

Christians in Spiritual Warfare

Course: The Armour of God

Lesson 2

Lesson Title: Beware of worldly substitutes – be strong in the Lord.

Text: Ephesians 6:10-12 ‘Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 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.’

Theme: We cannot defeat the enemy with carnal weapons; we must stand in the strength and power of the Lord.

Introduction: Our own abilities are not enough to overcome the enemy. Spiritual strength and power is through a close personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. The scripture says 'be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might' (Ephesians 6:10).

- in the Lord (relationship with Jesus Christ) and
- in the power of His might (The Holy Spirit empowered life)
- There is a danger that we can neglect our relationship with the Lord and allow other things to fill our lives. Even things that are good can rob us of our spiritual power if we trust in them instead of Christ. We must beware that we do not allow substitutes to replace the power of God in our lives. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 'For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;'
- The false armour of morality, legalism, religion is no good in spiritual warfare.
- Armour is for close combat - personal fight. But we fight with an army and we must watch for one another.

Introductory Story: The Enigma Code Machine

We must be careful not to place our trust in wrong things.

Throughout the Second World War the Germans used a coding machine known as Enigma. It was a brilliant machine like a typewriter that sent messages in code. The Germans had no idea that the Allies had the most brilliant minds available working at Bletchley Park decoding the messages. In fact the first computer was made in deciphering the Enigma.

The trust held by the Nazi's in the Enigma was a major reason for the defeat of Nazi Germany.

Main Points:

1. There is a danger that our beliefs can become more important to us than maintaining a close relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. We must be ‘rooted and grounded in Christ’, Ephesians 3:17, John 15:5. We will not have the armour of God on if we stand for truth and neglect our personal relationship with the Lord through the Word of God and prayer, Col. 3:16; 1 Thess. 5:17. Jesus said ‘Without me you can do nothing’, John 15:5, but in Christ we are ‘more than conquerors’, (Romans 8:37).

A close relationship with the Lord Jesus comes through:

- a) Being filled with the Word of Christ (Colossians 3:16).
 - b) A prayerful life (1 Thessalonians 5:17).
 - c) Christ being the centre of our affections (Colossians 3:1-4).
 - d) Walking in ‘newness of life’ (Romans 6:4) and
 - e) Serving God in the ‘newness of the Spirit’ (Romans 7:6).
- Church at Ephesus, Revelation 2:1-7 - They had left their first works? What were they? Ephesians 1:15, Faith in the Lord Jesus and love for all the saints. Our relationship with Jesus can be measured by our love for one another.

Question: What were the first works that the Ephesian Church needed to do?

Look at the epistle to the Ephesians. Ephesians 1:15 ‘Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints’

- a) Faith in the Lord Jesus - this means the life of Christ in the life of the believer. Walking in the new life. Colossians 3:1-3 ‘If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.’
 - b) Love unto all the saints John 13:34-35 ‘A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another.’ 1 John 3:16-17 ‘Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso has this world's good, and sees his brother have need, and shuts up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him?’
- Breastplate of faith and love. The Ephesian Church had taken off the armour of Faith and Love because they thought the armour of standing for doctrine was enough to protect them. It was not. 1 Thessalonians 5:8 ‘But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.’
 - 2. There is a danger that professionalism can replace the need for the power of the Holy Spirit. ‘For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power’, 1 Corinthians 4:20.
 - Spiritual warfare must be in the power of His might. Paul’s preaching was in ‘demonstration of

the Spirit and of power', 1 Corinthians 2:4. We must always be dependent upon the power of the Holy Spirit, Acts 1:8.

- The Holy Spirit must lead us in every area of our lives (Romans 8:14). It is necessary to always be sensitive to the moving of the Spirit of God, (Ephesians 4:30). The Apostle Paul waited for the leading of the Spirit before going to Macedonia (Acts 16:6-10).
- We need to beware of wrong spirits that seek to deceive God's people (1 John 4:1). The demon possessed girl in Philippi spoke the truth, but in the power of a wrong spirit, Acts 16:16-18.

