

Eph 6:10–14 (ESV) Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ⁽¹¹⁾ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ⁽¹²⁾ For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ⁽¹³⁾ 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.

1. Review: Seen two things are necessary to fight well

- A. We must fight in God’s strength and not our own – AND – we must put on the armor
- B. This morning we will concentrate on that first condition – fighting in God’s strength
 - 1). My goal is to convince you of the spiritual help we have in fighting this war

2. Why is this necessary to go through this as slowly as we are?

- A. Because we are so prone to quote these great and powerful truths so quickly – so lightly
“The battle is the Lord’s” and “Stand in the power of his might”
 - 1). But we don’t take the time to understand what that means – how to use that truth
How to practically apply what that is saying in this spiritual war were called to
 - 2). Therefore it remains fuzzy, mystical – truths we can recite but don’t know how to use

Point: This is why we are going to take our time going through this section

- A. *This is the passage you MUST understand and apply to stand strong in the fight*

3. Outline: We are going to be looking at the supernatural help available to us

- A. God’s involvement in the battle – both God the Father and Jesus Christ
- B. The Holy Spirit’s involvement in the battle
- C. The Angels involvement in the battle

I. GOD’S INVOLVEMENT IN THE BATTLE

1. I want to start by looking at Satan’s primary goal and Jesus involvement

- A. Last supper: We get a clue of Satan’s goal (end game) of every trial and trouble he brings into our life
- B. The disciples reclining at that table experienced extreme high and lows
 - 1). They were shocked when Jesus told them one of them at that table would betray them
 - 2). Then they were thrilled as he spoke about the future in the kingdom of God
 - a). They would sit at Jesus table eating and drinking with Him
And they would sit on thrones with Christ judging the 12 tribes of Israel
 - b). Feasts and thrones in the kingdom of God! How exciting! Can’t wait!

- C. But Jesus has one last thing to say to Peter - something that must have shook him to the core

Lk 22:31–32 (ESV) “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, ⁽³²⁾ but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

- 1). We get some important clues of Satan’s goal when he troubles us
- 2). Satan wanted to *sift Peter – and wants to sift us - like wheat*
 - a). Ancient sifting – beat the wheat with stick or rods to separate grain from chaff
- 3). What did he want to separate from Peter – from us? Faith
 - a). Why Jesus prayed “But I have prayed for you *that your faith may not fail*”

“Satan wants to sift you like wheat but I have prayed that your faith doesn’t fail”

Point: It is our faith that is in the crosshairs of the devil

- A. He wants to shake us so badly on those evil days that we turn away from God
 - 1). We stop trusting him – we become angry and grow bitter at him

Thought: This would be horrifying if we didn’t also see that God is involved in our battles

Lk 22:31–32 (ESV) “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, ⁽³²⁾ but *I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.*”

- A. That was meant to comfort Peter and it is meant to encourage us when we are in the battle
 Jesus says “Peter, you’re going to be shaken so violently that you think your faith has failed completely. But because I am involved you are going to turn back, and will be stronger than ever. You will be able to use all of this to strengthen your brothers when they go through their evil days.”
- 1). Luke 22:31 shows us how serious the battle is – Satan wants to sift us
 It also provides comfort – God enters into that battle to strengthen us
 - a). In the end Peter’s faith won’t fail
 He will actually become stronger and be used to strengthen his brothers
 - b). Why? Because Jesus stepped onto that battlefield with him – he was involved
- B. This is simply Hebrews 12:2 being lived out on the pages of Scripture
Heb 12:2 (NKJV) looking unto Jesus, the *author* and *finisher* of our faith...

Transition: Let’s look at a reason we stay weak – wrong focus

2. Our problem: We tend to see Christianity as something we primarily do

- A. We minimize God’s work in our spiritual life and exaggerate our own
- 1). We tend to think everything is based on our faithfulness and discipline
- B. While Christianity certainly calls us to a certain kind of lifestyle
 And does place obligations upon us as God’s children
- 1). Scripture always places the emphasis on God first
 - a). What he has done for the believer and what he will continue to do
 - 2). Scripture tells us to set our gaze upon him and his work – his involvement
 - a). We run our race looking unto Jesus – Hebrews 12:2
 - b). We set our hearts and minds on Christ and the things above – Col 3:1-2

Point: A secret of fighting well is the ability to look away from our weakness to his strength

- A. Base everything on you – your faithfulness, discipline, seeking, and serving God
- 1). And you will lack confidence in the battles you face against temptation
 Those battles for consistency and perseverance in your life
 - 2). If I’m focusing on me how can I have any hope for victory – why? *I know me!*
 - a). I know well aware of my weaknesses and inconsistencies
- B. But if I base my confidence on him holding me – sustaining me – then I can rest
- 1). If I rest in his faithfulness rather than relying on mine I have hope
Zec 4:6 (ESV) “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.

