

How to Stand Against Satan

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One of the most remarkable passages in the Word of God is found in the sixth chapter of Ephesians:

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye 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. Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girded about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, with which ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. (Ephesians 6:10-18)

You and I are engaged in a staggering struggle in which angels and demons are involved. We are participants in a battle for survival, light and darkness, right and wrong, justice and injustice, liberty and slavery. God and Satan have clashed in a duel that has eternal consequences. It's greater than any world war. In fact, a world war is very small compared to it. The armies of heaven and of hell are in a death grip. And even if we had a world ruler who could bring war to an end and could conclude in victory the war against poverty, may I say to you, this universal and titanic struggle between God and Satan would continue because even he could not stop that. The Christian today is told in unmistakable terms that he is drafted into the army of the Lord and that war is declared, the enemy is identified, the armies are drawn up in battle array and there will be no truce. God has said He will never accept the white flag of surrender from sin. He intends to drive it from His universe. He intends to completely eliminate sin out of this world in which we live. Therefore, we want to look at this struggle as it relates to you and me, for we are involved in it and any of us can say, "It's my struggle."

Paul begins here by saying, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." This is a battle in which your physical strength and your human best are not enough. In fact, if that's all you're bringing into the battle, you have too little too late and it will mean defeat for you. You and I need the power of the Lord, and it's only in the power of His might that there is any possibility of victory.

We're told to "put on the whole armor of God." Why? That we might "be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Paul is playing upon two Greek words which we miss in our English translations. Let me spell it out like this: He says, "Put on the whole *panoplia* of God, that you may be able to stand against the *methodia* of the devil." He is putting those two words in apposition. The armor of God is the *panoplia* you and I need in order to overcome the *methodia* or, as our translation has it, "the wiles of the devil." And the Word of God gives us a detailed description of this armor in this passage in Ephesians. Now this is the same struggle that Paul wrote about over in Romans:

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now

is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. (Romans 13:11, 12)

We need this armor because of the fact that we are living in the last days and because we have advanced far into the night — I do not think anyone would dispute the point that at this time in history we are far along toward a crisis, a crisis that evidently God is going to enter into directly. There are many today who believe that God is going to take some specific action as it relates to this earth. As far as we can tell, for nineteen hundred years He's had a hands-off policy, but there is coming a day when He will intervene.

Because of the present darkness Paul says we are to "put on the armor of light." And it's because of the *methodia*, the wiles, of the devil. The devil will not fight fair. He will use every subtle weapon at his disposal. To begin with, his power and wisdom are far above ours — we're no match for him. And added to that, of course, is the fact that he will not fight fair. The Lord Jesus Himself said Satan is a liar and a murderer from the beginning, and he'll use those two methods against God's children. He tried to get at Job,

And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand.... (Job 1:12)

And when Job withstood the initial assaults, finally Satan said in effect, "I gotta get to him." So God said, "You can bring him down but you cannot take his life." This enemy of ours, I'm confident, would eliminate every child of God if God permitted him to do it.

Recognize Satan's *Methodia*

I think he uses two primary methods against the child of God. First of all, he will use lies against you. If you're a Christian you're going to be misrepresented. I'm sure you have had that experience in one way or another. It's been said that some people will believe anything if it's whispered to them. It's amazing today how, even in church, someone reaches over and says, "Have you heard?" That's all they need — "Have you heard?" — and their eyes and ears, in fact every avenue for receiving information, is open because they haven't heard and they do want to hear.

It's amazing today how a great many Christians become apostles for the devil instead of being apostles for the Lord Jesus Christ. They never give out the gospel, but they are quick to give that which hurts another believer and, in so doing, become immediately an instrument of Satan. My friend, the minute you begin to malign another child of God, that very moment you are an apostle of the devil. You are using his method. In fact, you are falling into his trap. It would be a wonderful thing today for people in the church if, the minute they hear gossip relative to anyone, they would just take the informant by the arm and say, "Well, before it goes any further let's go to this person you're talking about and find out if it's true." I think if we'd do that it would stop gossip almost overnight because most of these folk who gossip are not willing to face the person they have maligned. Paul always made those who gossiped to him face up to it. When he wrote to the Corinthians, the first thing he said was, "It has been told to me by the household of Chloe...." He wanted to know whether they were gossiping or not so he laid it on

the line for them. Gossiping is one method of Satan. He's a liar and he's a murderer — he doesn't always pull a gun, but he often puts the knife of malicious gossip in your back. That's one of his methods.

