

The Christian's Enemy, Battlefield, and War

Christians are in a life or death battle with Satan and his host of demons. The winner of the battle takes all (i.e. the eternity of the soul). The apostle Paul tells the Ephesian Christians to “*Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*” (Eph. 6:11). Understanding the “*wiles*” of the devil will help us better understand the battlefield in this life. The word “*wiles*” (*methodeia*) is “craft (skill in evasion or deception; guile / AHD 336), wiliness (a deceitful stratagem or trick / AHD 1382)” (LS 493). The apostle Paul tells the Corinthians that the devil’s “*devices*” (II Cor. 2:10-11) are “*craft and deceit*” (II Cor. 4:2). With craft and deceit the devil wages a bloody battle with the saints.

At Ephesians 6:12 Paul writes, “*For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places*” (6:12). The Christian is in a wrestling match (i.e., battle cf. LS 587). The Christian’s “battle” is not against “*flesh and blood*” but is rather a spiritual battle. Christians are in battle against “*principalities*” (*arche*) (those of power and authority). Christians are in battle against “*powers*” (*exousia*) (“Power or authority to do a thing). Christians are in battle against “*world-rulers of this darkness*” (*Kosmokratoras tou skotous*) (a worldly prince, a power paramount in the world of the unbelieving and ungodly” (Moulton 238)). “*Skotous*” = “a realm of moral darkness” (Moulton 370). Keep in mind that Paul is not discussing “*flesh and blood*” world rulers but rather those in the spirit world (i.e., the devil and his demons). The devil is known as the ruler or prince of this world (cf. Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; II Cor. 4:4). Christians are in battle against “*the spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places.*” The word “*spiritual*” (*pneumatikos*) is “a bodiless spirit... spiritual, pertaining to the soul, as distinguished from what concerns the body... pertaining to the nature of spirits, evil spirits at Eph. 6:12” (Moulton 331). Diagramming the sentence may help here. The Greek word *pneumatikos* is a plural adjective describing the noun “*wickedness*” (person, place, or thing) (Friberg 600). The wicked persons under consideration are spiritual beings in heavenly places. The wicked beings are spiritual in the “*heavenly places*” (i.e., spirit realm of the unseen / cf. Eph. 1:3).

Ephesians 6:12 reveals the spiritual nature of the conflict the Christian is in against the devil. The devil is depicted as one who walks to and fro in the earth ever watching for weak moments in individuals lives that he may gain advantage (Job. 1:7; I Cor. 7:5; I Pet. 5:8; II Cor. 2:11). The object of the devil’s wrath is the saint of God and the Lord’s church (cf. Rev. 12:17). Clearly the devil has a host of wicked servants to help him in his work of tempting mankind.

Paul continues, “*Wherefore take up the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand*” (Eph. 6:13). We have identified the enemy as the devil and his demonic host. We have examined the devices of the devil against mankind. The battlefield is now set. Where I spend eternity is at stake in this battle. This is a must win situation. God’s instructions for Christians in this battle are to “*take up the whole armor of God.*” The word “*armor*” (*panoplia*) = “the full armor, i.e., shield, helmet, breastplate, greaves, sword, and lance, a full suit of armor, panoply” (LS 590). Our English word panoply means “the complete arms and armor of a warrior” (AHD 898). We often sing the song, “Soldiers of Christ, Arise” in worship. The Song states, “but take, to arm you for the fight, the **panoply** of God” (Hymns for Worship, pp. 231). God effectively equips the saint for victory.

The “*evil day*” is the day of temptation (the battle). The devil and his demonic host tempt Christians through enticing and deceptive means to act in some unwise or immoral way. The Christian is commanded to “*withstand*” (*anthistemi*) which means “to set against, to set up in opposition... to stand against, esp. in battle, to withstand, oppose... to make a stand” (LS 70-71). The clear command is to do battle with the devil and his host of demonic beings when they try to entice you to make unwise and immoral choices.

These verses shed light on the process of our daily fight against sin (the battlefield) and the enemy (Satan). You and I are continually assaulted by the devil and his wicked host. There are times when we fail in this battle and we give in to unwise and immoral choices. We are defeated. Here is where God comes in. God, through His Son Jesus, enables us to be forgiven of sins (cf. Acts 2:38; 8:22; I Jn. 1:9). The Christian is thereby like a super warrior. The devil and his host may slay us time and time again; however, Christians have the power (through Christ’s forgiveness and our humility of spirit) to be forgiven and given new life. Let us identify our ancient foe, the battlefield, and wage effective war that we sin not.

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