

## Standing Firm Against the Enemy, Ephesians 6:10-20, 4/6/25

Let me remind you that last week in 1 Samuel 28 we read the story of King Saul dabbling with the spiritual dark side, and in response I gave you some pastoral warnings about the spiritual realm.

And I ended that message with a question hanging, "If the dark side is real, how can we fight against it?" And that's what we want to talk about today. Let me start with a quote by an old 17th century book called *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*, Thomas Brooks. The Puritans got some things wrong- legalistic practices, Salem Witch Trials... those terrible outfits with the collars, one of the things they got right: they understood that humanity was in a spiritual battle that was as old. "Several strategies [our Spiritual Enemy Satan] has to keep souls in a mourning, staggering, doubting, and questioning condition."

"A man may as well count the stars and number the sands of the sea, as reckon up all the devices of Satan."

"Christ, the Scriptures, our own hearts, and Satan's devices are the four primary things that should first and most be studied and searched.

If any cast off the study of these, they cannot be safe here nor happy hereafter." If our spiritual eyes are open, we know he's right. We know it when we see some things in our world that are so evil that it just can't be explained by bad choices or poor environment. But it isn't just out there, is it? It's in here... You can feel it can't you, this battle? You can sense it when you want to do the right thing but something seems to hold you back, like when you know that if you just said to your spouse those words, "Honey, I'm sorry, I was wrong, please forgive me" it would turn everything around, but you just can't bring yourself to do it. You sense you are at war when you knowingly lie to yourself that having another drink isn't a mistake, and it isn't going to put you over the edge, and so you do it anyway and live with regret the next day. You know there is something more going on than just flesh and blood when you are struggling to overcome your impulses and intrusive thoughts. Or have you ever sensed spiritual warfare before you are going to serve the Lord in some way, but you are having one of those days from hell where it just seems like everything is conspiring against you, because maybe it is!

Now, we often hesitate to speak about spiritual warfare, and demons and angels because we don't want to come across like kooky or overly-spiritual like the Church Lady from SNL. But the Bible does not hesitate to call it what it is. Ephesians 6: <sup>12</sup> *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities,*

*against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.* On one hand we can't blame everything on Satan- it might just be our own stupidity or life's curve balls. On the other hand, Evil is real, the Devil and demons are real, and they conspire against us, they seek to steal, kill, and bring destruction in our lives (John 10:10). They

are at war with God and his good creation. And most of all at war against God's plan of salvation through his Son Jesus Christ. And as Thomas Brooks says, they use a thousand devices to accomplish their goal. Overt things like the occult like we discussed last week, but covert things like lies, manipulating and twisting even good desires we have, he uses the distraction of the digital world, addiction, the lust for more- more sex, wealth, and power. They use false religion to trap people on a treadmill of works and rituals believing that they can attain salvation for themselves. And if they can get his hands on the church through its leaders they will make it compromising, hypocritical, and impotent. This is war, and this is what everyone of us is up against, and many of us are getting eaten for lunch. So welcome to Brandywine!

Good news! God has not left us defenseless, the analogy Paul uses in Ephesians 6:10-20 is that of a soldier, being fitted for a battle. God gives us everything we need for the spiritual battle. From this passage, I want to give you six strategies to stand firm against the enemy. Each could be their own sermon or even series. But my goal is to give us a baseline to build from in your small groups, own study time with God, conversations around your dinner table, with a mentor.

**Ephesians 6** <sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. <sup>13</sup> Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. <sup>18</sup> And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. <sup>19</sup> Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

The first two are prerequisites for the last four. What word, phrase, or idea is repeated?

**Strategy #1 Stand your ground in the power of the Gospel of Jesus.** We do not stand our ground in ourselves. In our cleverness, our wisdom, our power, our moral track-record. What does Paul say? **v.10 Be strong in the Lord and his mighty power.** We stand firm in the power of the Gospel of Jesus. Look at the elements of the armor- they are the gospel! **the belt of truth-** We stand with the power of the truth, the reality that all other so-called realities are measured against, revealed in God's Word- that God is the creator, he is holy and he is good. That we have rebelled against God and that we are separated from a holy perfect God because of our sin, we are in need of rescue, unable to save ourselves. Jesus is the one who saves. **breastplate of righteousness** Not that we are righteous (in right standing with God) in ourselves, but because of Jesus' death in our place, his righteousness becomes our righteousness. **gospel of peace** While we used to be enemies of God, Jesus himself has become our peace, we are eternally

forgiven of all our sin, past, present, and future. We are now called children of God when we accept Jesus. **shield of faith**- It is by faith alone in what Jesus did for us. He is our shield when the enemy tries to shame us, condemn us. **Helmet of Salvation** The power of sin has been broken. We are saved from the penalty of sin that binds us to our past, we are freed from the power of sin- that held us in bondage to sin, and in the future, the very presence of sin will be a thing of the past when Jesus returns to break the curse of sin and death. And here's what that means, even when the enemy wins a battle in my life and I sin, I know he hasn't won the war. Because Jesus stands as my advocate before the father, I can stand back up, confess my sin and know that I'm not condemned, and I'm forgiven.

If you haven't trusted the gospel, you are still in bondage to the enemy and to sin. When you know the truth, Jesus, you are set free, because of the gospel you do not need to listen to his lies, we can say no and we are given the power to say yes to God in obedience. This is what it means to stand in the power of the gospel.