Another method he uses today is to deceive folk with lies. For instance, you know that he has made multitudes of intelligent people right here in this country believe that liquor is a mark of distinction and sophistication and that there is something wrong with you if you don't take a drink. It's amazing the number of people who believe that today. May I say to you, Satan has many methods. The latest figures show that there are an estimated eighteen million alcoholics in this country today, and one of the biggest problems is among women. Statistics show that two out of three women being treated for alcoholism are under the age of 35. Alcohol is also a factor in the majority of fatal traffic accidents, yet they get after the automobile industry to make the automobiles safe! Why don't they go after the liquor industry? Nobody in Congress has said a word about that because he wouldn't be elected next time, I can assure you.

May I say to you that the devil has sold this nation another lie. He has made multiplied thousands of boys and girls believe that freedom in sex is smart and clever. But he didn't finish the story. He didn't tell them about the diseases that could make them unfit for parenthood and establishing a family. They could never have the kind of family that they should have.

Also Satan has made literally millions of people in this day believe that if they have enough "things" they will be happy, that money is all they need.

The devil has also duped the citizens of this country into believing that we do not need discipline and laws anymore, nor jails or gas chambers — that we can throw off all restraint. May I say to you, as one of our missionaries to Africa told me, "It's safer to walk the jungle trail in Africa than it is the streets of Los Angeles!" And that is true. It's not safe for women or men to walk the streets of Los Angeles at night. Murders are taking place that are unspeakable in their brutality. And there is a sadistic and abnormal interest in them today. They're not taking place on skid row but in the respectable suburban neighborhoods.

C. S. Lewis, who wrote *The Screwtape Letters*, was an egghead, a brain, a man of extraordinary intelligence. He taught at Oxford and later at Cambridge. He was a philosopher, and in *The Screwtape Letters* he made fun of the liberal who did not believe in a personal devil. He had this to say: "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the demons. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe and to feel an unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and they hail a materialist or magician with the same delight." What a statement!

Satan operates in many other areas. He is called in 2 Corinthians 4:4 "the god of this age." He's behind all the false cults of our day. In fact, he's more interested in religion than in anything else. This idea that the devil wants to get you down on skid row is totally false. He would rather have you out on the boulevard in a dead, liberal church. Or he would like to have you in a cult because he operates all of them. The Lord Jesus called him "the father of lies," and he is seeking to ruin and to wreck. But he is also called an "angel of light" — what deception he uses! His ministers don't appear as demons in the popular sense that they have forked tails or sprouting horns. They're not that at all. They are just about as attractive as human beings can possibly be. And such is the picture we're given in Scripture.

Not only that, but we are told Satan is today trying to seduce the elect. The Lord Jesus said that if it were possible he would deceive even the elect. He oppresses them and he also is one who leads into apostasy, for we are told that "doctrines of demons" is what will characterize the

last days.

So Satan is at the present time using his *methodia*; that is, he is using his wiles, his schemes, his strategies. My beloved, it's the wiles of the devil that Paul is warning us about.

Look Beyond Flesh and Blood

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. (Ephesians 6:12)

Now I want to give you another translation. I would not recommend it, but it's one that is very literal and it's my own:

For our wrestling is not against blood and flesh, but against the principalities, against powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of evil in the heavenly places.

A great many believers always try to center their attention on some individual as if that particular individual were our enemy. Actually, the principal enemy of the child of God is not a human enemy, he is a spiritual enemy. And he's an enemy that cannot be seen. That's what makes it dangerous. By the way, that's the reason fighting in Vietnam was so dangerous; we could not see the enemy. Neither can we see this enemy who is lined up against us today. It's not a human being, and I want to emphasize that for the simple reason there are a great many folk who speak very disrespectfully of the devil. Yet you'll find in the ninth verse of the Epistle of Jude that even the archangel Michael, in contending with the devil when they disputed about the body of Moses, "dared not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." Michael had respect for the devil because of who he was, his position. That is something we need to recognize.

