

2144 - STAND AGAINST the SCHEMES - Eph 6.10-13

PRELIMS. Paul has just finished outlining the **duties/responsibilities** of Xns in their various **roles/relationships**. We are **all** in relationships – all of us are ‘superiors’ or ‘inferiors’ in one area of life or another, and all of us have duties/responsibilities towards God and each other. No matter what role we have to play, we must be able to **stand against** the devil and his schemes/wiles! For if we are Xns we **will** be attacked by Satan - time and time again!

BEING STRONG in the LORD

Paul is keeping this **most important part** of his letter for the end - **defending** their **faith**, for they are in a **real war**! He is giving clear directions of how we are to fight and stand against Satan.

These Ephn believers were **first generation** Xns with no history or tradition! They were **not brought up** in the faith, but in **idolatry**! So Paul was concerned that the devil (of whom they were ignorant) would somehow get in among them and create havoc! So Paul wanted to **equip** them to fight against the *schemes of the devil* [11]. Paul obviously sees the Ephs as **vulnerable**, because he tells them to *Be strong!* Paul wants to **prepare** them for the realities of life, life is a **battlefield** not a playground! Paul **knows** they would be attacked!

He says *Be strong in the Lord?* Does Paul believe they can **make themselves** strong? Is there a **choice** of being strong and being weak in the Xn faith? Does Paul who believes that we have **no power** to regenerate ourselves, believe that we **have** power to make ourselves strong? Well, Paul obviously believed there was something they could. But note, it is **not Be strong**, it is *Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of HIS might!* Throughout Scripture, there is a constant ‘call’ to believers to be **vigilant**. Moses *Be strong and of good courage* [Deu 31:6]+Psalmist *call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you!* [Psa 50] Xns **do** have **access** to power that unbelievers do not have access to! Paul has already **assured** them that they had this *access...to the Father* which they could use any time! [2:18]

That is also **why** at the very **beginning** of this letter Paul spoke of the immeasurable greatness of His power! [1:19] to **remind** them that

they **can appeal** to their God and Saviour for **His** strength Paul is **not** calling them to be strong in their own strength, but ***in the strength of His might*** calling upon God's name as they **engage** the enemy! Remember God has provide **armour - take on this armour!**

As Xns – we must take **responsible action!** We have to ***Put on*** certain spiritual armour. Just as in the **physical realm** we **can** become weak or strong **depending** on **how** we **live**, what we **eat**, what we **drink**, how we **exercise**, how we **sleep**, how we **care** for our **bodies**, so it is the **same** in the **spiritually realm!** We must **take action!** Depending on **how** we treat and **feed** and **nurture** our souls, so we will be strong or weak Xns. Its simple really. If we eat **healthily**, we will be healthy, but if we **neglect** our health we will become undernourished and ill. So we must ***put on...*** One of the schemes of the devil is: 'You are saved. Why bother?'

The DEVIL and His SCHEMES

Many people today do not believe in the devil! For the **same reason** that they do not believe in God – they cannot see him! People think believing in the devil is a piece of '**medieval nonsense**'. They say that is what people believed **before** the **Enlightenment!** Believing in God and the devil is unreasonable they say! *But **after 2 centuries** of Enlightenment teaching '2 out of 3 18yr-24yr olds in the UK, believe in **horoscopes**' (The Spectator)! Many people do not believe there is in reality, a **person** who is the Devil! But friends, he is as real as God. He is not just a power/influence/force! He is a **person!** X met him – and chased him away! **3 times X: *the prince of the world***

Of course Satan does **not always appear** with a body – but he has often 'assumed' a body. You do not need to have a **body** to be a person! Satan (& God) is a **spirit** but both have the **characteristics** of a person. Both **respond** to stimuli, both have feelings, desires, both plan and act and have purposes, both are offended and can be jealous. (The great story is not that man walked on the moon, but that God walked on the earth! God **became** man by **taking** human **flesh**, a body, *the Word became flesh* – Christ is God in **bodily form!**)

Paul wants to ensure that we realise who our enemy really is. And note – it is **not people!** Our struggle is ***not against*** *flesh and blood*

[12]! The **tragedy** in Xndom is that the fighting we are engaged in, is against **one another!** But Paul says it is not people – not even against evil people! We should have the greatest **sympathy** for evil people! We should have the greatest **love** for evil people. We should have our **longest prayers** for evil people, and have **time to chat** to them!!

