

**ENTERING INTO THE FOURTH STAGE OF THE EXPERIENCE OF LIFE
TO ARRIVE AT A FULL-GROWN MAN
FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S PURPOSE**

(Friday—Second Morning Session)

Message Five

**The Fourth Stage of the Experience of Life
(4)
Spiritual Warfare**

Scripture Reading: Eph. 6:10-20

- I. If we would know how the church can be God's warrior to engage in spiritual warfare, we must know that in the universe there are three wills—the divine will, the satanic will, and the human will:**
- A. God's will is for us to enjoy Christ as everything (Heb. 10:5-10) by functioning in the Body life (Rom. 12:1-2; Phil. 1:19) for the reality and oneness of the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:5, 9, 11; 4:3-4; John 17:21).
 - B. Lucifer's pride in his high position and beauty gave rise to an evil intention, which became the satanic will—Ezek. 28:12-19; Isa. 14:12-15.
 - C. All warfare has its source in this conflict of wills; before the satanic will rose up to contradict the divine will, there was no war in the universe; the rebellion of Lucifer, the archangel of God, was the beginning of all the fighting that is now taking place among nations, in society, in the family, and within individuals—cf. Rev. 12:3-11; Gal. 5:17.
 - D. The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil represent the divine will and the satanic will, respectively; the crucial issue is whether man would choose the divine will or the satanic will—Gen. 2:7-9.
 - E. Through repentance man can turn from the satanic will to the divine will, from Satan's side to God's side—Acts 11:18.
 - F. The Bible says that we must repent for the kingdom (Matt. 4:17); the kingdom of God is actually the exercise of the divine will; when sinners repent for the kingdom of God, they turn from the side of Satan to the side of God, which is the kingdom of God, the will of God.
- II. Ephesians 6:10-20 reveals that we can “fight the battle in the Body” with Christ as the constituents of God's armor—*Hymns*, #885:**
- A. “Finally, be empowered in the Lord and in the might of His strength. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the stratagems of the devil”—Eph. 6:10-11:
 - 1. The fact that we need to be empowered in the Lord indicates that we cannot fight the spiritual warfare in ourselves; we can fight only in the Lord and in the might of His strength.
 - 2. The whole armor of God is for the entire Body of Christ as the corporate warrior, not for any individual member of the Body; we must fight the spiritual

- warfare in the Body, not as individuals—vv. 10-13; James 4:7; cf. Phil. 1:19; Rom. 13:12-14; 16:20.
3. In Ephesians 2 we sit with Christ in the heavenlies; in chapters 4 and 5 we walk in His Body on the earth; then in chapter 6 we stand in His power in the heavenlies.
 4. To sit with Christ is to participate in all His accomplishments, to walk in His Body is to fulfill God's eternal purpose, and to stand in His power is to fight against God's enemy.
- B. "Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth"—v. 14a:
1. *Truth* here refers to God in Christ as the reality in our living, that is, God realized and experienced by us in our living; this is actually Christ Himself lived out by us—4:15, 21, 24-25; John 14:6.
 2. The truth with which we are girded is actually the Christ whom we experience; because Paul's living was conformed to the pattern of Christ, he had the strength to face all opposition and adverse circumstances—Eph. 4:20; Phil. 1:19-21a.
- C. "Having put on the breastplate of righteousness"—Eph. 6:14b; 1 Cor. 1:30; Jer. 23:6:
1. Christ as the breastplate of righteousness covers our conscience, signified by the breast; in fighting against Satan, our accuser, we need a blood-purified conscience, a conscience void of offense—Heb. 9:14; 10:22; Acts 24:16.
 2. "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 12:11); our response to Satan's accusations should be, "I overcome Satan, the accuser, not by my perfection and not even by a conscience void of offense but by the blood of the Lamb. I am defended against his accusations by the breastplate of righteousness."
- D. "Having shod your feet with the firm foundation of the gospel of peace"—Eph. 6:15:
1. Christ has made peace for us on the cross, both with God and with man, and this peace has become our gospel; the gospel of peace has been established as a firm foundation, as a readiness, with which our feet may be shod—2:13-17.
 2. We fight the spiritual warfare by standing in peace; if we lose the peace between us and God or between us and other believers, we lose the standing to fight—Col. 3:15.
- E. "Besides all these, having taken up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one"—Eph. 6:16; 2 Cor. 4:13; Heb. 12:2; cf. Phil. 2:13:
1. The flaming darts are Satan's temptations, proposals, doubts, questions, lies, and attacks; we need to take up the shield of faith to quench these flaming darts.
 2. We need to exercise our spirit of faith, with our subdued and resurrected will, to believe that the Lord's manifestation is to destroy the works of the devil—2 Cor. 4:13; 1 John 3:8; Matt. 16:22-23; Luke 4:39; Matt. 12:28; Luke 10:17, 19.

