

Who Will Win the Election and Who Must Win the Battle

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at GCBC on November 4, 2012

www.goldcountrybaptist.org

I came across an article this week that comes from a very reliable source that I would trust with my life. Some of you will find this disturbing, in light of the state and national elections that are taking place on Tuesday of this week, and understandably so, but it's true. It's not something that has hit the mainstream news yet, but I think you need to hear it. The article heading states: "Reliable Source Reveals November [6th] Election is Already Fixed." Let me read it:

'According to a recent CNN poll, Obama and Romney are virtually tied in the presidential race. Our nation is split down the middle, and who will occupy the White House seems like anyone's guess. But a reliable source reveals that November's election is not as uncertain as people may think. The next president of the United States will not be determined by hanging chads and dimples on the ballots in Florida. It won't even be decided by the elite electoral college (regardless of what you may have heard). A reliable source reveals that this year's election has already been fixed.

What is this reliable source? - the Bible. [Turn to Daniel 4. It's] ... not ... some secret code contained in Scripture. I'm sure if you rearranged the letters in some verse in the book of Revelation, you could spell Mitt Romney, Barack Obama or Cap'n Crunch! No, the Bible does not reveal who the next president will be, but it does reveal that the outcome has already been fixed by a sovereign God.

... [end of Dan 4:17]"*The Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, [He] bestows it on whom He wishes...*" [also end of v. 25, 32. Daniel 2:21 says God "*removes kings and establishes kings,*" one translation says God "*sets up king and deposes them*" – that's not just true with a "people's choice" (OT Saul), also pagan rulers]

... In the book of Daniel, the Jewish people in captivity were encouraged to place their hope, not in their rulers, but in the God who ruled over their rulers. And that's not to say that their rulers were godly (I'm sure that Nebuchadnezzar would not receive the nomination in any party). Rather, Daniel encouraged the Jewish people who were in captivity, by reminding them that the powers that exist will not have the final say, God will ... Earth does not rule, and neither does hell [Daniel 4 goes on to say, end of v. 26: "*...it is Heaven that rules ... (look also at v. 35:) All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand ...*"] ... Now all of this is not to say, you should not exercise your right to vote. Get informed, get involved and get in line to vote for the candidate that best represents biblical values. But don't place your hope in a ballot box or lose your hope in a ballot box either.¹

Our hope needs to be in the Commander-in-Chief of the Universe whose sovereign will and purpose shall prevail and can't be vetoed. We must balance man's responsibility with God's sovereignty. It was important in NT times when Paul wrote Ephesians that Christians understood their highest ruler didn't determine their future. Caesar wasn't sovereign or able to stop God's purposes for the church, the Emperor was impotent and the gates of hell can't prevail against it. God inspired these truths not just for them, but for us to remember.

Paul wrote to Romans under pagan rule, Rom 13: "*governing authorities ... God has established. The authorities that exist are established by God ... rulers ... [are] God's servant*"(1, 3-4).

In Ephesians 1:11 God's Word reminds us of the absolute sovereignty of God "... *having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will...*"

Elections are part of "all things" that God works according to His will and purpose for His glory, working it together for good for all who love God and are called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28). And yes, we have a responsibility to obey God's written will, and in America we have the privilege to express our will in the voting booth, but if results go contrary to our will, or even go contrary to God's revealed will (commands of Scripture), in the mystery of providence, the sovereign will of God is always actively (sense of the Greek verb here) working in all things, even what sinful people intend evil by, God intends good in (Gen 50:20). God's election of His people to salvation is sure, not subject to a re-count.

With that in mind turn to chapter 6 and all of that is introduction to and biblical perspective for and context of what Paul says in Eph 6: ¹⁰ *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.* ¹¹ *Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.* ¹² *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.*

Our struggle is not physical or political, it is a spiritual warfare. It is not fought by worldly weapons and not fought by charging into the battle; in v. 11 he tells soldiers of Christ to put on God's armor *so that you can stand firm*, not run forward. It's defensive, it's not offensive, and the only weapon is the Word (v. 17). Our struggle is not "against democrats," politicians *are* "flesh and blood" (some may question that, but they are :). Our enemy is not homosexuals. Our enemy is not human; they're our mission field. Our real enemy is invisible and spiritual; v. 12 speaks of his armies in the spiritual realm, using terms for ranks of fallen angels, his demons.

