

HOW TO FIGHT THE ENEMY

By Terry Jones, June 29, 2008
Christ's Church at Tiffin, Ohio

Ephesians 6:10-17

CENTRAL SERMON THEME – As followers of Jesus Christ we fight for God by standing against His enemies with the armor of God and the strength the Lord provides.

INTRO. - Do you want to fight?

1. Does God want us to physically fight for Him? About 1,000 years ago, the established church launched a military crusade from Europe to Israel. These soldiers' goals were to conquer the city of Jerusalem and take the rest of Israel from Islamic rule. Those believers thought God wanted His people to take up weapons to fight a physical battle. The failures of this 200 year campaign prove God's battle is not a physical fight. We cannot fight physically.
2. Does God want us to join the political battles? In recent years the news has focused on the involvement of the evangelical world in politics. The late TV evangelist, Jerry Falwell, held the conviction that Christians should vote the right candidates into office to change the direction of our nation. I believe Christians should vote their consciences. I believe we have a voice in the political process of our nation. I believe every Christian should vote. God never called His church to be political lobbyists. Our battle is not a political fight.
3. Does God want us to launch a war over morals? Christians are to be salt and light in our world. To be salt means we influence the world to prevent decay as salt was once used to preserve meat from decay. To be a light to the world means we Christians get involved to shed light on the moral darkness in our world. Our world needs light in these dark times. I believe abortion is wrong. I think partial birth abortion is inhumane. I believe in equality for men and women in the job market. Murder is the worst of all sins. Rape and abuse rate as abominations. I cringe when I watch same sex marriage ceremonies in California. Is the moral fight for us? Let us read the Bible again. The Ten Commandments came after God redeemed Israel from physical and spiritual bondage. In the church's orders in Matthew 28, Jesus said for His followers to disciple all nations; baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. After their conversion they were to obey God's commands. We are losing the moral battle. Jesus never commissioned His

church to be moral crusaders in the world. The good news of Jesus causes moral revolutions but they are a by product of the real battle.

4. Does God want us to join the legal fight? We have become a nation of laws and regulations. Can new laws save our nation? How can a different set of laws save us when we cannot obey the laws we have? A man gave a speech stating our nation needs to outlaw unemployment. He advocated Congress passing a law that made being without a job illegal. He proposed the idea of having a law that everyone be employed and everyone have a job. Others believe we can solve all problems with new laws.

God calls us to a different battle. The Bible reveals battles exist behind the culture wars, secular battles, political strife, and troubles we face. Our desire to stand for Christ connects us to this Scripture from the Apostle Paul. To stand for Jesus Christ and His Word, we first need to:

I. BE CONSTANTLY STRENGTHENED IN THE LORD, Vv. 10, 11

- A. To be strong in the Lord is to receive the strength the Lord supplies.
 - 1. This strength is not a self-help achievement because the language used means the strength is received.
 - 2. The second statement in verse 10 explains that this strength is in God's power.
 - 3. How do we receive this strength?

- B. We put on the full armor of God.
 - 1. We put on the armor of God to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.
 - 2. What are the devil's schemes? You can review Ephesians for the answers.
 - a. In 2:1-3, Satan alienates humanity from God through disobedience because we were spiritually dead in our sins.
 - b. In 4:17, 18; Satan separates us from each other by corrupting our thinking and understanding to make our hearts totally insensitive to God.
 - c. In 4:23, Satan separates people with greed and lust.
 - d. In 4:25, Satan alienates us from one another with falsehoods.
 - e. In 4:26, Satan separates us from each other with anger.
 - 3. We will be able to stand firm against the devil.
 - a. Standing firm means we are not fighting a battle to gain territory.

- b. We are standing to defend a victory that is already won where the Lord won.
- c. The victory over the devil is Jesus' sinless life, death on the cross, and His resurrection.
- d. We defend what Jesus has already won.
- e. Do not let the devil regain what he lost to Jesus!
- 4. Paul is chained to a Roman soldier from whom he gets his illustration to describe our battle with spiritual forces.

C. Once ready to stand for the Lord, we:

II. IDENTIFY THE ENEMY OF THE LORD, V. 12

A. We mistake others for the enemies.

- 1. Your fellow church member/attender is not your enemy for Ephesians teaches us to be united as followers of Christ.
 - a. Illus. - Michael Vick, the former quarterback for the Atlanta Falcons, is awaiting trial for dog fighting. He lost his position with the Falcons and may go to prison for illegal dog fighting. Dog fighting is a cruel sport as two vicious dogs are placed in a ring to fight until one of them dies. This man is despised by people who love dogs.
 - b. The devil has been charged with a worse crime than dog fighting, which is inciting Christians to fight each other.
 - c. Fellow Christians are not our enemy.
- 2. Atheists and those who believe in the world religions are not our enemies for Ephesians says God is rich in mercy and grace.
- 3. The world is not our enemy but as the Lord's Church we are to bring the good news of Jesus' salvation through the cross to the world.

