

Week Forty-nine: Kingdom Warfare - Ephesians 2:2; 6:10-18



Overview

Spiritual warfare begins in the Garden of Eden and continues today. Adam and Eve fail to defeat the enemy when they fail to use the sword given to them by God—His promise regarding the consequence of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They fail to appropriate His truth in the situation and thus suffer mortal spiritual blows.

Hebrews 11 chronicles the lives of many of the Old Testament warriors who recognized the spiritual battle being fought, took up “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” (Eph. 6:17), and won. Sadly, few believers today realize that the earth is a war zone, that they are under attack by a real enemy, and that the battle is spiritual in nature. Noted New Testament theologian George Ladd describes kingdom activity: “The theology of the Kingdom of God is essentially one of conflict and conquest over the kingdom of Satan.”¹

Paul addresses spiritual warfare in a number of his epistles. Most notably he concludes his letter to the Ephesians with a description of the enemy, the spiritual battle that kingdom participants face, and the armor provided by God for certain defeat of the enemy. This lesson focuses on Ephesians 6, where Paul declares the necessity of spiritual warfare preparedness—kingdom warfare—and reveals how believers can stand victoriously.

Lesson Objective:

At the conclusion of this lesson, students will recognize that kingdom people are involved in spiritual warfare and that God has not left them defenseless but has provided the necessary armor for protection and victory.

Key Truths

Christ-followers face a real enemy who continually schemes and strategizes against them.

Christ provides His followers with full armor, but they must appropriate each piece.

The full armor of God must be appropriated for the believer to experience victory against the enemy.

¹ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament, revised ed.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 48.

Lesson Outline

1. The enemy - Ephesians 2:2; 6:10-12

Paul describes the enemy:

- The Prince of the power of the air (2:2)
- The spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience (2:2)
- A schemer (6:11)
- Not flesh and blood (6:12)
- Principalities (6:12)
- Powers (6:12)
- Rulers of the darkness of this age (6:12)
- Spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (6:12)
- Uses fiery darts (6:16)

Peter's letter adds to this description, stating that "your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8).

One theologian describes the enemy as the "spiritual Mafia."² Christ, however, stripped Satan of his ability to do as he will, as He "disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it" (Col. 2:15); Satan is a defeated foe. Though he has been defeated, he still attacks by accusing, oppressing, and slandering believers. Believers do not have to live in defeat; rather, they can trust in Christ's victory. Victory has already been won, it simply must be appropriated by faith.

2. The armor - Ephesians 6:13-17

Earlier lessons focused on Adam and Eve's failure in battle with the serpent and Jesus' wilderness victory against the enemy. Each battle offers insight to the list of armor Paul provides and what each piece requires:

- *Belt of truth* (6:14) - When Adam and Eve faced the enemy they did not appropriate God's truth regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; they relied on their reasoning instead of God's revelation. Jesus defeated the schemes of the enemy by relying on God's truth. There is no truth but God's truth; everything else is tainted with sin and, therefore, unreliable.
- *Breastplate of righteousness* (6:14) - Aware of their nakedness after the fall, Adam and Eve clothed themselves with leaves. God, however, replaced their clumsy attempt to cover themselves with clothing of His own making. Jesus had no unrighteousness that required covering. God has clothed believers with the very righteousness of Jesus Christ. The unrighteous, legalistic, or self-righteous person

² John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament* (Cook: Colorado Springs, 2004), 643.

is doomed to certain defeat by the enemy. Without appropriating the righteousness of Jesus Christ, the believer is vulnerable to the enemy's attack.

- *Feed shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace* (6:15) - Adam and Eve tell their story to their children to train and to warn them. Abel listens and comes to God His way, but Cain does not. Those who live missional lives of evangelism and discipleship are prepared for battle, while those who spend their lives on lesser pursuits fall prey to the enemy.
- *Shield of faith* (6:16) - Adam and Eve had faith that they were making the right decision for themselves, but it was not faith in the Living God—faith resting in His promises and character. Jesus operated by faith in God. The object of our faith isn't faith itself, but faith in God.
- *Helmet of Salvation* (6:17) - The enemy gained entrance into the thoughts of Adam and Eve as they entertained suspicions about God and His goodness. Jesus never questioned God's goodness as he hungered in the wilderness. Believers, therefore, must take errant and suspicious thoughts captive and operate out of a renewed mind (2 Cor. 10:4-5; Rom. 12:2).
- *Sword of the Spirit* (6:17) - Adam and Eve did not rebut Satan's suggestions with a firm commitment to God's Word, as Jesus did when He continually referred to what had been written in the book of Deuteronomy. Spiritual power is released when the Word of God is appropriated.

3. The battle - Ephesians 6:11-18

- Battle position - 6:11, 13-14

Paul mentions the word "stand" a number of times—"that you may be able to *stand*" (6: 11); "having done all, to *stand*" (6:13); and "*Stand*, therefore . . ." (6:14). Standing denotes alertness, readiness, and engagement or active resistance. The laid-back, apathetic, passive, and unaware believer has lost the battle before it has even begun

- Battle power - 6:10, 18

Paul begins his teaching on spiritual warfare by declaring first and foremost that the strength for battle and the power in battle come from the Lord (6:10). Man's role is trust and strategic prayer (6:18), while the Lord is the one who conquers the forces of darkness.

Believers cannot afford inattention to spiritual warfare and warfare preparedness. Peter's warning about the enemy going about as a roaring lion ends with the call to "resist him, steadfast in the faith" (1 Pet. 5:9).

Application - What does this lesson teach us about God? Man? Sin? Redemption? *We have a real enemy who fights dirty, but we have genuine weapons which protect us and which defeat the enemy.*

Without the appropriation of designated armor believers will be vulnerable to the enemy's schemes and eventually be defeated.

Throughout Scripture watchfulness and prayer are linked to readiness for battle.

Summary

God speaks all the truth believers need to live victoriously.

God acts when His people appropriate His truth and promises in the midst of battle.

God reveals His power over the enemy as His people wield His word against the enemy.

Discussion Questions

Why do so few Christ-followers today live with a warfare mentality and lifestyle?

Describe some of the scheming activity the enemy uses against believers today.

What does it mean when Paul says that “we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers” (Eph. 6:12)? How do you apply that to your situation?