3. We need to exercise our spirit of faith to believe that the Lord's death has destroyed Satan—Heb. 2:14; 1 Cor. 15:54-58; Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:3-6.
 4. We need to exercise our spirit of faith to believe that the Lord's resurrection has put Satan to shame—Col. 2:12-15, 20; 3:1; John 14:30; Phil. 3:10; Isa. 61:10; Zech. 3:4-5.
 5. We need to exercise our spirit of faith to believe that the ascension of the Lord is far above Satan's power—Eph. 1:19-23; 2:6; 6:11, 13.
 6. We must have faith in God, who is real, living, present, and available—Mark 11:22; Rev. 1:18.
 7. We must have faith in God's heart; God's heart toward us is always good; He has no intention to punish us, to injure us, or to cause us to suffer loss—Rom. 8:28-39.
 8. We must have faith in God's faithfulness; God cannot lie but is always faithful to His word—1 Cor. 1:9; 1 John 1:9; Titus 1:2.
 9. We must have faith in God's ability—Eph. 3:20.
 10. We must have faith in God's word; God is bound to fulfill all that He has spoken—cf. 1 Thes. 5:24; Eph. 6:17-18.
 11. We must have faith in God's will—1:5, 9, 11.
 12. We must have faith in God's sovereignty; under His sovereignty even our mistakes work for good—Rom. 9:19-29.
- F. "Receive the helmet of salvation"—Eph. 6:17a:
1. The helmet of salvation is for covering our mind, our mentality, against the negative thoughts shot in by the evil one; such a helmet, such a covering, is God's salvation.
 2. Satan injects threats, worries, anxieties, fear, and other weakening thoughts into our mind; God's salvation is the covering that we take up against all of these, and this salvation is the saving Christ whom we experience in our daily life—John 16:33.
- G. "Receive...the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God"—Eph. 6:17b:
1. Among the six items of God's armor, the sword of the Spirit is the only one used for attacking the enemy; with the sword we cut the enemy to pieces.
 2. Christ as the Spirit and the word furnishes us with a sword as an offensive weapon to defeat and slay the enemy.
 3. When the *logos* (the constant word in the Bible) becomes the *rhema* (the present, instant, living speaking of the Spirit) to us, this *rhema* is the sword that cuts the enemy to pieces.
- H. "By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints"—v. 18:
1. Prayer may be considered the seventh item of the armor of God, because it is the means by which we apply the other items.
 2. Prayer is the unique way to apply Christ as the armor of God; it is prayer that makes the armor available to us in a practical way.
 3. We need to persevere in prayer because prayer involves a battle, a fight; two parties, God and Satan, are hostile to each other; the third party consists of

God's chosen and redeemed people—Col. 4:2; Eph. 6:18; Matt. 26:41; cf. Eph. 5:14; Rom. 13:11-14.

4. In order to fight on God's side against Satan, we need to persevere in prayer; this perseverance is needed because the course of the whole world is away from God—1 John 5:19; cf. John 14:30; 16:33.
5. Before we try to persevere in prayer, we should first make a vow to the Lord concerning our prayer life; we need to say to Him, "Lord, I am desperate about this. I offer myself to You so that I may have a prayer life. Lord, keep me in the spirit of prayer. If I forget this or neglect this, I know that You will not forget it. Remind me again and again about prayer."
6. Persevering in prayer has many benefits:
 - a. Prayer is the only way that we can set our mind on the things above—Col. 3:2; Heb. 7:25; 8:2; cf. Acts 6:4.
 - b. Prayer is the way to enter into the Holy of Holies and come forward to the throne of grace so that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help (Heb. 4:16); when we pray, approaching the throne of grace, grace will become a river flowing in us and supplying us—*Hymns*, #770.
 - c. The more we pray, the more we experience being one with the Lord and the more we enjoy His presence and have fellowship with Him; what a marvelous reward!

