

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

Standing Strong – Part I

Ephesians 6:10-13

1999

Introduction

Paul, in the final passages of Ephesians, calls the church to arms. He has spoken of the greatness of the purpose of God in Christ, of the glory of his high calling, and the life that should follow from it. The standards have been set, the standards for personal life, for life in the fellowship of the church, and in the more intimate circle of the home. But in every one of these areas the believer needs to be prepared for the inevitable encounter with evil. Each believer needs to be ready and equipped for the fight.

The victory is already assured through what Christ accomplished by his death and resurrection (Eph 1:20-23). And the believer is identified with Christ in his conquest over evil (Rom 13:14). However, even though the victory is secure, the war is not yet over!

There are two extremes the Christian must avoid:

1) Being ignorant and unaware of Satan's work

Some have attempted to demythologize Satan and reduce him to a mere figure of speech representing "evil".

2) Placing too much emphasis and attention on Satan's work.

Some see Satan everywhere – behind every rock and more importantly, responsible for every evil, rebellious choice a person makes. James clearly contradicts this when he says in James 1:14-15 that ...

"each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."

Either error serves the purposes of the Christian's enemy who has a singular goal of destroying the purposes of God but uses a variety subtle as well as overt.

I The Believer's Source Of Strength

A. Be strong in the Lord

1 Cor 16:13 "Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong."

Strong (*endynamousthe*) = "Strengthen yourselves, let yourself be strengthened"

Unfortunately, some refuse to:

Strengthen themselves

Be strengthened

“All the resources you need to live the Christian life are found in Christ!”

How can we be strong in the Lord?

1. Love God

a. Obedience

John 14:21 “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”

2. Abide in Christ

John 15:4-6 “Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit ...”

The warning in verse 6 ...

“If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.”

a. Word: Quiet Times, study, scripture memory, meditation

b. Prayer: Dialogue with God

c. Worship: Devotion and adoration of God

d. Fellowship: Mutual encouragement and accountability

B. Be strong in His mighty power

How can we be strong in His mighty power?

Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

1. Surrender to the Holy Spirit

Eph 3:16-21 “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith ... Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

2. Dependence on the Holy Spirit

2 Cor 12:9-10 “But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That

is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Apart from God’s strength and mighty power we can do nothing
John 15:5 “If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

II The Believer’s Source Of Protection

A. Put on the full armor of God

Put on (*endysasthe*) = “Be clothed in”

Full armor (*panoplia*) = “It is a complete outfit” vs. *hopla* = “Pieces of armor”

The soldier must be protected from head to foot

It is quite likely that Paul drew his detailed description “live” from the soldier he was chained during his house arrest.

B. Stand against the devil’s schemes – 1 Pet 5:8

Stand (*stete*) = A military term for holding on to a position. Before any offensive can be launched, a believer must first of all be able to maintain his own ground. Ask any football fan how important holding your ground is when your team is on their own one yard line defending against an aggressive offensive. Just holding your ground successfully can often be the difference between victory and defeat.

Satan’s schemes = “Cunning arts, deceit, craftiness, trickery”

2 Cor 11:14 “... Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.”

Infiltration schemes: Various levels of espionage

Satan may be a defeated foe from a prophetic perspective, but he is active, angry and hell-bent on destroying God’s most precious possession – YOU! He is the wisest, shrewdest, most brilliant strategist in all of God’s creation. He is not to be feared, but he is certainly not to be dismissed as some cosmic bumbling buffoon. He is a master of ingenious strategies, the sworn enemy of the church and his tactics must not catch us unaware.

1 Pet 5:8-9 “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”

We are not to be ignorant or unaware of his "schemes" or to allow him to outwit us (2 Cor 2:11)

Just what are Satan's schemes that Paul is referring to?

1. Persecution

1 Pet 5:8-9 "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings."

Matt 10:22 "All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved."