Outline:

1. Who the battle is against
2. Who the battle belongs to

#1. Who the battle is against

We're just going to really introduce the subject of spiritual warfare today and set the scene for this battlefield, and then we'll look at the details of our enemy's tactics and our armament and artillery or weaponry we have in the gospel in future weeks. But in v. 11 Paul:

- lays out our battle gear ("*put on the full armor of God*")
- gives our battle plan ("*to stand firm against the schemes*")
- says who our battle is against (end of v. 11: "*...the devil*")
- this one verse summarizes and outlines the spiritual warfare that is developed through v. 20 we'll develop future weeks

Our country also is at war at this very moment. I don't mean in Iraq or Afghanistan, although if you think of what it's like for U.S. troops there and the mindset they need as they go out each day, we need to have that mindset spiritually, if we believe what Paul is saying in Ephesians.

There is a battle waging on U.S. soil over our nation's future. The battle cries and battle lines have been made clear for this election Tuesday, but these are not merely political issues, there are spiritual issues and spiritual forces at work more powerful than partisan rallies or rhetoric. When the liberal left accuses us pro-life supporters of a supposed "war on women" (because we oppose the "reproductive rights" of women to have the choice to kill a baby in her womb), Ephesians 6 pulls back the veil on that to remind us the real war on women is waged by Satan (Gen 3:15). Demonic forces are behind abortion, murdering millions of unborn women, that's the great "war on women." Abortion has murdered more women than any war, and millions more of defenseless minorities and poor slaughtered by a party that claims it's for those abortion slaughters.

The battle lines are so clearly drawn in the sand that preachers who normally avoid politics are speaking on the spiritual biblical battle. Billy Graham, who is known for being the pastor to presidents of all parties equally, in a full page *Wall Street Journal* ad on Oct. 18: "... I urge you to vote for those who protect the sanctity of life and support the biblical definition of marriage between a man and a woman. Vote for biblical values this November 6 and pray ..."²

John MacArthur said boldly the Democratic National Convention has now made the sins of Romans 1 the very planks of its platform, which draws the lines pretty clearly for us who take Romans 1 pretty seriously. I commented on that more in our PM message on website 9/16/12.³

Eph 6 reminds us those are *symptoms, not the source* of struggle. There is a *spiritual battle* raging in our nation, and it's not just the obvious assaults on our freedoms, not just the increasing attacks on biblical values, but more subtle attacks that are not on the national stage, rather on individual souls. And we need to keep our guard up for the right enemy in the right realm (spiritually in our heart and mind), in the right strength, v. 10

Which brings us from point #1: Who the Battle is Against, to ...

#2. Who the Battle Belongs To (the Lord of v. 10)

We can't end with Satan, we need to end with our sovereign Lord! I can't just stop on the discouraging bad news, because there is good news in our text as well. If we only focus on the enemy we will be imbalanced and will miss seeing the victory that is in Jesus who's in sovereign control of history and still will be after Tuesday. And we need to remember we are not in this battle alone. Hebrews 2:10 says Jesus is the *captain of our salvation*, "for whom are all things and by whom are all things" (NKJ). He's our strong captain.