### **Strategy #2 Put on the Gospel Armor Daily.**

***<sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.***

Notice Paul doesn't say we sit back and watch this battle as a spectator. Spectators don't need to put on armor, soldiers do. Spectators on the battlefield get taken out. Soldiers fight. There is an active, intentional decision we need to make to put on the gospel armor each day. How? Through the spiritual disciplines, developing healthy habits of our faith that the Bible points us to. Prayer- I start my day in prayer- in essence putting on the gospel each day, I reset reality and the truth through my Bible Study, Meditating on the Word, Confession of Sin, Solitude, Fasting, Rest...It takes discipline. Like working out...there's no shortcut to physical fitness is there? True spiritually. What shape is your spiritual body in? These first two are pre-requisites that enable you to use the last four strategies.

### **Strategy #3 Identify the Temptation, Lie, or Other Strategy of the Enemy.**

***<sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.*** You see the imagery of an archer? He doesn't come at you up close with a club or sword most of the time because we'd see it coming. It's from afar. This is why that puritan guy Thomas Brooks said, we have to study ourselves, what are we susceptible to based on your own weaknesses, your past wounds, your family heritage, your insecurities. Some examples in my own life- prone to control and wanting to fix everything myself...and I happen to be in a position as a lead pastor, that makes that desire on steroids, so the enemy can exploit that- whisper: No one else is going to do it right so YOU have to do it. Knowing myself helps me combat that lie, those temptations when they come my way. Some of us are vulnerable to depression and the enemy feeds lies to keep you in isolation or a negative thought pattern. Some are vulnerable to our self-image and obsess about what everyone else thinks about us, or to anxiety, or fear...Are you aware of your vulnerabilities? We must be aware so we can see the arrow coming and get our shield up. This is why it is so important to invite people who know you to speak into your life, because many times we aren't self aware, or we prefer to lie to ourselves.

#### **Strategy #4 Take the Lie Captive with the Truth**

<sup>14</sup> *Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist. V.17 sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.* 90% of the arrows that come our way are through lies. The only way you will discern a lie from the enemy is by being well acquainted with the truth in the Word of God. **1st Service Only** - Counterfeit 100...not studying all the fakes, but knowing the real thing.

**2nd Service Only** - Two Truths and a Lie- Bring up Aidan:

- 1- The Keeler family was asked not to renew a beach rental because of an egg fight that took place on the front lawn.
- 2- In 9th grade your dad had a leading role in the high school musical *Oklahoma*, playing Curly, and still wakes up the house often singing, "Oh what a beautiful morning!"
- 3- One side of our family has an Easter tradition of dressing up in a full sized bunny costume, and I have played the bunny.

The truth of God's Word is what shields us from the enemy's attacks. Which means we must be well-acquainted with the truth to discern the lies. And the only way to know the truth is to read it, study it, meditate, memorize it.

#### **Fighter Verses**

**Temptation of Lust or of Anger: 1 Corinthians 10:13** No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

**Perseverance: Hebrews 12:1-2** Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

**Over Fear: 2 Timothy 1:7** For God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and self-discipline.

#### **Strategy #5 Stand Firm through Prayer in the Spirit**

<sup>18</sup> *And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.* What does it mean to pray in the Spirit? I do not think praying in the Spirit is praying in tongues...incoherent. The sword of the Spirit is the word of God, praying in the Spirit I believe means praying with reliance on the Spirit's power in accordance with the Word of God. So, in the moment of temptation, we are not relying on willpower. Willpower can work against getting a second cookie after dinner. But willpower on a besetting habit/sin/addiction? Willpower on a triggered father wound from childhood?...it doesn't stand a chance.

To stand firm, we need access to a power that is beyond us. We need an ally in the fight to come alongside us and turn the tide. And that is the Holy Spirit! In the moment you are feeling tempted- we use our fighter verses and we pray them back to God and in humility and

weakness, we ask for the power of the Spirit to stand firm. All kinds of prayers and requests. John Piper- "Prayer is like a war-time walkie talkie for us to call headquarters to send fresh supplies to the battle lines."

When I don't want to humble myself and apologize to my wife and ask for her forgiveness. And the enemy is whispering, "She should come to you! You don't have anything to apologize about, you are justified. She just doesn't understand you." That's when I need these fighter verses, and I need to pray in the Spirit for his help to coach me in the corner like Rocky to get back out there.

### **Strategy #6 Stand Firm in Community**

*With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.*<sup>19</sup> *Pray also for me,* Individual soldiers put on armor, but they fight as a unit, shoulder to shoulder, arm in arm. We need each other. If Paul needed brothers and sisters in arms, we need it too. Paul needed his community to have his back spiritually. He was human just like you and me, he was afraid, he had doubts, he had insecurities. He needed the body of Christ to surround him, encourage him, hold him accountable in prayer because he knew he was going out into enemy territory. He was sharing the gospel and the enemy wanted to take him out. He needed a community to have his back, encourage him, remind him of the truth, and pray for him.

The enemy doesn't want Go Week to happen, he doesn't want it to be successful, he wants to keep you from doing it, and if you do it, cause you to have a bad attitude that morning, or keep your mouth shut and not share. We need each other, we need to pray and ask for the supplies to be sent! **Go Week Prayer Gathering next Sunday.**

Devil prowls like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Africa Safari-lion hunt.

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**Strategy #2 Put on the Gospel Armor Daily.**

**Strategy #3 Identify the Temptation, Lie, or Other Strategy of the Enemy.**

**Strategy #4 Take the Lie Captive with the Truth**

**Strategy #5 Stand Firm through Prayer in the Spirit**

**Strategy #6 Stand Firm in Community**

Next Steps- Take these notes today, work through them this week in Quiet Time. Use them to evaluate your life, talk about them in your groups, around the dinner table. Find a few other people this week and discuss it.

Communion