Matt 5:11-12 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

2. False doctrine

Mark 13:22-23 "For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect-- if that were possible. So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time."

1 Tim 4:1-2 "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron."

3. Temptation

a. The temptation of Adam and Eve

Gen 3:1 "Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

b. The temptation of Jesus

Matt 4:1 "Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil."

c. The temptation of the believer

1 Cor 10:13 "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."

James 4:7 "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

4. Trials

Job 1:9-11 "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

James 1:2-4 "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

1 Pet 5:10 "And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast."

5. Personal conflict

Pss 109:1-5 "O God, whom I praise, do not remain silent, for wicked and deceitful men have opened their mouths against me; they have spoken against me with lying tongues. With words of hatred they surround me; they attack me without cause. In return for my friendship they accuse me, but I am a man of prayer. They repay me evil for good, and hatred for my friendship."

Eph 4:26-27 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold."

2 Tim 2:23 "Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels."

6. Unresolved sin issues

- a. Personal sin - 1 Jn 1:9
- b. Violations by others - Matt 18:15-17
- c. Violations against others - Matt 5:23-24

7. Discouragement

1 King 19:1-4 "Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them." Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors."

If you have fallen prey to the schemes of Satan and have cooperated with his miserable plan for your life, I've got good news. God can heal your life and restore life to you today.

Only with the Lord's help can we overcome the wicked one

2 Thess 3:3 "But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one."

III The Believer's Source Of Struggle

Struggle (pale) = Wrestling

A. Flesh and blood? Yes, on the surface! But ultimately, NO!

Life may often appear, from a human perspective, to be a battle between human personalities. And on the surface it is. But underlying what our eyes see and our ears hear is the orchestrated efforts of the enemy of every believer to wreak havoc.

We are to guard against underestimating the power of the enemy – or to be tricked into failing to identify his orchestrating handiwork behind what our human senses can experience.

B. Spiritual warfare? Absolutely!

Against (4 times); we do have an adversary and he is ruthless and the battle is to the death – no holds barred.

1. Rulers

Archoi = Magistrates or rulers

"Cosmic powers"

Until the end of the age these demonic forces, already defeated by Christ on the cross (4:9), exercise a certain limited authority in temporally opposing the purposes of God.

2. Authorities

Exousis = "A spiritual potentate"

3. Worldly powers of this dark world

Kosmokrator = Denotes one who aspires to world control.

The context ("not against flesh and blood") shows that not earthly potentates are indicated, but spirit powers, who, under the permissive will of God, and in consequence of human sin, exercise satanic and therefore antagonistic authority over the world in its present condition of spiritual darkness and alienation from God.

4. Spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms

Spiritual forces = the heavenly bodies were believed to be the abode of demons who held human lives in their grip. Pagans had no option but to resign themselves to an unalterable destiny. This hopeless religious system became the basis for Greek mythology which emphasized autocratic, despotic rule of supernatural beings driven by passion and self-gratification.

Rom 8:38-39 “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Why? Because ...

“The Father raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.” Eph 1:19-23

“And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” Col 2:15

IV The Believer's Source Of Victory

A. Put on the full armor of God

Put on (elabete) = “Take up, assume”

Full armor (panoplia) = “It is a complete outfit”

Vs. hopla = pieces of the armor

The soldier must be protected from head to foot

Paul may have drawn his detailed description “live” from the soldier he was chained to in his house arrest.

1 Thess 5:8 “But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.”

2 Cor 10:4-5 “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

B. Stand your ground

Every man, every woman has to decide where they stand.

1. When the day of evil comes

Not referring to the end times, nor to the whole of the present evil age, but to life when the bottom falls out – when things are at their worst.

Ps 1:1-2 “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.”

Josh 24:15 “But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

C. Stand victoriously

Having done everything = “Having overcome all”

When the crisis or temptation is over, it will be found that not an inch of territory has been yielded.

Isa 40:28-31 “Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

I Jn 4:4 “You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”