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The Heavenly Warfare

Your adversary the devil . . . : whom withstand steadfast in your faith.

First Peter 5:8–9, ASV

With the purpose of learning something about spirit warfare we will turn to the sixth chapter in Ephesians, and in so doing we will listen to Paul, who wrote this letter from a prison. Though he was in a Roman prison, his spirit was in triumph with Christ, in the place of victory, and Paul in Rome and in prison is ministering to the church today. Looking at him from the outside, one might be tempted to say: “Poor Paul, his work is ended.” “No, no,” he would answer, “there is no defeat in

the heavenly places.” This is the man who wrote of the highest things that concern the spiritual life of the church; and this revelation we have in this wonderful epistle to the Ephesians.

It begins with the revelation of Christ seated at God’s right hand, and closes with the message of the Christian’s conflict in the sixth chapter. Let us look at it, sentence by sentence.

In the tenth verse of chapter 6 it says, “Finally”; in the margin [of the 1881 Revised Version] it is, “From henceforth.” Let us read it as from August 1st in this Llandrindod Convention tent—“From henceforth be strong.” Be strong in what? In a spiritual position, “IN THE LORD.” You are in Him. Where He is, you are. You are joined to Him in spirit. Do you know it? Well, *live* there! “Be strong in the Lord.” Not in your own opinions, not in your own strength, but “be strong” in a person—and that person the Lord. Have only Christ as your center, and as your life, and as your strength, and as your power. It is the Lord, *the Lord*, “The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.” Not in yourself,

not in your circumstances, not in your place, not in your plans—be strong in nothing else but “in the Lord”!

We need to pause here and go over the steps of the believer’s path into the position of victory. To be strong in the Lord for the spirit warfare of Ephesians 6, we must first be “in the Lord” in His *death*. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized *into Jesus Christ* were baptized into his death?” (Rom. 6:3). You must be planted in His death (see 1:5) before you can be strong in His life. He does not say that He is going to make your life strong. He does not say that He is going to make *you* anything! You are to be planted, to be rooted, to be deep down in His death, so that nothing can tear you out—so that not all the forces of hell can draw you out of your deep-rooted place in His death; “baptized,” “planted *into His death*,” so that you may be so united in spirit to Him as to “be strong” in His *life*. “Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ” (6:11). Then “Be strong in His life, as the ascended One.” That is the position for your spirit—not for your body, not for

your soul. “He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” (1 Cor. 6:17). Not a mixture of soul and spirit, but the “soul” poured out unto death—as we are planted into His death so that the spirit is liberated and joined to Him who is the Overcomer seated above principalities and powers in the heavenlies.

“And in the *strength of His might*”: To “be strong in the Lord” means to be strong in the strength of His might. According to the first chapter of Ephesians, the “strength of his might” (1:19, ASV) is the very strength that lifted Christ from the dead, and set Him at God’s right hand. That very strength of His might can enter into your spirit, and lift it to the place of victory. Your spirit will never *get* there but as it is actually joined to the One who *is* there. “In the strength of *His might*”: that very same strength that lifted the dead Christ from His tomb and took Him right through the “powers of the air,” for He passed through them into the heavens, and sat down. Be strong in that position of the spirit, even that Spirit-strength which comes from union with Him who overcame and sat down in the place of victory and power.

We are so anxious about our bodies. We want our bodies strong; but if your spirit is strong, your body will become strengthened. Your body is not to carry your spirit, but your spirit should control your body. For this the spirit must be made strong by the strength of His might, and this is given by spirit-food. The Word of God is spirit-food. The words He has spoken to us, they are "spirit and life." When your spirit is strong, it assimilates the spirit-food in the Bible, and you feed your spirit. You need a strong spirit more than a strong body, and even more than a strong mind. Your mind, however, will be stronger if you have a strong spirit to quicken it, for in that spirit dwells the Holy Spirit. It is the shrine of God. It is the place where God dwells, and the strength of the might of God is to get into your spirit until your spirit is "strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might" (Eph. 6:10, ASV).

Have you asked God to make your *spirit* strong (see Luke 1:80), and do you use the means provided for making it strong? How? By not only feeding it, but exercising it. A strong spirit comes by exercise. This is why God per-

mits conflict. *Your spirit grows strong in conflict*, and that is why God permits the warfare.

Notice the way in which the spirit gets strong in the Lord. It is given in the eleventh verse of Ephesians 6: "Put on the whole armour of God, *that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*" Does it say "against the wiles of the world"? No. Of the people? No, but "*of the devil.*" Here we see a spirit-position given to stand upon against an unseen spirit-foe exercising "wiles" for some specific purpose. They are to draw you down from your position. If I went through this tent and inquired, I should probably find that many of God's children have been drawn down. You once knew the song of victory—how to shout the shout of victory, and see the Lord disperse the foe; but the "wiles" have worked around you, and the shout has gone. They have brought to you dark clouds, exaggerated to you all kinds of things, placed pictures in your mind, planned all sorts of things to draw you down. Did you put on the whole armor of God, to stand in your spirit-position "in the Lord" against the wiles of the devil?