3. My goal this morning is to convince you of God’s involvement in your life

- A. To show you he truly is *“The author and finisher”* of your faith
- B. I want you to go home comforted – excited about God’s power in your life – to be strengthened
- 1). To be strong in the Lord and to be able to stand in strength of his might
You must understand how that strength works in your life
- C. We’ll start with a bit of repeat from last week – but worth looking at again

We Are Involved In God’s War

1. We are not fighting in a personal battle with the devil

- A. This is not me choosing off hell – struggling in my own strength with my own resources
- 1). We have been called (recruited) and sent into God’s war with the devil

- 2). This war is God vs devil - heaven vs hell – light vs darkness
- B. This is such a comforting truth because it means:
 - 1). Heaven will supply all the resources that are necessary to win this
 - a). All the power, abilities and guidance I need
 - b). He’s not going to send soldiers into the battle without the proper equipment
 - 2). AND it also means the outcome of this war is already settled – Why?
 - a). Because God’s glory is involved – therefore he’s not going to let the devil win this

Summary: So God is not going to lose this because his glory is involved

- A. ***Therefore everything we need will be provided including his presence on the battlefield***
 - 1). To make sure this war is won he steps onto the battlefield with us – we are not alone

2. The battle is the Lord’s – 2 Chron. 20:15

- A. King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah are facing impossible odds
 - 1). A vast army made of the Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunites was approaching
 - 2). Jehoshaphat turns to the Lord and cries out for help
 - 3). The Lord responds by speaking through Jahaziel – listen to his words

2 Ch 20:15 (ESV) And he said, “Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the LORD to you, ***‘Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God’s.***”
- B. This didn’t mean the soldiers had nothing to do – just sit and passively watch the Lord move
 - 1). They had to strap on their weapons and march onto the battlefield
 - 2). But they entered the battle against overwhelming odds with tremendous confidence
 - a). God is involved! This is primarily his battle not ours – he will make sure we win this!
 - 3). Result: Rather than being terrified - they entered the battle singing praise songs

Thought: That is what this kind of truth can do – give confident joy in times of trial - shaking

- A. It is meant to take our eyes off ourselves and circumstances and fix them on God and his involvement
- B. Whenever Israel remembered this they trusted God and experienced victory

Whenever they forgot that they experienced defeat because they trusted in other things

 - 1). Their own schemes – they made alliances with other nations – trusting them instead of God

Transition: So for our joy, peace, rest, security and confidence it is important where our faith is focused

- A. If we are trusting in ourselves or any other thing we will suffer defeat
 - 1). If we learn to trust in God’s involvement – ability – strength and resources we will be victorious
- B. Let’s look at a few more scriptures showing God’s involvement in all this
 - 1). Remember Satan’s end game in every trial is to separate us from our faith
 - 2). ***That would be horrifying if Scripture didn’t point us to God for comfort***

3. The double grip of security gives us confidence – John 10:27-29

Jn 10:27–29 (ESV) My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ⁽²⁸⁾ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ⁽²⁹⁾ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.

- A. Such a comforting promise for all who have trusted Christ and are following him
 - 1). They are given eternal life and look at how intimately God’s involved – his protecting grip
- B. Believer – right now – you are being held in the Father and Son’s grip
 - 1). Devil would love to win this battle by snatching you out of his hand – shaking you loose
 - 2). He tries to frighten us convincing us that he will – but he’s not strong enough
 - a). This battle is the Lord’s – he will win it

4. The Son’s promise to the Father gives us confidence – John 6:39-40

Jn 6:39–40 (ESV) And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. ⁽⁴⁰⁾ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

- A. The Father has given the believers eternal life and has given them Jesus to guard and keep
 - 1). Protecting the believers – keeping them – raising them up on the last day is his assignment
 - 2). The Father’s will is that Jesus loses none of us – that we all end up in glory with him
- B. Do you think Jesus is going to fail to fulfill the Father’s will?
 - 1). **He will be involved at every step** – in every battle – so the Father’s will is accomplished