B. We wrestle not against flesh and blood or other human beings.

- 1. Wrestle is used to describe the athletic game of wrestling.
- 2. Ex. - When we consider that the loser in a Greek wrestling contest had his eyes gouged out with resulting blindness for the rest of his days, we can form some conception of the Ephesian Greek's reaction to Paul's illustration.
- 3. We get confused over who our enemy is.
- 4. Our enemy is not people but the powers over them.

- C. Our enemy is so powerful he must be described in different ways.
1. Rulers - Satan and his demons rule our world.
 2. Powers - Satan and his demons abuse any form of power.
 3. Forces of darkness - Satan and his demons use forces of evil.
 4. Spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places - the battle is between God and Satan because Satan opposes God's people.
 5. A description of the devil:
Satan promises the best, but pays with the worst;
he promises honor and pays with disgrace;
he promises pleasure and pays with pain;
he promises profit and pays with loss;
he promises life and pays with death.
Thomas Brooks.

D. Applic. - One of my professors once said, "Do not be surprised when the world acts like the world." If we fight against the people we are trying to win for Christ, how will they respond? We will not influence them for God. How do we fight this enemy of God? We have instructions in verses 13-17.

III. TAKE ON THE ARMOR OF THE LORD, Vv. 13-17

- A. Take up the full armor of God.
1. To be able to resist on the evil day and to stand firm.
 2. We stand firm in the armor of God.
- B. The pieces of the armor are:
1. Gird on the truth as a belt around our waists.
 - a. The belt held the sword.
 - b. The belt held other items the soldier needed.
 - c. Our belt to which all our essentials are attached is the truth.
 2. Put on the breastplate of righteousness.
 - a. The breastplate of righteousness is not an attempt to be saved by good works.
 - b. The righteousness that guards our hearts is the righteousness we practice to please God and influence others.
 - c. Applic. - We cannot take a chance on being perceived as dishonest. Our friends in the world deserve our obedience to God's commands.

- d. Illus. - In the book, *Your Money Counts*, is the story of Robert Newsome who was trying to sell his old pickup truck for months. Finally an interested buyer decided to buy his truck. At the last moment he told Newsome, "I'll buy the truck only if you don't report it to the state so I won't have to pay sales tax." Newsome responded, "I'm sorry, I can't do that because Jesus Christ is my Lord." Newsome said later, "He almost went into shock. Then an interesting thing happened. He purchased the truck and his attitude completely changed. He became very open to the truth of Jesus Christ in a personal way." The breastplate of righteousness guards us.
3. Fit your feet with shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace.
 - a. Roman soldiers wore half-boots with nail studs in the soles for traction.
 - b. Our feet as Christian soldiers are fitted with the good news of Christ which brings peace.
 - c. Illus. - Jesus is a reconciler. A rough man was harsh with everyone including his dog. He became so abusive with his dog the dog ran from him. One day he was converted, born again. He had much to do to make things right. He talked to everyone who had been offended with his harsh words. His dog became his friend. His preacher asked him to tell his story. He said to the church one Sunday, "Even my dog could tell the difference in me."
4. The shield of faith extinguishes the burning darts of the devil.
 - a. Background - A shield was about two and a half feet by four feet, made of wood but overlaid with leather. Soldiers shielded themselves from the front and overhead with their shields. The leather covering in the shield was soaked in water to extinguish the arrows which had burning tar on their tips.
 - b. Satan hurls his temptations toward us but our faith in God keeps us standing firm.
5. The helmet of salvation protects the head.
 - a. The helmet represents hope in Christ.
 - b. Hope is two-dimensional; now and eternity.
 - c. The head is considered the most important part of the body, therefore salvation is the most important weapon in our battle against Satan and his forces.
 - d. Biblical instructions for salvation are Eph. 2:8, Acts 2:38.
6. The sword of the Spirit is the word of God.

- a. The only offensive weapon we have is the word of God.
 - b. The Bible taught and applied defends itself.
 - c. I believe strongly in the necessity of preaching/teaching the Bible.
 - d. I am writing a book about how to preach the intended meaning of the biblical author with appropriate application.
7. Pray
- a. Verse 18 - Pray at all times in the Spirit.
 - b. Pray with all perseverance and for all the saints.
 - c. Illus. - I was in the habit of calling Robby Bridgewater, one of the missionaries we support, early on Thursday mornings. One morning when I called him, I was fatigued from a stressful day with long meetings into the evening. Robby asked me if something was wrong. I asked him why he asked. He said he went to bed that night but he became so troubled he got up to pray. He prayed for several hours and returned to bed. He could not sleep so he got up again to pray. He told me he believed someone was deeply troubled and he asked God to help. I told him about the problems in that church and he said, "Oh, Brother Terry, I was praying for you." When we are in a struggle we need others to be praying for us.

CONCLUSION - Are we ready to fight? Our battle is to defend what Jesus has already won. (Use visual of the bear with armor.)