

Stand Strong

Long Beach Alliance Church • November 8, 2015 • Pastor Chris Lankford

Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

~Ephesians 6:13 (ESV)

1) Putting On The Whole Armor Of God

- A) Without a doubt, the most significant truth regarding spiritual warfare for every Christian is this: We fight in the power and strength of the blood-bought victory of Jesus Christ on the cross (Ephesians 6:10, also 2:14-16; Colossians 1:19-20; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:18-31). Conversation about spiritual warfare is only useful if we have died to our old selves and are living in Christ Jesus (Galatians 2:20).
- B) If we engage the world of spiritual warfare without an authentic identity in Christ, we enter into a place of fearful and dangerous circumstances (cf. Acts 19:11-20). Many Christians spend far too much time deciding what to wear to church on Sunday, rather than on what to wear in a genuine spiritual war!
- C) It's as though the Apostle Paul is saying, "don't come to a spiritual fight dressed for a casual social event!" The only thing which can truly "clothe" the Christian for battle is full identity with Jesus Christ, the "whole armor of God" against "the schemes of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11). Spiritual armor for spiritual living!

2) The Schemes Of The Evil One

- A) Our modern world, especially in light of extraordinary technological and scientific advances, makes a mockery of most things demonic and/or Satanic. The popularity of a rational, provable, naturalistic world view has resulted in the reduction of the spiritual world to idiotic portrayals of the devil in horror films, and faithful Christians as religious oddballs who are half-baked, superstitious, and anti-scientific/anti-intellectual.
- B) Christians are warned of these "schemes" (tactics, wiles, methods, trickeries, strategies) of Satan (6:11). The devil is actively involved behind the scenes of our human experience with carefully designed strategies meant to thwart God's plans and purposes. If God's great "rescue plan" is the Gospel, and the Gospel is Jesus Christ, then the devil is in the business of destroying anything which reflects the Gospel of Christ Jesus.
- C) God's Word states that the devil disguises his schemes as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:12-15), while at the same time hunting like a blood-thirsty lion, "seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Known as "a murderer from the beginning" and "the father of lies" (John 8:44), Satan has a sophisticated ability to use evil to tempt, distract, intimidate, entice, and destroy (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10; also 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1).

3) Confidence & Power To Stand Firm

- A) The call to "stand firm" (6:11, 13-14) seems fairly passive in light of the cultural and spiritual realities (6:12) surrounding most Christians. But taking a "stand" is not meant to be read as "standing around," but rather an aggressive attack on "this present darkness" in the name of Christ! Standing firm expresses that victory is not just possible, it is reachable, attainable, and in Christ – assured!
- B) Jesus has won the spiritual battle against Satan, even making a mockery of Satan and the demonic hoard as they assumed victory over God and His Gospel (Colossians 2:15). Jesus in our lives is greater than any opposition we can face, because Jesus is Victor (1 John 4:4).
- C) This is not just a call that we *should* stand firm. This is a call that we *must* stand firm. Further, it means we **actually can** stand firm. **Nothing** can separate us from God in Christ, He is the Victor (Romans 8:37-39)!

Growth Group Guide Week 10: Ephesians 6:10-20

Opener

We all have our “subtitles” that briefly describe who we are, like “Susan: Entrepreneur & Mother of Four” or “Steve: Philosophy Student & Vegan.” What would your subtitle be? What Christian subtitle means the most to you (ambassador, sojourner, son/daughter, priest, saint, bondservant, disciple, heir, etc)?

Bible Study

Read through Ephesians 6:10-20

1. Whose strength and might do we depend on? (6:10)
2. List the uses of the word “stand” (including “withstand”).
3. List the instructions to pray.

Read about the character and end of Satan in Revelation 12:10-12

1. What does Satan do before our God day and night? (12:10)
2. How is he conquered? (12:11)

Read about Jesus’ place in the throne room in Hebrews 7:24-26

1. What does Jesus do always, as Satan accuses? (7:25)
2. The accusations will end, but Jesus’ intercession never will! Hallelujah!

Discussion

1. There is a significant difference between *being* and *doing*. When God says we *are* one way, He is accurately describing reality. Why is our *identity* in Christ more significant than our *activity* in Christ? Which do we focus on more? How does that impact you?
2. Jesus is the one who destroys Satan, so the battle is His, not ours. There is a continuous battle regarding your sin that we see in Revelation 12:10-12 and Hebrews 7:24-26. How does Satan’s continuous accusation and Jesus’ continuous intercession relate to prayer?
3. If someone asked you what the book of Ephesians is about, how would you answer? Have any themes stirred in your spirit, because they are especially significant or troubling to you?

Making Room to Make Disciples

The holiday season is a wonderful time to make much of your relationships in order to make much of Jesus. They try to cultivate gratitude without knowing the God worth thanking. Our whole culture goes mad trying to give extravagantly, but their generosity will never match the extravagant gift that we celebrate at Christmas. How can you Make Room in this season to Make a Disciple of an unbeliever?