

How You Can Prepare and Strengthen Yourself for Spiritual Battle

Note: This is the first of a two-part article.

We love God because He first loved us. As lovers of Jesus, we courageously face hardship and opposition that others may know Him. That is our commission and mandate.

We recognize, that before Christ we “used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God” (Eph. 2:2, NLT).

We understand that deception covers those who do not know Jesus, and our aim as His followers is to help liberate them from darkness.

We recognize that we are not fighting against those who do not know Jesus or against each other, but against unseen forces. Love must anchor and guide us always. We wage spiritual war as a lover of God and of others, resting in the finished work of Christ. The church is a glorious bride and a holy army, prepared for spiritual battle. We live ready, for the stakes are high: the liberation of souls.

In this two-part article, I will discuss being prepared and strengthened for the spiritual warfare that we experience. It is unavoidable.

To give you an example of the sway demonic powers have over those who don't believe, CNN host Don Lemon made a heretical statement last Monday evening, “Jesus Christ, if that's who you believe in, Jesus Christ, admittedly was not perfect when he was here on this earth,” Lemon told his colleague Chris

Cuomo during *CNN Tonight with Don Lemon* on Monday.

No, Jesus was the spotless, sinless, Son of God—God with us in human flesh—perfect in every way.

Sure, unbelievers make statements like this often, but Lemon has an international audience of millions. The enemy uses people with influence to cast doubt about Jesus and His divinity and hold humanity in unbelief and darkness. We love and pray for Lemon; we recognize he is blinded by darkness and pray he would encounter Jesus and experience His love and salvation.

I'll begin with Paul's admonition to the Ephesians, "A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:10-12).

Paul uses the imagery of a disciplined Roman soldier for the church to understand how we are to be engaged in the spiritual realms. Paul understood a Roman soldier's preparation, intensity and equipment.

Paul is casting a vision to the Ephesian church of the battle they (we) are engaged in. The Holy Spirit instructs all believers to put on the armor of God, to not only prepare for battle, but to advance the kingdom.

The success of the Roman Empire was the reflection of the Roman military and the discipline of its army. Paul lived during a time known as the *Pax Romana* or Roman Peace. The peace was the result of Roman military might, which established the boundaries of the Empire.

Rome started out as a city-state, in 753 B.C. Rome became a

republic by 509 B.C, as its farmer-soldiers had conquered cities and territories outside of Rome. Rome became an empire in 27 B.C until A.D. 476.

Rome eventually controlled the Mediterranean, which led to the conquest of Judea in 64 B.C. Rome expected a great deal out of her army. Along with fitness, the Roman soldier trained to use his weapons and armor in combat—often training from 6:00 a.m. until midnight. Before battles they would spend weeks training, getting ready for the war.

Paul, who sees himself and believers as God's warriors fighting against demonic realms, commands the church to be strong in the Lord and wage effective warfare.

"Finally my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might" (Eph. 6:10, NKJV). This phrase could be translated, "Strengthen yourself in the Lord." (I shared extensively on this passage two weeks ago, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord, Part 4*)

Paul, by using the phrase, "Finally my brethren," is concluding his message to the church at Ephesus. The letter to Ephesus is divided into two parts.

In the first part (Chapters 1-3), Paul instructs the church where they stand in Christ. In the second part (Chapters 4-6), Paul instructs the saints how to apply their position in Christ. They are not to be passive believers; they are to walk in the spirit (Eph. 4:1). Our walk is based on the presence of God's Spirit, who dwells in us, because of our conversion (Part 1). Therefore, we are to imitators of God (Eph. 5:1).

The Christian faith is established upon our love for and intimacy with Jesus. But it also requires action for growth and training. Paul exhorts the Ephesian saints, and us today, to "walk in love," "walk as children of light" and to "walk circumspectly." To be strong means to walk, move forward in faith—established in the Lord's strength. {eoa}

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