Also, have you noticed that Paul showed great respect and regard even for the religious rulers who were attempting to convict him? You will recall that he was arrested yonder in Jerusalem and brought before the chief priests for judgment. Paul couldn't see clearly (which leads me to believe that Paul's thorn in the flesh was eye trouble), and when he was brought before the chief priests we read in Acts 23:2, "And the high priest, Ananias, commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth." And the soldier hit Paul on the mouth. Well, what would you do if somebody hit you on the mouth? The Word of God is accurate: "Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness," and that's what will come out of the mouth. Now Ananias ordered that Paul be hit on the mouth. Paul is not about to curse but listen to him,

Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall; for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? Then said Paul, I knew not, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people. (Acts 23:3-5)

You see, Paul apologized because he would never have intentionally violated God's clear com-

mand on the issue. You'll find that when he appeared before Felix and Festus and Agrippa and then the captain on shipboard, Paul used the utmost courtesy, yet all of those men were sending him to his death. Certainly they were his enemies. But Paul the apostle exhibited that gracious restraint. Paul says that you and I do not have a flesh and blood enemy, that our enemy is a spiritual enemy.

I want you to notice in Colossians 1:16 and 17 that the Lord Jesus Christ created all these things that are visible and invisible, including the different gradations of spiritual powers. I believe that in Colossians Paul is enumerating those aligned with God. They are organized as an army would be organized, with generals and colonels and majors and captains and lieutenants and sergeants and corporals, and with buck-privates in the rear rank.

I think the same organization exists in the demon world today. When Satan was cast down from his position in heaven and a host of angels went with him, those angels who fell included all gradations of angels. And God on His side has the angels organized the same way. Principalities are perhaps those who have the rank of general, having the oversight of nations. Powers, I think, are just privates — they are demons who want to possess human beings. “World rulers of this darkness” are demons who have charge of Satan’s worldly business. And then “spiritual hosts of evil in the heavenly places” are demons who have charge of religion.

Now these opposing forces are so well organized that, when the battle is carried on, one will have respect for the other. We have an illustration of this in what is without doubt one of the most remarkable passages in the Old Testament. We read about this in the tenth chapter of the Book of Daniel. At that time Daniel was under the Persian ruler, Cyrus the Great, apparently a man whom Daniel was able to win to the Lord. But Daniel became concerned because they were coming to the end of this period that had been prophesied by Jeremiah. And so Daniel went to God in prayer, and in verses 1 and 2 we read,

In the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia, a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long; and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision. In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks.

Can you imagine fasting and praying for three full weeks! And Daniel was disturbed because previously he'd always received answers to his prayers. But three full weeks went by and he was given no answers! That probably wouldn't disturb many of us since we're not accustomed to receiving immediate answers when we pray. But if we don't, perhaps we ought to consider this experience of Daniel and really look into the matter.

Now Daniel was so concerned that he fasted and prayed for twenty-one days. So what happened? Well, he tells us that finally he got an answer and with the answer he also received an explanation with a remarkable vision.

Yet heard I the voice of his words; and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground. And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands. [Daniel was on all fours now.] And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved.... (Daniel 10:9-11)

That was a wonderful word for this messenger to give Daniel, and especially to have a word like that from heaven that he was loved up there!

...understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright; for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel; for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. (Daniel 10:11, 12)

Now the messenger explains that three weeks earlier when Daniel prayed, God had sent him to answer that prayer. If you'd been Daniel, what would you have said to this angel? I probably would have said, "Where in the world have you been?" And if you'll go back and read the ninth chapter of Daniel, you'll realize this angel is really late because it had taken Gabriel only three minutes to get to Daniel. Dr. A. C. Gaebelein used to read Daniel 9 to us in class in Hebrew. Then in his broken accent he would say, "See, it took three minutes from the time Daniel began that prayer for the angel Gabriel to be sent, and so when Daniel finished praying, Gabriel was there! It says it takes three minutes from heaven to earth, so this messenger in chapter 10 is late."

And, friend, this is an eye-opener. In fact, it is one of the strangest factors that you and I know nothing about.

But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days....
(Daniel 10:13)

Three weeks prior, when Daniel began to pray, this angel was sent to answer the prayer, but what happened? The prince of the kingdom of Persia (this is no human being; this is the demon that Satan had placed over the kingdom of Persia) did not want the message to get through to Daniel because it pertained to Persia, for Persia was to give the decree that would permit the children of Israel to return to their own land. "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days." The angel of God could not get through. Why? I do not know, but I surmise it was due to his rank. Maybe he was a sergeant, a lieutenant or captain. But the one who was standing against him probably had the rank of a colonel or maybe a general and had charge of the Persian Empire! So God's angel said, "I myself couldn't get by him; but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me." He had to have an archangel. And the archangel came to free him, "...for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia. Now I have come to make you understand."