Question: Why does Paul say the kingdom of God is not in word when our faith is built upon the Word of God? Paul uses the same Greek word 'logos'. The devil is not afraid of words. If we wrestle against the devil merely by quoting scripture it will not work. The Word of God must be living in us.

- Methods, abilities and organisational skills are not able to make us victorious over the enemy.
- Good singing can move the emotions;
- Good speaking can win decisions; and clever words can raise large offerings; but God's work can only be achieved through the power of the Holy Spirit. The world trusts in riches (Proverbs 10:15), but riches have no power in spiritual warfare.

Quote: The 19th century founder of the China Inland Mission, Hudson Taylor, said, 'God's work, done in God's way, will never lack God's supply'.

But note - God's work, God's way, God's supply.

Illustration: An electrician must know how to wire a house. He must have knowledge. But all his work is useless if there is no power supply to connect with.

In the Christian life there is the temptation to take an easier route.

Alternatives to the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. Psychology can replace the need for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
2. Entertaining music can replace the anointing of the Holy Spirit.
3. Philosophy can replace the need for the Spirit of truth.
4. Counselling can replace the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

Paul's preaching was in 'demonstration of the Spirit and of power', 1 Corinthians 2:4.

Note: Don't throw the baby out with the dirty bath water but education, music and personal counselling alone cannot bring spiritual change. Only the Holy Spirit can do this. We must learn to move in the power of the Holy Spirit.

3. There is a danger that good moral living can replace the need for holiness, Matthew 5:20.
 - The breastplate of righteousness is Christ. Holiness is the life of Christ in us, and scripture calls holiness of life walking in the Spirit, Galatians 5:16. It is the fruit of the new nature, Galatians 5:22-23. Without holiness we cannot see the Lord, Hebrews 12:14.
 - Living a good life is highly valued by the world but it is not enough to trust in living a good moral life. Wearing the armour of God requires standing only in the righteousness of Christ. Our righteousness is as filthy rags, Isaiah 64:6. We are only holy in Christ. It is His life, His holiness. Without holiness we cannot see the Lord, Hebrews 12:14, but it is His holiness in us.
 - Morality looks at what we do. Holiness is what we are.

Question: What was the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? Matthew 5:20 'For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.' It was a righteousness concerning the outward appearance. They were hypocrites because they put on a show of outward piety.

Sermon on the Mount – holiness deals with the thoughts. The outward morality of the religious leaders only hid their inner corruption.

4. There is a danger that our fight can become carnal and without power for spiritual warfare. 2 Corinthians 10:4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;). We must be strong in the Lord because our fight is not against flesh and blood but against the powers of darkness.
 - People are not the enemy. We wrestle against spiritual wickedness in high places. We must love the people - we fight against the spiritual powers that control the people.
 - Strength in ourselves is weakness in spiritual warfare. We are at our strongest when we are weak in the flesh. Paul wrote 'when I am weak then I am strong'. The church today is often strong in the flesh but has no power for spiritual warfare.
 - Spiritual warfare is against a mighty hierarchy of evil. Satan leads the hierarchy but under him are rulers, authorities, world powers of darkness, spiritual evil in the heavens. This kind of warfare cannot be fought in the flesh. Ephesians 6:12 'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities (rulers), against powers (authority), against the rulers (powers) of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness (evil) in high places (heavens).'

Summary:

1. Beware of substituting doctrine for a close personal relationship. Stand 'rooted and grounded in Christ' by maintaining a close relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ through the Word of God and prayer.
2. Beware of professionalism replacing the power of the Holy Spirit. Be sensitive to the moving of the Holy Spirit.

3. Beware of substituting morality for holiness. Stand in the righteousness of Christ.
4. We must be strong in the Lord because our fight is not against flesh and blood but against the powers of darkness. Remember that we do not fight people. It is the spiritual powers that control the people that we fight. A spiritual warfare requires spiritual weapons.