You see, people, human beings, evil human beings, are **being ‘used’** by Satan – but they **don’t know** it! The devil is the **chief deceiver** in all the universe. He is the greatest **administrator of evil** in the universe! He is a **chameleon** who can change his appearance for certain purposes. And note: he **always** appears as something **nice and good** – eg an **angel!** *For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself disguises himself as an angel of light* [2Cor 11:14]! Do you know, that even within Holy Scripture, Satan only speaks **3 times!** In Eden, to Job, to Jesus! So, a **scheme** of Satan is he **always appears as something good!** Stand against him!

Satan **never** appears with a **forky tail** and **fiery tongue!** It would be counter productive! **Terrorists** hide their faces. They do not expose themselves? Why? The same reason as the devil – they do not want to be known **who they really are!** They themselves are **ashamed!**

No, our enemy is not human beings but **evil powers!** Our real enemies are the **cosmic powers** and the **spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms** [13]. There **are** actually evil **planners** and **schemers** in the heavenly realms tonight who **incite** humans to do wicked things! We often read in the press of a murderer saying he heard a voice (whether he did or not, doesn’t matter) he thought he did and therefore carried out the awful deed.

But these ‘authorities’ and ‘powers’ also **subtly steer** and **manipulate** human beings to **believe** and **do** what is wrong. And these wrong things can have great and serious **consequences!** They fill their **minds** with an **‘idea’** and then **‘work’** on that ‘idea’ until they are convinced it is good and true and then encourage them to **act** on it! There is such a thing as ‘The Spirit of the Age’! Six times we read *an evil spirit from the Lord* (all in 1st Sam!). ‘From the Lord’ means that it was all still **under His control.** ‘This spirit’ can be a

mindset beginning to settle on a **nation** or **community** over a period of time. Like the Enlightenment was an ‘age of reason’ because of the philosophy and **teaching** that the people accepted.

Satan plays on the **mind!** That is where he does his work. *The god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers [2C4:4] But I am afraid that as the serpent **deceived Eve** by his cunning, your **thoughts** will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ[2C11:3] **Conversion** is actually a change of **mind** - it is being given a **sound mind** And you, who **once** were alienated and **hostile in mind**, doing evil deeds [Col 1:21] Have this **mind** among yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus [Ph2:5] Satan’s **scheme** is to **affect** our **minds!***

Satan is **not** **omni-present**. Too often we refer to Satan when it is one of his **agents** who is doing the work. Satan can only be in one place at one time. He is **limited** – in space as well as in power! But Satan has plenty helpers – all from the same pit, tarred with the same brush! They all have the **same mind!** There **are** evil **authorities**, **powers**, **forces** who assist him in his evil work.

But Satan also does have **people** doing his evil work – Hitler, Pol Pot, bin Laden, ISIL etc! Some of them **know** they are doing wrong, **some don’t!** Some will be **deceived** right up to the very end.

When we are being **attacked** in spiritual warfare, **activity** is not the main element. The important thing when we are being attacked is to **stand!** Not to give ground. If you **stand** long enough, the enemy will give up, and you can then advance! Remember ‘**Braveheart!**’ Remember all the arrows pouring down on the Scots with shields over and around them! The English **spent** all their arrows – Scots just **stood still** until they were all spent - then they **advanced!** 3 times Paul says **stand!** Satan is **not** **omni-present** and **not** **omni-potent!** All his resources **are limited!**

After all these **years**, after all these **difficulties**, after all these **problems**, when so many other people have gone, you are **still** worshipping...**praying**...reading **Bible**...**believing**...**loving Lord** – after the **devil** has **thrown “everything”** at you, still **standing fast in your faith!** That’s **brilliant!** Hallelujah! PTL!