Thought: See why Jesus entered that battle Peter was going through? He wasn’t going to lose him

- A. Satan’s shaking set Jesus to praying – and his prayers are always answered

Lk 22:31–32 (ESV) “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, ⁽³²⁾ but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. **And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.**”

- 1). Not IF you turn back – when you have turned back
 - a). You’re not going to lose this battle and I’m not going to lose you – I’m involved

5. The confidence of Paul – Phil. 1:6

Php 1:6 (ESV) And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

- A. Because God is the **author** and **finisher** of your faith – he is faithful to finish what he started
 - 1). When you go through those radical evil days verse 13 talks about
 - a). Temptations so strong – circumstances so overwhelming you don’t think you’ll make it
 - 2). I’ve been there – my faith so rocked I didn’t know if I could hold on to Christ
 - a). But when the smoke cleared I was still standing with God – Why?
 - Because he was involved – he was holding me – he finishes what he starts

- B. Paul shows this great confidence again in Romans 8

Ro 8:37–39 (ESV) No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ⁽³⁸⁾ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ⁽³⁹⁾ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- 1). Paul lists off all the things we might think could separate us from God and says they won’t
- 2). God’s love in Christ is everlasting – his grip on us unceasing
 - a). Like Chuck Smith used to say – when a parent walks across their street with their child
 - Whose hand is gripping whose – it is the parent holding the kid so they don’t run off
 - b). It is the same with us on our journey to glory – God is gripping us

Summary: I pray you find great comfort and joy here!

- A. You are loved – you are held right now in that firm, secure, double grip of divine love
 - 1). You never enter a battle alone – God always steps onto that battlefield with you
 - And he being with you – he supplying every resource is enough – HE WINS
- B. Since he says the battle is his – stop basing everything on you
 - 1). Learn to look away from you to him and find rest in his strength and abilities
 - 2). Learn to rest in his love and involvement in everything you go through
 - 3). If you think somehow – but if I just rest in him I might relax to much start to drift
 - a). No! See his love – his grip on you – his sustaining you – his breathtaking grace
 - b). You won’t stop serving – start coasting – how he enters every battle with you
 - 1a). You’ll begin to serve more from right reasons

1 John 4:19 (NKJV) We love Him because He first loved us.

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- C. So God the Father and Jesus Christ are involved in the fight – next the Spirit’s involvement
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II. THE HOLY SPIRIT’S INVOLVEMENT

Without his involvement we would never be believers

1. The Spirit’s involvement in our rescue from sin and guilt

- A. We were born with an inbred hostility and couldn’t live in a way that pleased God
Ro 8:7 (ESV) For the mind that is set on the flesh is *hostile to God*, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.
- 1). Because of this Paul calls us *enemies* of God in Romans 5:10
- B. **Problem:** We were *blinded* to the message that could change that horrifying condition
2 Co 4:4 (ESV) ... the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
- 1). Hostile towards God and blinded to the message that could change that - horrifying

Question: What happened to change this in our lives?

- A. The Holy Spirit took off the blinders – turned on the light so we could see the truth
2 Co 4:6 (ESV) For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
- 1). He caused you to see your sinful condition – your guilt before a holy God
 And convinced you that your only hope was through Jesus Christ
- B. He made the truth of the Gospel so compelling it became irresistible
- 1). That message you thought was foolish before now became important and urgent
- a). And you willingly embraced Jesus Christ by faith
- 2). That was God being the author of your salvation – opening your eyes to Gospel truth
- a). You moved from Ephesians 2:1-3 – dead in your trespasses and sins
 To Ephesians 2:4-8 – saved by grace and alive in Christ

Transition: But what about after you were given life – is the Spirit still involved – of course

- A. He convicts you of sin – brings about repentance – through his involvement you grow in Christ
 He continues to illuminate the scriptures and helps you to pray – empowers you for service
- 1). Every bit of growth in Christlikeness comes about because of his involvement
- B. But there is one aspect of his involvement in this battle I don’t hear much about
- 1). Something I find very interesting and extremely comforting

2. The Spirit’s involvement in our perseverance

- A. I have said it before – I’m really good at starting things – not so good at finishing them
- 1). Diets! Exercise! Hobbies – started with great enthusiasm but dies down until I stop

Question: What would cause somebody like me to continue on with Christianity? Like you?

