

Notes: *Stand Firm Against Your Foe* (Eph. 6:10-12)

Intro: Christians are “in Christ.” They enjoy an intimate spiritual union with Christ and already taste the spiritual blessings of the new age “in the heavenly places” (1:3). However this heavenly realm where spiritual blessings are enjoyed is also the field of spiritual conflict. Christ by his death for sins and resurrection has dealt a deathblow to the forces of spiritual evil. But they are not finally destroyed. We are no longer prisoners of the prince of spiritual darkness we are children of God. But precisely because of this truth we are hated by the forces of evil and opposed. Four times in verses 10-14 some form of the verb “to stand” is used. We must stand firm. But how?

#1: Know your enemy (12). A healthy respect for our enemy is necessary for victory. We are not opposed by flesh and blood individuals but by the cosmic forces of evil. Our enemies are not human but demonic. In two basic ways we face opposition: Opposed on a cosmic level. We are blessed with every spiritual blessing *in* the heavenly places (1:3). When we were dead in sin, God made us alive with Christ and “raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places” (2:6). But to live in this heavenly realm is also to be brought into the warzone of a great cosmic conflict. This conflict is the setting for the entire Bible, from Genesis 3:15 onward. It is the ongoing war between the Lord and the serpent in the garden who has become a hideous dragon by the end of Scripture in Revelation 12. When the devil tested Jesus in the desert, he claimed he had the power to give him “all the kingdoms of the world” (Mt. 4:8). Jesus called Satan “the ruler of the world” (Jn. 12:31). The terms “rulers, authorities, powers, forces” suggest that Satan’s powers are well organized and exercise considerable power. It is true that our Lord Jesus will be with us “till the end of the age” and that he accompanies us “with all authority in heaven and on earth” (Mt. 28:18). Demonic power cannot finally keep God from saving his elect (Phil 1:6) anymore than they can finally avoid their own destruction and torment. Greater is he who is in us than he who is in the world (1 Jn 4:4). Under the mighty hand of God, the devil is like a vicious dog on a short leash. He is a defeated foe. Yet before our Lord’s return with final judgment he remains a cosmic foe. Opposed on a daily level. Far from being opposed in a mystical way, we fight with invisible forces in the ordinary routines of life. Every advance which God enables involves being attacked. The devil seeks to defeat us in the ordinary progress of growth in Christlikeness. In fact, Paul’s transition here from instructions for marriage, family, and work relationships to warnings of demonic conflict suggest this. It wasn’t when Adam and Eve were attempting some great work for God that Satan tripped them up, it was in the routine affairs of life. Ferguson: “In fact, their marriage, which was the best of all God’s basic provisions for them, became the strongest instrument Satan could use to set them at odds against God and each other. It is in marriage, parent-child relations, and in the daily working world that we need to recognize we are not dealing merely with flesh and blood but with rulers, authorities, cosmic forces...spiritual forces of evil.”

#2: Beware of his schemes (11). A man who is not a Christian is Satan’s prisoner (2:1-2). If however, he becomes a Christian by God’s grace and power, Satan sees him as an escaped prisoner and goes to war to try and recapture him. How? Note Paul’s warning about “schemes.” Deception. The devil is the master of duplicity. William Bridge: “the devil will tell us a hundred true things in order to get us to listen to the one hundred and first thing which is a lie by which he traps us.” Like a fishing hook masked by a colorful lure, he masks what is harmful beneath what he thinks we want. He is a student of sinful humanity who knows us. His one goal is our

destruction. Discouragement. He tries to destroy us under a mountain of discouragement, hopelessness, and despair. How? Blinding us to five things: (1) God's Word and its reliability (2) God's character and his goodness (3) God's righteousness and absolute faithfulness (4) The enjoyment of God and its surpassing pleasures (5) The fellowship of the people of God and its help. Don't believe Satan's lies! Hopelessness is unnecessary and ultimately unbelief! David was an adulterer and murderer yet he found mercy from God. Further, all the world's vain allurements are outweighed by the surpassing pleasures of knowing God (Phil 3:8). Only the Lord can give us the desires of our hearts (Ps. 37:4).

#3: Be strong in the Lord (10). Note: We cannot empower ourselves. The verb "be strong" is in the passive voice. In chapter 3, Paul prayed that God "according to the riches of his glory (cf. Phil. 4:19) would strengthen the Ephesians with power". We must be empowered by the Lord. Be joined to Christ by simple faith in his atoning blood and be assured that you are covered by his blood (Rom. 4:7), robed in his righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21), a member of God's household (2:19). We are in the strong arms of the Lord and so we can't lose even if we die and we have confidence to fight even when we have fallen. In fact, our falls teach us to trust not in our strength but in God's (2 Cor. 12:9).