Excerpts from the Ministry:

WARFARE TO DEAL WITH THE SPIRITUAL ENEMY

The Church's Responsibility

In 1928 brother Nee held his first overcomer conference on spiritual warfare. In that conference Satan, the evil one, was exposed to the uttermost. Brother Nee pointed out that in the universe there are three wills: the divine will, the satanic will, and the human will. If we would know how the church can be God's warrior to engage in spiritual warfare, we must know these three wills, these three intentions. God's will, being self-existing, is eternal, uncreated. As created beings, the angels also have a will. One of these angels, an archangel, was appointed by God to rule the universe that existed before the creation of Adam. Because of his high position and his beauty, this archangel became proud. This pride gave rise to an evil intention, which became the satanic will. Therefore, in addition to God's intention, God's will, there is a second intention, a second will, for now the satanic will is set against God's will.

All warfare has its source in this conflict of wills. Before the satanic will rose up to contradict the divine will, there was no war in the universe. The controversy in the universe began with the rebellion of the archangel against God. That rebellion was the beginning of all the fighting that is now taking place among nations, in society, in the family, and in individuals. Throughout history there have been wars between nations, groups, persons, and even within individuals. For example, you may experience an inner warfare between your reason and your lust. All the different kinds of warfare have their source in the controversy between the divine will and the satanic will.

We do not know how much time elapsed between the rebellion of Satan and the creation of Adam. We simply know that at a particular time, God created man and endowed him with a human will that was free. It is because of God's greatness that He gave man a free will. A great person will never compel anyone to follow him. By giving man a free will, God was indicating that He would not force man to obey Him. When I was young, I thought that God was not wise in creating man with a free will. If I had been God, I would have made it impossible for man to have had a choice. I would have created man in such a way that all he could do was follow God. But in His greatness God gave man freedom of choice.

In Genesis 2 we see that man was free to exercise his will to eat either of the tree of life or of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. These two trees represent the divine will and the satanic will, respectively. Hence, in the garden there was a triangular situation, with the tree of life representing the divine will, the tree of knowledge representing the satanic will, and Adam representing the human will. Actually, the tree of life denotes God Himself, and the tree of knowledge denotes Satan. Therefore, there were three persons—God, Satan, and man—each one with a will.

Although there were three wills, the controversy involved just two parties—God and Satan. The crucial issue was whether man would choose the divine will or the satanic will. If the human will stood with the divine will, then God's will would be accomplished. But if the human will took sides with the satanic will, Satan's will would be carried out, at least temporarily. As we all know, the human will took sides with the satanic will. This means that man chose to follow Satan and sided with the satanic will. Therefore, Satan was victorious temporarily.

However, through repentance man can turn from the satanic will to the divine will, from Satan's side to God's side. The first commandment in the gospel is to repent. The next two commandments are to believe and to be baptized. Any sinner who desires to be saved must obey these three commandments. He must repent to God, believe in the Lord Jesus, and be baptized in water. To repent is to have a turn from the satanic will to the divine will. Since birth our will has stood on the side of the satanic will. The reason for this is that we were in Adam when he chose Satan's will above God's will.

Many Christians do not know the true significance of the preaching of the gospel. The Bible says that we must repent for the kingdom (Matt. 4:17). The kingdom of God is actually the exercise of the divine will. When sinners repent for the kingdom of God, they turn from the side of Satan to the side of God, which is the kingdom of God, the will of God. After a person turns from the satanic will to the divine will, he must believe in the Lord Jesus and be baptized. Through baptism he is brought out of the authority of darkness, the satanic will, and is transferred into the kingdom of the Son of God's love (Col. 1:13).

From the day we were saved, our Christian life has been a life of warfare. The same was true of the children of Israel after they made their exodus from Egypt. After eating the Passover, they marched like an army out of the land of Egypt. This indicates that their eating of the Passover lamb was a preparation for war. They

were saved in an atmosphere of warfare. As soon as they came out of Egypt, the fighting began. Pharaoh and his chariots pursued the children of Israel, but God came in to fight for them. After the children of Israel had passed through the Red Sea and Pharaoh's army had been overthrown, God's people triumphantly praised Him for His victory over the enemy. The Israelites proceeded to fight their way through the wilderness, and they continued fighting in the good land. Their history thus reveals that the life of a saved one is a life of warfare.

