armor. You and I aren't equipped to take on the devil without God's armor. Every Christian who fails does so because they are fighting the battle on their own. You may be having the best day of your life, but when the devil attacks, put on God's armor.

Take off your pride in your ability to fight your own battles. Stop thinking you are invincible. Quit acting like you don't need any help. Drop the act that you've got it together. Put on God's armor.

Take off your selfishness that you can do whatever you want. Surrender yourself to the grace, mercy, love and power of God. Recognize that whatever you think is wise, or best, or strong, God is stronger. You are made stronger than the devil because of God's wisdom, God's power, God's salvation.

Take off your plans for your life. Lay them at the feet of Jesus. Test them against the wisdom of the cross. Set them aside until your Savior puts them in your hands.

Take off your attitude that nothing matters. Reject the indifference that has become a callus on your heart and mind. Push yourself away from the boredom of your daily routine. Put on the armor of God. Be the victor. Live the life Jesus saved you to live.

God's armor begins with faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord. Believe it or not Jesus was wearing the armor of God throughout His ministry. He was wearing it when they stripped Him naked and they nailed Him to the cross. To all the bystanders, mockers, and discouraged disciples it looked as though Jesus had lost.

Jesus was standing on the Truth. He was right with God. He was at peace with God's plan. He is the author of faith in God. He was offering Himself as our salvation. He is the Word of God.

Jesus gave His life that anyone who believes in Him would be saved from their sins. His death on the cross redeemed all who believe in Him from the eternal punishment of their sins.

His sacrifice on the cross opened the tomb so all who believe in Him will be delivered to a new life.

Today, cast off anything that is keeping you from trusting in Jesus. Give your heart and soul, mind and spirit, all your strength to loving Jesus.

Put on the armor of God and the new life Jesus has given to you.