

• *Spiritual conflict*

Paul cannot end his letter just yet. He has been appealing for the Christians to live godly lives, yet there is a complication – the devil! He must give some attention to the subject of spiritual conflict before he closes his letter.

1. *Be strong*

1. First, **we have a call to be strong**. *‘Finally, be made strong in the Lord and in the might of His strength’* ^{□1}. Paul is about to tell us of a great conflict. This living of the Christian life has one extra difficulty, the devil. It will require strength to defeat Satan. Where can such strength come from? From the Lord Jesus Christ! Jesus has already shown Himself to be a mighty conqueror of Satan. He defeated Satan in the wilderness. Now He can give strength to us. The Christian learns to lean on Jesus. That is not everything; an armour has to be put on as well. But there is a starting-point. We have constant fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. We trust His promises.

□1 6:10

2. *Be equipped*

2. Next comes **the call to be equipped**. *‘Put on the full armour of God so that you will be able to stand against the craftiness of the devil’* ^{□1}. We have to be in fellowship with the Lord Jesus, and we have to trust Him to give us strength – but then we have to do certain things. ‘The battle is the Lord’s’ but we have to fight as well. It is God’s battle but He strengthens us to fight for Him. We have to do certain things (as we shall see) that give us victory. Paul calls it ‘putting on our armour’.

□1 6:11

3. *The devil is a real enemy*

3. Paul mentions **the enemy – the devil**. He is real. He is a personal being. He hates God and God’s Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. He hates God’s word. He hates God’s people. He has great power: power over nature, power over animals, access to the heart of man. He can blind the mind. He can sow doubts. He spreads the spirit of fear and can use false teachings. He attacks us with evil thoughts, with depression, discouragement, resentment, with pride. He can hurl against us ‘fiery darts’ – special attacks, thorns in the flesh.

4. *The enemy’s assistants*

• *They are real*

4. Next Paul mentions **the enemy’s assistants**. *‘For the battle that is ours is not a fight against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places’* ^{□1}. With Satan are a host of evil spirits who assist him. They are real. Jesus was accused of being the prince of demons ^{□2}. He replied by speaking of a whole kingdom of spiritual beings under Satan, which is united in its hatred against God ^{□3}. When a woman asked help for her demon-possessed daughter, He accepted what she said and eventually sent healing to her daughter ^{□4}. He did something similar for a man with a son who was demonised ^{□5}. On occasion He exercised His authority over a whole mass of evil spirits ^{□6}.

□1 6:12

□2 Matthew

12:22-24

□3 Matthew

12:25-29

□4 Matthew

15:22-28

□5 Matthew

17:14-20

□6 Mark 5:1-

16

• **Opposition from the world, our own flesh and ultimately Satan**

When we seek to live a godly life we shall find powerful opposition not only from the world and our own 'flesh' but – even more forcefully – from spiritual opposition coming from outside of us. It does not mean that we are 'possessed'. It only means that we are facing opposition. One of the secrets of the Christian life is to realise that this opposition is not coming from 'flesh and blood'. Our ultimate enemy is not ourselves; we have died to sin. Our ultimate enemy is not other people. Our enemy is Satan and his colleagues. There is a whole kingdom of them with different positions in that kingdom. Some are 'principalities', others 'authorities', others 'world rulers' or 'spiritual forces of evil'. Like Satan, they are personal beings, spiritual beings without bodies. They are unclean and have power to attack God's people.

5. Victory is assured

5. Paul assures us of **the hope of victory**. 'So because of this you must take up the full armour of God, in order that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done all things to be standing' ¹.

¹ 6:13

• **Strength from God**

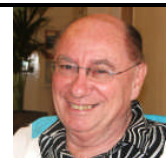
This is the good news! The devil and his agents are resistible! Despite their very great power, Jesus is stronger than they. If we are 'in the Lord' and if we put on our spiritual armour we are able to withstand even their mighty strength, because the mighty strength of Jesus is greater. We are not to be surprised at this conflict or afraid. We are to stand! Our Lord Jesus is there at our side. He is ready to give us assistance. We have to fight but Jesus is near at hand. Sometimes when the battle is strong He will draw specially close and will say to us 'I am with you. . . no one shall attack you to harm you...' ¹. There is a great atmosphere of victory in these words. Can you hear them? 'Be made strong in the Lord! . . . You will be able to stand . . . you must take up the full armour of God... to resist in the evil day, and having done all things to be standing.' There is a great sense of triumph in these words. Almighty power is at work for us and in us. The secret of victory is to know that the Lord Jesus Christ is strong and yet He is willing to impart His strength to us. We see our strength in Jesus. We look at the victories of His life, His miracles, His wisdom, His conquering Satan and all his friends. And then we recall that same 'might of His strength' is available for us. We are 'in Him'. His strength is ours. We live by the faithfulness of the Son of God.

¹ Acts 18:9-10

• **We are 'in Him' and His strength is ours**



Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His **Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)** books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



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