We have seen that as the new man the church should walk according to truth and by grace and that as the Bride the church should live in love and in light. However, not only must God's eternal purpose be fulfilled and the desire of Christ's heart be satisfied, but God's enemy must be defeated. For this, the church must be a warrior. Even in the Song of Songs we see that as the seeking one enjoys the Lord's presence, the fighting is going on. Therefore, we walk according to truth and by grace, we live in love and light, and we fight to subdue the satanic will. Our walk is for the fulfillment of God's purpose, our living is for the satisfaction of Christ, and our fighting is for the defeat of God's enemy. Hence, for these three things the church must be the new man, the Bride, and the warrior.

Empowered

Ephesians 6:10 says, "For the rest, be empowered in the Lord and in the might of His strength." The Greek word here rendered empowered has the same root as the word power in 1:19. To deal with God's enemy, to fight against the evil force of darkness, we need to be empowered with the greatness of the power that raised up Christ from the dead and seated Him in the heavens, far above all the evil spirits in the air. The fact that we are to be empowered in the Lord indicates that in the spiritual warfare against Satan and his evil kingdom, we can fight only in the Lord, not in ourselves. Whenever we are in ourselves, we are defeated.

The charge to be empowered implies the need to exercise our will. If we would be empowered for spiritual warfare, our will must be strong and exercised. We should not be like jellyfish, those who are weak-willed and vacillating. Actually, it is those with a strong will who are most able to repent. Consider Saul of Tarsus as an example. As he was traveling to Damascus with the intention of arresting all those who called on the name of the Lord Jesus, he was apprehended by the Lord. Because Saul had such a strong will, he could have a strong repentance.

In addition to preserving our conscience, God has sovereignly preserved our will. If He had not done so, the preaching of the gospel could have no effect on people. We may mistakenly think that it is difficult to preach the gospel to one with a strong will. According to my experience, most of those who were saved through my gospel preaching were those with a strong will and a definite intention. Such a will is able to function positively in repentance. Repentance requires the exercise of the will. In like manner, to be empowered also involves our will.

On the day of Pentecost Peter told the people to be saved from that crooked generation (Acts 2:40, Gk.). This command seems to be both active and passive, with the word be implying something active and the word saved, something passive. The

same is true of Paul's command in 6:10 to be empowered. An active element—be—is combined with a passive element—empowered. We need to exercise our will to be empowered in the Lord.

In chapter four we see that we must be renewed (v. 23) and in chapter five, that we must be submissive (5:21). For the new man, we need to be renewed; for the Bride, we need to be submissive; and for the warrior, we need to be empowered. As the warrior, we must go into battle not as a gentleman or as a lovely Bride, but as a lion. Therefore, for the new man, the Bride, and the warrior, let us be renewed, submissive, and empowered.

The fact that we need to be empowered in the Lord indicates that we cannot fight the spiritual warfare in ourselves; we can fight only in the Lord and in the might of His strength. In 6:10 Paul refers to power, might, and strength. Firstly, we are empowered by the power that raised Christ from among the dead and made Him to be the Head over all things. Then we know God's might and strength.

Putting on the Whole Armor of God

Verse 11 opens with the words, "Put on the whole armor of God." To fight the spiritual warfare, we need not only the power of the Lord, but also the armor of God. Our weapons do not avail, but God's armor, even the whole armor of God, does.

The whole armor of God is for the entire Body, not for any individual member of the Body. The church is a corporate warrior, and the believers together make up this unique warrior. Only the corporate warrior can wear the whole armor of God; no individual believer can. We must fight the spiritual warfare in the Body, not individually.

The charge to put on the whole armor of God is an imperative, a command. God has provided the armor for us, but He does not put it on for us. Rather, we ourselves must put on the armor God has provided. For this, we need to be empowered. Although God can empower us, we still must exercise our will to cooperate with Him. In the same principle, we must cooperate with God's command to put on the armor. (*Life-study of Ephesians*, pp. 527-532)