May I say to you that here is the spiritual warfare, a warfare in which Daniel was engaged through prayer. Now do you begin to see what Paul is saying in Ephesians? Our enemy is not flesh and blood, but we wrestle — and wrestling is as close a grappling as you can get; it's body contact. And these are the enemies: principalities and powers and world rulers of this darkness and spiritual hosts of evil in the heavenly places — different gradations of spiritual enemies. They are the ones who hinder our prayers. My, one of the reasons so many of us are so ineffective in prayer is that we do not recognize our enemy at all nor how to overcome him. Let's remember who is our real enemy.

Put on God's *Panoplia*

Now notice carefully as God begins to set before us the battle:

Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor [panoplia] of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (Ephesians 6:13)

He uses the word *stand*. The song for Christians is not “Onward Christian Soldiers.” Frankly, that’s not a very appropriate song for a group of defeated Christians to sing. But I’ll tell you the song that is appropriate: “Stand up, stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross....” My friends, we are called upon to stand. Someone has said, “As pilgrims we walk, as witnesses we go, as contenders we run, but as fighters we stand.” God instructs you and me to “stand therefore, having your loins girded about with truth.”

Paul begins now to tell us what we are to put on, and I am going to mention briefly this armor. The first thing he talks about is truth. That truth primarily is the Lord Jesus, His person and His Word — what is stated in the Bible. And we are to have our waist girded with truth.

The girdle in a Roman garb held everything together. It’s sort of like what happened in the Civil War. Many years ago, when I was just a boy, a man told me how they won a battle in the Civil War. The uniforms during the Civil War included suspenders. So his side simply cut the suspenders of the enemy, and when they started into battle they couldn’t get their guns because they had to hold their pants up! It was much the same for the Roman soldier. It was the girdle that held together everything he had on.

May I say to you that the Word of God, the truth, holds everything together. The minute you get away from that you lose everything. You cannot be a soldier and be ignorant of the Word of God. And so the first thing is to have your waist girded with the truth.

Then put on the breastplate of righteousness — which protects the heart and all the vital part of us. And this is the place where we get disturbed today. Oh, how many people are disturbed because they have failed to put on the breastplate of righteousness. A blind preacher in the Bay Area has called me three times because he’s afraid he’s committed the unpardonable sin. He just can’t believe that God is now going to receive him and that he has on the righteousness of Christ which covers his heart and protects him and brings peace to him. He doesn’t realize that he can stand in the righteousness of Christ so that,

...as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ, our Lord. (Romans 5:21)

And, friends, we are yonder in Christ this day in that glorious position. What a peace and joy this fact should bring to the heart. Therefore, we should put on that part of our armor, the breastplate of righteousness, without delay. How important it is!

And then have “your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” Actually that’s the *foundation* of the gospel of peace, “for other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11). This is the foundation on which we rest; it’s the only foundation. You cannot fight unless you can stand. How important that is. It’s fundamental in boxing; and these men who are expert golfers tell you that you have to get your position right and your feet on a solid place before you can hit the ball, and even then sometimes

you don't hit it!

As Christians, our feet must be correctly shod and anchored. And the child of God who is not properly shod is going to wobble and stumble, and certainly the enemy will be able to overcome him!

In addition to all the soldier's armor we're told to take up "the shield of faith." It actually says *above all* take up this shield. Have you ever seen the shield that the Greek hoplites, the heavily armed infantry, used? The shields were called doors — they were that big — and protected the entire body. Shoulder to shoulder the hoplites would put down in front of them a regular barrier of shields. They would stand behind the barrier while the enemy made the attack. Then they would move forward and put them down again. That is the way the hoplites advanced. As you can see, they would win the battle because of these shields that they had. The child of God is told here, in addition to the armor, to take the shield of faith. Why? So "ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

Now may I say this to you very carefully. I believe in apologetics and all of these very fine books on archeology and on science that confirm the Bible. But in the final analysis, my friend, you'll have to get back of the shield of faith. You cannot overcome, you cannot stand against the enemy just on the basis of intellect, just on the basis today of one man beating another man in an argument. On the intellectual level, it doesn't make any difference which side you're on, the smarter man will win every time. The real issue, however, is faith — a living faith. May I say to you, friends, we're living in a day when a great many people in this materialistic age think if they could just get it into their hand or look at it under a microscope they would be convinced. What would it convince you of? What is really important in spiritual warfare? What is the real problem today? The real problem is lack of faith. Oh, my beloved, to believe God today, that is the shield and the only shield that will keep the fiery darts of the wicked one away from you.

