



Tim Pauley
PO Box 58403, Charleston, WV 25358
304.767.8430
tim.pauley@capitolcom.org

The Christian's Warfare Ephesians 6:10-20 1. Fighting the Right Battle

In the months leading up to the invasion of Normandy in World War II the United States military engaged in a grand plan called "Operation Fortitude". It was designed to deceive the Germans as to where the actual invasion would take place. It involved staging fake troops and equipment making it appear the Allies were preparing to attack Calais to the south. Buildings were built, and dummy vehicles and landing craft were massed. Gen. Patton even visited these fake "armies" several times to further the deception. All this was done to make the Germans think the attack would take place at Calais rather than Normandy. The operation was a great success! It prevented Germany from massing their defenses at Normandy, and even after the attack began, they believed it was merely a diversion and they failed to pull troops away to defend Normandy until it was too late.

We certainly applaud the Allied leaders for such a clever scheme that helped bring an end to that terrible war. But we can learn an important lesson from "Operation Fortitude" as to how our enemy wants to deceive the followers of Christ - and all people - about the spiritual battle taking place around us.

In the last chapter of his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul warns believers that they are in a spiritual battle and informs us how that battle must be won. This is the passage we will be considering in our studies during the regular session. As you enter this season of political "warfare" during the session, let us realize we are ultimately in a spiritual warfare and turn to this wonderful passage to see how we find victory over the greatest of enemies.

Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus is one of the most encouraging books in the Bible. In the first three chapters he shares with believers the glorious truth of who God is, our lost condition due to our sin, all Christ has done for us and given us in His perfect life; His suffering and death, and His resurrection; and who and what we are as believers because of our repentance and faith in Him. He focuses on God's amazing grace that brought Him to do such great things for us.

In chapter four Paul begins to share how we should live because of the truths of gospel outlined in chapters 1-3. In 4:1 he begins this practical challenge, **"Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called..."** He tells us that because of God's grace and the change He made in us we should live out that reality in our daily lives. We should live in unity because of our common relationship with Christ. We should live lives of holiness, speaking kindly and building each other up. We should seek to follow God in our roles as wives and mothers, husbands and fathers, and children. Lastly Paul warns us that in seeking to live out the gospel in such a way we are in a spiritual battle:

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you

will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, 19 and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. (Eph. 6:10-20)

Like the Allies at Calais, Satan would deceive us into fighting the wrong battle. Paul writes to make sure we are fighting the right battle, against the right enemy, using the right weapons. We hope will join us in these studies during the session as we see how we can win the spiritual battles we face every day.

Fighting the Right Battle

Paul's priority is to make sure we know and understand we are in a spiritual war zone! In the oft adversarial atmosphere in the capitol, it is easy to believe that the

“battles” and conflicts are all political. Political parties. Debates. Elections. The selection of leadership positions. Floor debates and votes over many different issues. All these contribute to the atmosphere of a “battlefield” in the statehouse. But Paul reminds us that during all the political conflict, there is a much greater and ultimate battle going on – a spiritual battle. Paul gives us a vivid description of this spiritual warfare. He warns us we must **“stand firm against the schemes of the devil”** (vs 11). He writes **“...Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against...spiritual forces of wickedness”** (vs. 12). We need God’s armor so that we may **“resist in the evil day”** (vs. 13). We must use the shield of faith to **“extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one”** (vs. 16).

Paul describes this battle as a **“struggle”** in verse 12. This emphasizes the personal nature of our conflict. It describes hand to hand combat until one soldier vanquishes the other. While you are in the middle of the political skirmishes in the capitol, a spiritual conflict is going on in your life. You may be tempted to pride or discouragement. There are many opportunities to become angry making it easy to say or do things that harm your testimony and the name of Christ.

Paul says we must **“be strong”** (vs. 10); **“resist”** (vs. 13); and strive **“to stand”** (vs. 11, 13, 14). This emphasizes the fierce nature of our conflict. We may look at the last several sessions in our statehouse as particularly challenging and intense. But this is nothing compared to the spiritual conflict which is taking place every day.

Paul’s challenge to you as you are serving in the capitol is to remember you are not in a merely political battle – you are in a spiritual fight. This fight takes place in the statehouse, at home, in your workplace, and in your community. We need to make sure we are fighting the right battle wherever we may be!

Fighting the Right Enemy

Next Paul wants us to know that we are in a war in which we need God’s strength to win. In our capitol we usually see the “enemy” as those on the other side of the ballot, aisle, or issue. Paul warns us that our real enemy is not “flesh and blood” but rather **“rulers”, “powers”, “world forces of darkness”,** and **“spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places”**. This describes Satan and his forces who fight against God, His kingdom, and His followers. We know from scripture that Satan was the highest of angels who rebelled against God and took many other angels with him. We know he deceived Adam and Eve leading them to join in rebellion against God, with their fall leading to all the evil we see today. He is today described as one who **“prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour”** and so we must be alert and resist him (1 Peter 5:8-9). In Paul’s description of our enemy we see he is powerful; he is wicked; he is cunning; and he is organized. And so, we must be strong, we must resist, and we must put on God’s armor so that we may stand against him and his forces.

It is important to remember that though formidable, Satan is already a defeated enemy. Christ is the Savior who was sent to “crush the serpents head” (Genesis 3:15).

We should stop for a moment and consider how we think of those we often consider our “enemies” in the capitol – those

which whom we disagree strongly on important issues. Those who reject God and His truth do so because their minds and hearts have been blinded by the enemy.

³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 2 Cor. 4:3-4

If we remember we are in a spiritual battle we will realize those on the other side of the aisle or the issue are not our real enemies. This will impact greatly impact how we act and speak in political skirmishes during the session.

Fight with the Right Weapons

Lastly Paul tells us God has provided all we need to win the battle, but we must use it properly. If indeed we are in a spiritual battle, then Paul tells us it is important that we fight with the right weapons. Twice Paul exhorts us to put on and take up the **“full armor of God”**. The letter to the church at Ephesus was likely written while Paul was in prison. He may well have been chained to or at least guarded by Roman soldiers. It is the well-equipped Roman soldier to which he is referring for his illustration. In our own military soldiers and marines are outfitted in what they call full “battle rattle” – all the protective gear and weapons needed for their mission. Here Paul describes the believer’s full “battle rattle” – all that God has provided to assure victory in the spiritual conflict. They are truth; righteousness; the gospel of peace; faith; and salvation. We will look at these – what they are and how we use them – in detail in our studies to come. In another letter Paul similarly writes:

³For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, ⁴for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses... 2 Cor. 10:3-4

The weapons God has provided for us are “divinely powerful” and assure us victory if we use them as we should.

The Power of Prayer

The last section of this passage deals with the importance of prayer in our fighting of the spiritual battles and donning of God’s armor. Perhaps we should have started with this topic as it would encourage us to faithfully pray for our own struggles and those of others during the hectic, challenging days of the session.

It is important that you consider on which side of this spiritual battle you stand. Paul wrote in Ephesians how apart from Christ we are enemies of God and separated from Him. Christ died and rose again so that when we trust in Him, we are made right with God and because part of His kingdom. Which side are you on today?

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDIES

Thursdays,

8:00 AM Government Organization Conference Room

12:00 PM Senate President’s Conference Room