

## Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – February 2, 2023

The Lord be with you.

Wow, have you seen the news today?

Well, maybe you don't wanna go there, but these are troubling times, aren't they? A violence, lawlessness, civil disorder, attacks on just good old-fashioned morality, and it feels like politics is open warfare.

So what is a follower of Jesus to do?

Well, I have something from God's Word for us today. And with that, I want to take a look at what is going on behind the news. I want to see in God's word something that is never gonna make page 16 of the B section of the newspaper. But it really is what is going on. And what you and I can do, I'm looking at Ephesians Chapter 6, and I pick up reading in verse 10, where the apostle Paul writes, Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His power. Put on the whole armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Now it's the next verse, verse 12, that I really wanna focus on as it tells us what is really going on behind the news and what you and I could do, first I read... For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh.

In the margin of your Bible, you could put that down as human beings, that our struggle is not against blood and flesh, human beings, I know it might feel like at a time, but it's not. Paul says, our struggle is not against blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, therefore, take up the whole armor of God.

Now, look look at verse 12, where Paul says, For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh. Notice that Paul takes for granted here that the Christian life... From one point of view, the Christian life is a struggle. I think we forget that sometimes. But behind behind the struggle, behind all the things we see going on around us, that we see and the things that upset us, there's something going on, and he says The struggle is not primarily with blood and flesh, people, the struggle is with mighty, invisible spiritual powers of evil, unseen diabolical powers of darkness around us.

Now, we might think that that guy on TV is the enemy, or that person three doors down is the enemy, but he's not. Paul says behind them are the forces of evil in the spirit world. You know the neatest trick Satan has ever pulled off is to make people think he doesn't exist, and that evil spirit forces don't exist. It's hard to struggle against an enemy if you don't even think the enemy exists.

I so need what Paul is saying here today, that our struggle, it's not primarily with people, it's not against blood and flesh beings. Paul says, our struggle really is against, and Paul uses her language describing different ranks or orders of evil spirit beings, Paul says, we struggle against the rulers, that's one, against the authorities, that's two, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, that's three, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places, that's four... As in

this listing of fallen spirits, Paul wants to bring out as strongly as possible as he can, that you and I right now, we are struggling against super human spirit forces. We dare not underestimate them, we dare not make light of the struggle that we are in, 'cause you know one of the first rules of warfare is know your enemy. Our enemy is not that guy from the other political party, our enemy is not those guys breaking the law. Our real enemyt behind them, our real enemy is not blood and flesh, but invisible spirit powers, and we dare not underestimate them.

Paul calls them first rulers to emphasize the influence that they exert in our world, he calls them authorities, emphasizing how they give orders to people, they move people to act. Paul calls them cosmic powers of this present darkness to point out their cosmic worldwide influence for evil that they oppose all that is good, holy and true, and finally Paul calls them spiritual forces of evil, emphasizing the evil of their schemes and plans on our world. Now, I know we don't teach it in school today, we don't even teach it in many of our churches, but there really is war going on right now, an all-out war between the kingdom of God and the Kingdom of evil. And we have to answer God's call to arms because we have an enemy that is out to destroy us, to destroy families, our churches, our nation, but you know what, this enemy is not gonna make front page news. And that's why I'm talking about him today. And it's because we face that kind of enemy that Paul says in verse 10, Finally be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His power.

Well, we must never underestimate the enemy who's fighting against us, on the other hand, we must never overestimate the enemy, because you and I we can be strong, Paul says in the Lord, and in the strength of His power. I am so encouraged by Paul's words a day as he says, Be strong in the Lord. We can be strong in the midst of the battle, Paul does not say, be strong in your plans, he does not say be strong in out-smarting them, but he says, Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

As I watched the news today... It makes me wanna spend more time in prayer. It really does. It makes me wanna spend more time in God to Word. It makes me wanna spend more time and doing everything I can do to get out the good news. I mean, nothing fancy here and nothing new, but just old old-fashioned faithfulness of God will defeat the enemy. I love that little verse in 1 John chapter 4 verse 4, For greater is he that is anew than the one who is in the world.

So you'll be strong in the Lord today, and in the strength of his mind.

I'm Tim Smith, a fellow traveler on the pilgrim way. Thanks for listening until next time.