

PREPARING FOR BATTLE

UNDERSTANDING THE ENEMY

Ephesians 6:10-13

Introduction:

[From Illy]... DON'T GET HOOKED!

It's a quiet spring morning. The mists are still rising as the fisherman moves quietly to his favorite fishing spot. He's after one of those big rainbow trout hiding just below the surface of the water.

Now, this fisherman is probably an honest man who wouldn't cheat on his taxes. But when he's fishing, he's a cunning deceiver. He is out there to snare and to capture. To do that, he's not going to throw a bare hook in the water. That wouldn't fool the fish. So he disguises it with an attractive lure. He wants the fish to take the bait without noticing the hook. By that time it will be too late. A skilled angler will give just the right jerk and set the hook. And that's the end of the fish's freedom.

Satan is also fishing. We are the fish. And the bait is whatever will lure us to take the hook. It usually appeals to a natural desire—such as our need for intimacy or success or security. He uses legitimate needs to hide his real intent, which is to get us to disobey God. He knows that to entice us to take the bait, he has to hide the hook. And he'll make it look as appealing as he can.

We are in a battle, my friends. *****The Christian life is a war and we need to understand the nature of that war if we are going to be victorious.*****

The Apostle Paul concludes his letter to the Ephesian believers with a call to action, a call to preparation for warfare. And we are going to spend the next couple of weeks looking at his instructions. My intent today is for us to better understand the nature of the enemy, and the battle, and to realize the source of victory in that battle.

I. The Nature of the Enemy

A couple of important things:

1. A Spiritual Enemy – our enemy is not people – see v. 12 – our war is not with people. Often we get caught up with concerns about all those wicked people out there – abortionists, politicians, homosexuals, feminists, judges – you name it, we get all worked up and disgusted about what they are doing and we forget that the real battle is not with them. Paul said our struggle is not against flesh and

blood. Rather, the enemy is a spiritual one – go through the rest of v. 12 – ultimately the enemy is the devil, the evil mastermind behind all that sets itself up in opposition against God. So, our enemy is a spiritual enemy, not a physical one. Let's not waste our time fighting people, let's realize that our enemy is all of the powers of hell and the devil and pray against the forces of evil.

2. A devious enemy – I probably don't need to remind you of this, but look at v. 11 – “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.” Schemes – the KJV uses the word wiles. The word is defined as, “...*cunning arts, deceit, craft, trickery.*” The devil is a tricky one. The world of nature gives us some very good illustrations of devious and tricky behaviour, used by animals to entrap and unsuspecting victim.

[From Illy]... CHARADE OF THE CUCKOO

Observers tell us that in the spring of the year the cuckoo bird can be seen mimicking the flight of the sparrow hawk. Flapping, gliding, and soaring like a natural predator, this impostor frightens songbirds and distracts them to the point that they leave their nests unattended. She then moves in and devours an unguarded egg, leaving one of her own in its place.

[From Illy]... THE GREAT IMPOSTOR

According to scientists, Arctic polar bears feed almost entirely on seals. To enjoy such a meal, they sometimes resort to a cunning bit of trickery. If the hole through which the seal gets his food is near the edge of the ice, the polar bear will take a deep breath and swim under water to its exact location. Remaining below the surface, he will then make a tiny scratching sound imitating a fish. When the charmed seal hears this, he dives in for a quick supper, only to find himself suddenly entrapped in the huge, hungry embrace of his predator.

Refer to the mimic octopus – at least 15 different species that it mimics – stingray, starfish, poisonous sea snake, many others.

What a picture of the way our enemy, the devil uses his schemes to trap us. 2 Cor. 11:14 – “... *Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.*”

We need to be aware of his tactics in order to not be deceived into taking his hook.

We are in a war – the enemy is a spiritual one – we cannot see him or touch him. He is also very devious and deceitful, ready with many cunning and diabolical schemes designed to trap us.

II. The Nature of the Battle

There are several important things to note from these verses about the nature of this battle we are in.