¹⁰ *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.*

¹¹ *Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand ...*

Man's armor and man's weapons can't prevail, but the Lord's will. Young David learned this when he fought the great enemy Goliath. Saul's armor and weapons he rejected but said to the defiant giant: "... *the LORD does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the LORD'S and He will give you into our hands.*" (1 Sam 17:47)

When a great evil army came against Israel in 2 Chronicles 20, the Lord said King Jehoshaphat: *'Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's ... Do not fear or be dismayed ... the LORD is with you.'* (v. 15, 17)

Don't fear or flee, be courageous, strong in the Lord. He's with us. Psalm 46 speaks of the mighty fortress who is our God, our refuge and strength, so we don't need to fear even if the waves crash and waters roar and floods come (as is happening in the East Coast and we need to pray God would use that to draw people to the refuge in Him). He says in Ps 46 "cease striving and know that I am God. I will be exalted in the earth." One translated that as "lay down your arms, put down your weapons, surrender, know that I am God." It also says "the LORD of hosts (hosts = armies) is with us ..." Lord Sabaoth, the Lord of hosts, the Lord of heaven's armies, is with us!

When v. 10 commands "be strong," that language in the OT often is tied with commands not to fear because the Lord God is with us:

- *'David said to his son Solomon, "Be strong and of good courage...do not fear nor be dismayed...God will be with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service...'* (1 Chr 28:20 NKJV)
- Israel is told in Deuteronomy 31:6 *"Be strong and of good courage, do not fear [context of enemies]; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you"* (NKJV, Heb 13:7 to Christians)
- Joshua is told in Joshua 1:9 *"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble [or "be afraid"] ... for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."*
- In Joshua 10:24 Israel literally has enemies put under foot and as captains of Israel stand with actual necks of enemies under their feet, *'Joshua then said to them, "Do not fear or be dismayed! Be strong and courageous, for thus the LORD will do to all your enemies with whom you fight."* (v. 25)
- I'm not spiritualizing that image by applying to Satan. Rom 16:20 says God *"will soon crush Satan under your feet."*
- Hezekiah sees Assyria's army against him, and is told: *"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of ... the vast army ... for there is a greater power with us than with him."* (2 Chr 32:7 NIV). That's the same language Paul applies spiritually in Eph 6:10, be strong for there is greater power with us, in the Lord. As one version puts it: *"the one with us is greater than the one with him."*
- Again, it's no interpretive jump to apply that to Christians in spiritual warfare because 1 John 4:4 says of false spirits *"greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world."*
- Daniel receives this comforting message from God in light of the princes of darkness he sees, the spiritual warfare that Daniel saw, the demonic world powers. God tells Daniel: *"O man greatly loved, fear not ... be strong and of good courage."* And as he spoke to me, *I was strengthened* and said, *"... you have strengthened me."* (Dan 10:19 ESV)
- Knowing the King of Kings is in sovereign control, and He also greatly loves me, helps me not to fear, but to be strong for *"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."*
- When Paul said that in Phil. 4:13, it's the same Grk verb as Eph 6:10: *be strong* (passive) = *be strengthened in the Lord*

Verse 10 is a command, but the power is not internal, it is external. It is our responsibility, but it is not possible by our own ability. To “be strong in the Lord” I must know that I am weak in myself, “*for when I am weak, I am strong*” (2 Cor 12:10, that is strong *in Him*). Paul says the verse before that, His sufficient power “*is perfected in weakness ... I boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.*” I’m a weak soldier with a strong General

Greater is He who is in you than he that is in the world, or anything that is in the world. If God is for us, who/what can be against us? Our Conquering King enables us to be conquerors, and more than conquerors through Him who loved us so, Romans 8 says, and it says none of Satan’s “*principalities nor powers ... nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of Christ*”

Hallelujah! What a Savior! The battle belongs to the Lord, so be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His sovereign might. He doesn’t tell us the name of who will win the next election. I don’t know who will win the next skirmish in the political realm, but rest assured, King Jesus is in control. He’s already won the war! If this world gets darker and more wicked, we don’t have to run and hide, nor does He call us to charge off into the fray to defeat the enemy. He’s already beaten the enemy at the cross and won the victory; we just need to stand firm, v. 11 says, and Paul repeats that in v. 13-14

When the power of darkness comes in like a flood
 The battle belongs to the Lord
 He's raised up a standard, the power of His blood
 The battle belongs to the Lord ...
 When your enemy presses in hard do not fear
 The battle belongs to the Lord
 Take courage, my friend, your redemption is near
 The battle belongs to the Lord
And we sing glory, honor, power and strength to the Lord ...⁴

