



Pastor's Update

Sunday, March 10, 2024

In the Heat of the Battle (Ephesians 6:10-13)

In order for Christians to be strengthened and stand against the evil, they must be equipped with the armor of God. The focus in Ephesians 6:10-13 is not so much on the actual battle scene, but on the armor. We ought to be certain that we are equipped in the heat of the battle. Paul exhorts us to be strengthened in the Lord by putting on the whole armor of God (See Isa. 11:5; 59:16-17).

At the time of writing Ephesians, the Roman military presence was a constant demonstration of the Imperial power, and the Roman world was saturated with the symbols of Imperial power. The forces which rage against the church are not just imperial; they are spiritual in nature.

Before the apostle delineates the armor of God, he describes the foes against whom the church wrestles. He says, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12).

In the text just quoted, Paul makes it plain that the true enemies of God's people are not human beings ("not against blood and flesh"). He then identifies four categories of the spirit forces as follows:

- (i) "the rulers" – primacy in power;
- (ii) "the powers" – these two titles speak of powerful spiritual entities;
- (iii) "the world rulers of this darkness" – it is used in ancient literature of world-ruling gods and of spirit beings who were said to have parts of the world, the cosmos, under their control (see John 12:31). Diabolic powers control the darkness (Eph. 5:8, 11), while God and his people reside in the light and are light (5:8, 13-14).
- (iv) "the spiritualities of wickedness" – this identifies the nature and the truly malignant intention of the church's foes. They are not humans to be countered by human tactics. Only divine potency and equipment have any chance of overcoming their power. Their location is the "heavenlies." Their base of operation is in the heavenly or supernatural realm. They attack from this command post. At the same time their impact, influence, and activity are very much directed to this concrete human sphere. That is why "flesh and blood" church members need spiritual weapons. We dare not try to overcome these spiritual forces by our own feeble strength. If we do, we are doomed to fail in the heat of the battle.

By God's Grace and for His glory,
Pr. Francis