1. A Spiritual Battle – since we are facing a spiritual enemy ... It is a battle that cannot be fought in the physical arena, it is not fought with worldly weapons. It is a battle not fought with swords and spears, or with guns and bayonets, but with prayer and the Word of God – *emphasize this*. Sometimes we get so caught up in trying fight the battles against people – the people I mentioned before – talking about and criticizing the awful things they are doing, even mobilizing to protest court decisions, letter-writing campaigns to our government officials – and I am not saying these are wrong, but we forget that the real battle is not with them, but with the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places – the devil himself. And our battle is not won with guns and bombs or even with letters and picket signs, but with prayer and the Word of God. If we spent as much time in prayer for our leaders, as we spend in fighting against them, we might see more results. It's a spiritual battle.

2. A Defensive Battle

Wiersbe – Quote: It's important to remember that the purpose of our Christian armor is not for use in gaining new territory. Of course, we are involved in a conquest. When Jesus said, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18), He was talking about the movement of His army, the Church, in gaining territory and claiming the spoil. But even as we are conquering, we must remember that we do not fight for victory but from victory. Christ has already won the victory for us, and we have already entered into our spiritual inheritance in Him. Thus, our role in the battle with the Devil is that of claiming and holding on to the territory and inheritance won for us by the Lord Jesus Christ.

We find a beautiful illustration of this truth in the Book of Joshua. The Children of Israel were preparing to enter the Promised Land—their inheritance. God told Joshua, "...*arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses.*" (Josh. 1:2,3). In other words, God was saying, "Start walking. You already have the inheritance; now claim it by faith." While the Israelites had to fight the inhabitants of the land, they did not do it to conquer new

territory but merely to claim the inheritance that God had already given them. (End quote)

Another interesting and important note about this text is that we are called to stand against the devil – we are not told to chase him, to attack him, but to stand, to stand strong under the onslaughts of the devil. You see, Satan is out to invade your life, to get his foot in your door, to steal your territory. His goal is to take ground away from you. Your task is to stand up against him, to defend your territory, to resist him and the Bible tells us that when we do this, he will flee. I see and hear many people these days running around "binding" Satan, talking about running Satan out of town, yelling at Satan, yet I don't see that in the commands of the apostles to the church. We are in a battle, a spiritual battle to defend our territory and to hold unto what Jesus has already accomplished for us.

3. A Continuous Battle – this battle is everywhere and it is ongoing. We cannot avoid this battle. We need to realize that no Christian, no believer is immune to the spiritual warfare.

[From Illy]... IN THE THICK OF IT

"During the War Between the States," writes Gary Redding, "a Union soldier from Ohio was shot in the arm during of the battle of Shiloh. His captain saw he was wounded and barked an order: 'Gimme your gun, private, and get to the rear!' The private handed over his rifle and ran toward the north, seeking safety. But after covering two or three hundred yards, he came upon another skirmish. Then he ran to the east and into another part of the battle. Then he ran west but encountered more fighting there. Finally, he ran back to the front lines, shouting: 'Gimme back my gun, cap'n. There ain't no rear to this battle!'"

When it comes to spiritual warfare, "there ain't no rear"! [Preaching, Apr/May, 1990.]

There is no out. It is an ongoing battle, a continuous war against the forces of evil and their persistent commander, the devil.

III. The Source of Victory

We must conclude with this, because the good news is that there is victory, and it comes through Jesus Christ and his power.

Three things: The Lord, His power, and His provision – the armour and weapons.

Next week we are going to take a more in-depth look at the armour that God has provided for us, but I just want to conclude today by taking you to another passage written by Paul – 2 Cor. 10:3-5 – read and discuss briefly.

Conclusion

The war is inevitable – we are in a battle. But the only way to win this battle is to understand the enemy, and his strategy. I trust that these things will help you to understand our enemy and the nature of the battle in which we are involved. It is a spiritual battle against a spiritual enemy, and it requires spiritual weapons – prayer and the Word of God.

Close with a call to commitment.