The Lord alone has the strength and power and alone gets all glory. We’re not capable of or called to ‘defeat the devil’; we’re called to hold our position, to stand in the Lord’s strength, till all enemies surrender. Every knee will bow in the spiritual heavenly realm and on earth one day but until then as enemy armies press in, we’re to hold our post till what J.R.R. Tolkien called the return of the king. As Martin Luther said, we sang it earlier: ‘He must win the battle.’ We don’t win it, but the good news of Revelation? *King Jesus does*

As I preach through the Bible verse-by-verse week-by-week, Bible truths not only often speak to the events of today (as we began this sermon with, how the Lord’s sovereign power relates to Tuesday’s election in the future), but this next section in our verse-by-verse study through Ephesians also looks back in history to what God’s sovereign power did last Wednesday 495 years ago, October 31st. Long before pagan symbols of darkness eclipsed what the day was all about, October 31 was called Reformation Day (still should be). On the eve of All Saints Day/All Hallows Eve, 10/31/1517, Martin Luther published his 95 Theses that proved more scary to the Pope than anything that would happen on future Halloweens. Luther was in a battle not just with the RCC, but the Roman empire, and as the Reformation gospel spread, Luther was summoned to appear in the presence of the Roman *Emperor* at a Diet (meeting) in Worms, Germany.

But as he was asked to recant his writings before that intimidating setting, he understood his real enemy was not the pagan emperor or the pope or priests or paying indulgences or powers of RCC, his great threat was not physical soldiers that might execute him as Jon Huss had been executed 100 years before for similar views. Luther understood his real enemy was spiritual, the devil in v. 11 was his ancient foe who Luther's greatest struggle and wrestling was with.

This is the record of his prayer the night before in spiritual warfare, and deeply felt weakness, *but God* strengthened him for his famous answer to the emperor and church "I cannot and will not recant...":

'O the weakness of the flesh and the power of Satan! If I am to depend upon any strength from this world, all is lost. O my God! Help me ... I have nothing to contend for with these great men of the world! ... Stand by me! ... O God, accomplish Your own will! Stand by me in the name of Jesus Christ, who will be my shelter and my shield, yes, my mighty fortress, through the might and strengthening of the Holy Spirit ... Though this world be filled with devils, and though my body ... go to destruction in this cause ... Your Word and Your Spirit they are good to me still! It concerns only the body. The soul is Yours. It belongs to You and will also remain with You forever. God help me. Amen."⁵

Later he would look back on that and on Psalm 46 as he writes:

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
our helper he amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe [Satan] doth seek to work us woe;
his craft and power are great, and armed with cruel hate,
on earth is not his equal ...

And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,
we will not fear, for God hath willed his truth to triumph through us.
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
his rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure;
one little word shall fell him ...

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing,
were not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is he;
Lord Sabaoth, his name, from age to age the same,
and he must win the battle.⁶

It's His battle and He must win, and *He will win* the battle. The devil and his forces may be mighty, but the Lord is Almighty, and the end of chapter 1 says all those forces are under the feet of King Jesus, in other words subservient to His sovereign rulership. Satan needs God's permission for what he does with God's people. He's no competition to God, he's a creature of God on borrowed time, conquered at the cross, he will soon be crushed underfoot by Him. Christ won't need to lift His finger then, one little word will do it.

Be strong in the Lord, soldiers. Be encouraged: the battle belongs to the Lord. Whatever happens Tuesday, Revelation says who wins

¹ <http://thecripplegate.com/reliable-source-reveals-novembers-election-is-already-fixed/>

² <http://www.alan.com/2012/10/18/billy-graham-tells-you-in-wall-street-journal-ad-to-vote-for-candidates-who-decide-based-on-biblical-principles/>

³ <http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=91712159481>

⁴ Petra, “The Battle Belongs to the Lord.”

⁵ <http://mrayton.wordpress.com/2012/10/31/reformation-day/>

⁶ Martin Luther, “A Mighty Fortress.”