- A. Why won’t I lose interest in this like I’ve done in so many things before? Where is my comfort?
- B. The answer is – I will continue because of the Spirit’s involvement in my life
- 1). Even the battle for my interests and desires is his! Watch how this works

Php 2:12–13 (ESV) Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, *work out your own salvation* with fear and trembling, ⁽¹³⁾ *for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

- A. This passage tells me I have a responsibility to work out my salvation
- 1). I am to live out my Christianity in a way that brings God glory
 I do that by obeying the commands in the Bible

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- B. But notice none of that starts with me!
- 1). It begins with the Spirit creating those desires within me to live in this way – *to will*
Php 2:13 (ESV) for it is God who *works in you, both to will* and to work for his good pleasure.
- C. Here is where this becomes comforting for people like us who start things but don’t finish them
- 1). Why won’t that happen in my Christianity – because the Spirit is involved
Because the battle for my desires begins with him *causing me to will*
Look at: Ezek 36:26-27 (NIV) I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. (27) And *I will put my Spirit in you and move you* to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.
 - 2). I will persevere because God finishes what he starts
I will preserve in the faith because the Spirit will persevere in keeping those desires alive
- D. He gives me the desire to live for God and as I work that out he gives me the power I need
Php 2:13 (ESV) for it is God who *works in you, both to will and to work* for his good pleasure.
- 1). It’s amazing how involved God is in all this! That is our hope – our comfort and security
Transition: So God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Spirit are all involved. One more. Quickly
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III. THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE ANGELS

1. Angels are a big part of God’s plan

- A. Bible tells us they deliver God’s messages and protect God’s people – even fighting God’s battles
- B. We see them showing up to comfort people – “Don’t be afraid” “Do not fear”
- C. They are all around us – no idea how many times we’ve come across them
Heb 13:2 (ESV) Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.
 - 1). Talk to any missionary and they’ll have examples they believe is angelic help
 - a). China – lost – train – man “Can I help” speaks perfect English and Chinese
 - 2). Scripture shows them being sent by God in answer to a prayer
 - a). That man if he was an angel was sent by God to help us

2. The angels should be a greater part of our thinking

- A. Perhaps we don’t think about them because it feels to mystical
Maybe we think they’ll steal the Lord’s preeminence if we think about them
- B. But listen to how Paul thinks
1 Ti 5:21 (ESV) In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.
 - 1). God, Jesus Christ is present – watching – but so are the angels all around you
 - 2). They were there when you repented and placed your faith in Jesus Christ – rejoiced
Lk 15:10 (ESV) Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

3. The angels are involved in our lives – they are assigned to help us

- Heb 1:14 (NIV)** Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?
- A. God uses these mighty angelic beings he’s created to serve and support his children
 - B. A great example of this is in 2 Kings 6 – Elisha and his servant
 - 1). Wake up and the city is surrounded with enemy soldiers wanting to arrest Elisha
 - 2). His servant Gehazi panics but Elisha is completely at rest – why? God was involved
2 Ki 6:15-17 (NIV) When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. “Oh, my lord, what shall we

do?" the servant asked. (16) "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. *"Those who are with us are more than those who are with them."* (17) And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. **(God's angels – ministering spirit's protecting him)**

- 3). Elisha rested in the strength of the Lord – this battle is God's - he will do whatever is necessary to win it – including surrounding me with these powerful angels

Point: God and the Angels are involved in our life – in everything we go through

- A. Every battle with sin – temptation – desires starting to fade he reignites (over and over again)
 - 1). We need to see this involvement and find great encouragement and comfort
 - 2). We are not on this journey to glory alone – we walk this path with divine support
 - a). That is our hope of heaven isn't it – our confidence we will get there
- B. What are you going through this morning – by faith look away from yourself to him
 - 1). By faith expect him to sustain you – provide for you – protect you
In his timing and in his way – by faith trust that his timing and way is right
 - 2). *The Father, Son, Spirit and the holy angels are all involved*

COMMUNION

1. We've seen that God is involved – isn't that what we remember in communion

- A. We remember how the Father was involved by sending his Son to the cross
We remember how the Son was involved in being willing to come
We remember how the Spirit was involved in opening that truth up to us
- B. God has already won that biggest fight you'll ever go through – the fight for your soul
 - 1). You are his child – now he says
I won't let the devil take you from me – he will try to sift you – separate you from your faith
 - a). But remember I am engaged in the fight – my strength will win the day