

Sabbath School Lesson #12 – The Call to Stand – 9-15 Sep 2023

Christ says through Paul: “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:10-11). Nothing less than the whole armour of God will afford security against Satan’s attacks. A single point left unguarded, will speedily be discovered by Satan, and become the target of his darts. But with all the armour on, with weapons from the Divine armoury, the Christian is invulnerable and irresistible to all his foes.

Sunday: Battle Speech – Study Paul’s ringing conclusion to his letter, Ephesians 6:10–20. What does Paul’s battle cry mean to us today, as combatants in the great controversy? The contest is to be carried on with the strength that the Lord gives, and it is really the Lord that gains the victory over the enemy, working through the man who yields to Him. Jesus says, “In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Therefore we read, “This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith. And who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4-5). It is the belief that Christ is the literal Son of God that give us victory. Sadly, our Seventh-day Adventist theologians deny the Sonship of Christ. They say, “We are dealing with metaphorical use of the word ‘son.’ Metaphorical significance: The Son is not the natural, literal Son of the Father” (Adventist World, November 2015, p 42). “Notice that He will ‘therefore be called the Son [of] God.’ It is a conferred title, a missional moniker in Luke’s telling, not a description of His intrinsic, pre-incarnate identity. He will be called the Son of God precisely because He was conceived in Mary’s womb by a miracle, as was Isaac, not because He always was the Son of God by nature before coming to our world” (Ty Gibson, *The Sonship of Christ*, Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1 January 2019, p. 85). To believe that Christ is literally the Son of God is essential to your salvation and eternal life. Christ says, “If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). There was nothing difficult in believing that Christ was the Son of David after the flesh, for His mother, Mary, and His supposed father, Joseph, were of the house and lineage of David. This the Jews knew, and said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?” (John 6:42). But they knew Him not as the literal Son of God; therefore, through the blindness of their minds and the hardness of their hearts, they could not believe. Even so is it with those who deny He was literally the Son of God before incarnation, for they only believe in Him after the flesh. A faith which believes that Christ was not the Son of God until He was born of the virgin, is only dead faith, and is a faith which will leave the soul at last to die in sin. No man who denies that Christ was before incarnation and after the literal Son of God and lives and dies in that error can go to heaven. The Bible calls such men liars, and we read: “Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:22); “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son” (1 John 5:10); “And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev 21:27). Hundreds of years before Christ was born of the virgin, Agur asked this question, which none of the deniers of the literal Son of God have ever been able to answer: “Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in His fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is His name, and what is His Son’s name, if thou canst tell?” (Proverbs 30:4). To deny the literal Sonship of Christ is to forfeit eternal life. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).

Monday: Finding Strength in Christ – Read again Ephesians 6:10–20. How do you see the reality of the great controversy, which involves literal supernatural powers, as central to Paul’s point? Why is keeping this crucial truth before us so important in our own daily walk with God? One of the armoury of Satan is telling lies, for “he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44); Satan spares no effort to use the Lesson writer to falsely say: “Paul wishes his hearers to understand that the triune God is fully engaged in equipping them to battle

against these evil powers.” The truth is, Paul never believed in a triune God. Paul says, “But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him” (1 Corinthians 8:6). Paul teaches that there is One Spirit (Ephesians 4:4), the Lord is that Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17), for Christ was made a quickening Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45) and sent into our hearts (Gal 4:6). Paul says that “we receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Galatians 3:14) and then he interchangeably says “the promise of Jesus Christ was given to them that believe by faith” (Galatians 3:22). The Spirit is also “the Spirit of God” and “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom 8:9). “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named (the family of God), That He would grant you...to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” (Eph 3:14-17). The Spirit of God in the inner man is Christ dwelling in our heart.

Tuesday: The Great Controversy in Paul’s Letters – How is the great controversy fought? Paul says, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Cor 16:13). Here is set forth the duty of every soldier of the cross. It has not been left, however, for the soldier to adopt his own tactics, or choose his own weapons. We have “the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph 6:11); “for,” Paul continues, “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” It is a great mistake to suppose that the Christian warfare is ever a warfare against flesh and blood. When the Christian stops to wrestle with flesh and blood, He ceases at once to fight the battles of the Lord, and cuts himself off from “the power of His might.” He must not attack people, but principle; not sinners, but sin. Neither man, nor civil governments, nor churches, can properly be made objective points for his weapons. The conflict is with “spiritual wickedness,” and must not be lowered to the place of human warfare. The controversy is not man’s, but is between the “rulers of the darkness of this world” and Him who is the light of this world, and man’s part is but to unite his will, his weakness and his ignorance with the will and power and wisdom of the great Captain of the hosts of the Lord.

Wednesday: Standing on the Ancient Battlefield – Read through Ephesians 6:10–20, noting each time Paul uses some form of the verb stand. Why is this idea so important to him? “Stand therefore,” he says, “having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the word of God” (verses 14-17). The first requisite mentioned is truth. One is no more prepared to fight in the cause of God without truth, than he is to take a journey with loins ungirded. He may have great zeal; but without truth his efforts will be worse than useless, for he will be led without knowing it to fight under the banner of the prince of evil. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). And therefore he who has not the truth has not Christ, and does not know Him. But truth is of no avail unless the individual having it is sanctified thereby, and hence the necessity for “the breastplate of righteousness.” The wise man has said, “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov 4:23). “Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts” (Ps 51:6). “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom” (Col 3:16).

Thursday: Wrestling Against Evil Powers – Read Ephesians 6:10–20. What should the reality of these evil powers teach us regarding why we must grasp hold of the Lord Jesus, who is not only greater than these powers but has already defeated them? When completely equipped with “the whole armour of God,” the Christian is fully able to “stand fast in the faith,” to acquit himself like a man, and “be strong.” But let him remember that he holds no carnal weapon and has no controversy with flesh and blood. The battle is the Lord’s, and only He knows the foes to be overcome and has the power and the wisdom to overcome them. Man’s part is to stand in that place where the Lord can manifest through him His power in fighting the battles of His truth; for “the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole world, to show Himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him” (2 Chronicles 16:9). Man and the Lord co-operate in the battle; but the Lord by His own Spirit does the fighting, while man, His instrument, beholds with wonder and joy His salvation.