I recall that when I was in college (which was as liberal as it could be) I had a philosophy professor who tied me up intellectually every class period, and I didn't have sense enough to keep quiet. I spoke out in every class. And he always had an answer. He used to whip me down intellectually by saying, "Well, Mr. McGee, have you read this book or that book?" Well, I'd never even heard of the book! So I began to read. I read more under that man than I've ever read. Actually, I read seventy-five books that year! He helped me in that way. Finally I went to a man who had about twice the number of degrees this philosophy professor had, a very brilliant man, and I said, "I'm stuck, I can't make it. And I'll get out of the ministry if I lose my faith." Well, this man sat down and went over all this ground with me, all of the philosophic approaches. And he had answers, intellectual answers. But then he concluded by saying this, "Vernon, you're going to find out as a young man preparing for the ministry that there are dark moments when you're going to have to walk with God by faith." My friend, in the final analysis you too are going to have to walk with Him by faith. God has the answer for you, but you'll have to learn to walk with God by faith. What a tremendous thing this is.

Then Paul says, "And take the helmet of salvation." I'm glad that's next, because God does make an appeal to the mind. The helmet protects the mind, and God never asks you to believe anything that's contrary to reason. I cannot accept the statement that "faith is a leap in the dark." If it's a leap in the dark, don't take the leap. God says unless you know where you're leaping don't leap. God is not asking you to do something that's strange or bizarre. God is appealing to you on the basis of reason and intellect:

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. (Isaiah 1:18)

So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)

God has a document, and He asks you to believe the evidence that He wants to present to you. He wants you to put on the helmet of salvation, and we do need to be able to meet these skeptics on an intellectual level.

Not only is He the One who provides the equipment we have for defense, but He also provides the weapons we need for offense. He says here,

And take...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:17)

Now the sword of the Spirit is not a plaything to run around just jabbing people with, giving them a little verse of Scripture every now and then. I've been talking to some young folk who have actually been driven away from the church and even driven away from their homes because they have just been pricked so much with the Word of God. I don't think that's the way you are to do it. I've come to an opinion today that it's not the way the sword is to be used.

Did you know that the Roman Empire gave a man in the army literally years of practice with that sword before it was put in his hands for actual combat? The Roman government would never throw a man into battle who did not know how to use that sword because it was hand-to-hand encounter.

In our day there was a man who walked up and down the streets here in Los Angeles with a Bible under his arm, yelling at the top of his voice, "You're going to hell!" And if someone said anything to him he would curse the person out. I thought, *My, what a messenger Satan has in downtown Los Angeles!* My friend, we are to use the sword skillfully. The Word of God should be handled intelligently today and in a way that will not bring disrepute upon the cause of Christ.

Then finally Paul adds,

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit... (Ephesians 6:18)

This is real prayer. This is not some little prayer meeting where a few cold Christians come together and remember a few petitions. This is a prayer made in the power of the Holy Spirit, and it's only this kind of prayer that will enable us to overcome.

You and I this moment, friends, are in a battle; it's a tremendous battle. You are asked to stand, and the only way you and I can stand is to take the armor of God. This idea today that the so-called surrendered life is just to sit back and do nothing. My friend, you are to *do* something! If you are a saved person, you are to put on the whole armor of God and, wearing that armor, you cannot be harmed by the enemy. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). And with that armor you and I can go through this world living for God.

Oh, that you and I as Christians might recognize we have an enemy, a spiritual enemy. He is greater than we are. And at this hour he's getting victory over many believers just because of

their negligence, just because they're not putting on the whole armor of God. May God enable us to put on that armor and stand for Him, "and having done all, to stand!"

But you say, "I'm always defeated." That's very disturbing to see, and God does not intend it to be that way. But, my friend, you do have to meet His conditions. You do have to put on the armor of God. You have to come to the Word of God, the Bible, for instructions and do it *His* way. You cannot do it your way and expect to win.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. (Isaiah 55:8)

It's only as you and I will come, recognizing our enemy and then prayerfully putting on this armor, that we cannot be defeated. In fact, we are absolutely defenseless and at Satan's mercy unless we have on the full armor of God.

Oh, God, help us to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.