

The Battle For Our Souls

(Ephesians 6:10-20)

by Bryan Gibson

“We do not wrestle against flesh and blood” (6:12), so it’s not a physical battle. It’s fought in the spiritual realm, with nothing less than our eternal souls at stake. Victory won’t come easily, but rest assured, it will come—if we heed the admonitions found in the above passage. Here’s what we need to do to win.

Identify the enemy. The enemy, of course, is the devil (6:11), who is elsewhere described as “the tempter” (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5), a “liar” and a “murderer” (John 8:44), “a roaring lion” (1 Peter 5:8), “the wicked one” (1 John 2:13)—just to name a few. He is a powerful, ruthless enemy who abides by no code of honor, and to make matters worse, he has a loyal army behind him (6:12). Winning begins with taking our opponent seriously.

Identify the enemy’s strategy. Notice the phrase in v. 11, “the wiles of the devil.” The devil rarely uses a frontal attack; he would rather trick us or scheme us into doing something we ought not. But, “we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11); all we need to do is look through Scripture to identify his tricks. He can trick us into thinking only about the present, with no thought to consequences—like he did with David (2 Samuel 11-12); trick us into believing that tomorrow, not today, is the day of salvation—like he did with Felix (Acts 24:25); trick us into believing a lie, because the man he uses to teach it “seems so sincere” and “is such a good speaker” (Romans 16:18); trick us into siding with the majority, despite what Jesus said (Matthew 7:13-14); trick us into thinking that this world has all we need—like he did with Demas (2 Timothy 4:10). These are just some of his “fiery darts” (6:16), but here’s the point: winning is easier when you know ahead of time your opponent’s plan of attack.

Make full use of our allies. First and foremost, the Lord is on our side, which gives us a distinct advantage, especially when we’re “praying always” (6:18). The instruction here is not “man up”; it’s “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” (6:10). We can also count on help from our fellow comrades, from “all the saints” (v. 18)—through their prayers, their encouraging words, their good example. It sure does help to witness first hand those who are resisting the devil at every turn. Witnessing others get the best of Satan convinces us we can do the same.

Use every weapon and form of protection the Lord has provided. “Put on,” or “take up” the “whole armor of God” (6:11, 13). It basically comes down to doing these five things. 1) Possess an unwavering faith in God (“taking the shield of faith”); 2) know the truth (“having girded your waist with truth”; “take...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”); 3) obey the truth (“put on the breastplate of righteousness”); 4) teach the truth to others (“having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace”); and 5) stay focused on the final victory (“take the helmet of salvation”—see also 1 Thessalonians 5:8). “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” (6:13). When the battle is done, let’s make sure we’re the ones left standing.