

“The Armor of God”- Ephesians 6:10-17

Good Morning! Before we get started, please bow your heads with me and pray. (prayer)

The King stood atop the castle turret, gazing into the dark horizon. Below him on the ground were His warriors, who were prepared for the biggest battle they will ever fight. With sword and shield in hand, the warriors gave a hard stare into the distance, watching and waiting. The King followed their gaze beyond the majestic mountains and it wasn't long until the King noticed movement ahead and immediately recognized it as their enemy- a dark mass that was rapidly advancing toward them.

The warriors stood strong. They did not fear the coming Shadow. They knew they had the King on their side. Victory was a name that belonged to the King alone. They knew Life eternal flowed through their veins and Light inexplicable pulsed in their hearts. They knew death could not touch them and now they waited for the King's command to wage war against the enemy that threatened all that they stood for.

It didn't matter how long the battle will be. It didn't matter the deep scars that will mark their flesh. For they knew the victory that awaited them. They were armed with the King and nothing could stop them now. The King's glory will be known through today, through this battle. And that is all that mattered

I share this story with you because it reveals profound truth found in today's passage, the big idea of fighting in an intense spiritual battle. If you would, please turn with me to Ephesians chapter 6, verses 10 through 17. If you don't have a Bible, there is one found in the pew in front of you. The passage is found on page

___979___ in the pew Bible. Again, the passage is Ephesians chapter 6, verses 10 through 17. I will read the passage as a whole then I'll go back and show you three key ideas found in the passage. Please follow along with me as we read God's Word together.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”

Let's quickly look at the background and context of this passage. Paul is imprisoned in Rome around A.D. 60-62. He is writing to the church in Ephesus and is providing encouragement to all followers of Christ, reminding them that Christ has rescued them from their sins and brought them into fellowship with God. Chapter 1, verses 3 through 14: ***“even as He chose us in Him...In love, He predestined us...for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ...In Him we have obtained an inheritance.”***

Christ has not only provided salvation for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles! In Him, He has united both Jews and Gentiles, so that all who believe in Christ will be saved. Chapter 2, verses 11 through 22.

As an outflow of these two themes, Paul gives the Ephesians guidance and wisdom on how to live the Christian life that is honoring and pleasing to the Lord. In chapters five through six, he shows them the traits of submission, obedience, and love. As a final point on this list of traits, Paul shows the Ephesians the dynamics of true strength in the midst of a supernatural war, which then brings us to today's passage.

I would like to start with **verse 10**. The first key idea found in this passage is the knowledge and source of **The Divine Strength**. This is a pivotal verse that sets the stage for the rest of the passage. We are commanded to be strong in God. We are not our own. Our identity, our being, our existence, is dependent on God. To be strong in the Lord is to submit to God and His Word, not making our own decisions based off our own feelings. We must hold fast to the truth and be confident in it.

In a world of independence and individualism, this passage breaks away from that mold and provides a radical way of thinking. In relation to the spiritual battle, we fight for the truth. Yet what happens when all that we stand for falls? What happens when dark forces strive to wreck our faith? On our own, we are weak. Because the truth is, we are all afraid. We are all afraid of things more powerful than us. Our sinful nature is magnetic to the dark, so we allow fear to sink its fangs into our souls and bleed us dry of our faith in God.

But there is a fire-blazing hope on the horizon. For those of us who are in Christ, we have strength beyond anything we can imagine. Our new life in Christ is

magnetic to the light, so God graciously gives us faith to explode our hearts with His love. As Paul tells Timothy, “Perfect love casts out all fear.” As His love flows through our veins, we do not have to fear the Shadow, the darkness. In Christ alone, we have strength to muster the courage to fight evil and stand.

”The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident.” –Psalm 27:1;3 (ESV)

Let me illustrate this point in a modern day example. A woman is at the end of her pregnancy and she is entering into labor. Her husband rushes her to the hospital and stays with her for the entire event. The woman takes a few medications to ease the pain yet nothing seems to help. So the only thing the woman can do is hold her husband’s hand. The woman’s labor is one of struggle and pain, yet through this trial, she is looking at her husband’s eyes. And in those eyes, she sees wisdom and strength that far exceeded hers at the moment. But looking into his eyes gave her a renewed sense of purpose and resolve. She is now determined and strength is flowing into her. Knowing that someone else is strong gave her the perseverance to endure and assurance that everything will be alright. And as a result through this trial, joy is brought forth into the world.

Just as we are in the midst of struggle and pain and battle, we should be fully relying on the strength of Christ to get us through. Christ has the wisdom and fierce determination that we never could have on our own. But if we hold His hand and look into His glorious eyes, we are able to stand firm and keep the faith.

(pause)

Why do we need God's strength then? I would like to then move on to **verses 11 and 12**. The second key idea found in these verses is the reality of **The Cosmic War**. Notice the language here. "Armor of God"..."schemes of the devil"- these are not of this world. We know God exists. We know the devil exists. But we cannot see them. This reality exists within a supernatural realm unseen to the human eye yet we see its effects in the physical world.

I would like to expand on "the schemes of the devil" for a little bit and how that relates to the cosmic war. We as Christians, as followers of Christ, experience daily struggle. But what do we struggle with? SIN! We are in a constant struggle against our flesh, our desires. This includes anything, such as lust, pride, anger, envy, jealousy, laziness. We fall into the trap of self-centeredness and think these things fuel our being, making us feel better in the midst of uncontrollable circumstances. This, my brothers and sisters, is the scheme of the devil.

As an enemy would do, the devil will employ the power of deception. Jon Bloom of John Piper's ministry puts it this way:

Hell's one primary objective is to destroy faith in God. All of its elaborate strategies and all of its diabolical energies are focused on one thing: breaking the power of the word of the Lord by undermining our trust in it. The universe was created and is upheld by the Word of God (John 1:3, Hebrews 1:3), so hell must break the power of the Word of God if it wants to win. Therefore, we find ourselves fighting an enemy that constantly seeks to alter our perception of reality. That is why this fight is such a surreal and sometimes horrific experience.

Hell wages a war of distortion. It seeks to make the most destructive things look tantalizingly desirable. It seeks to make the most wonderful things look unbearably boring. It seeks to make the most trustworthy things look unreliable. It seeks to make the one, true fountain of joy look like a dry well, and a broken cistern look like a spring of refreshment. Hell makes even hell look entertaining. End quote

I'll illustrate this by using something completely foreign, something Pastor Rob would never use- I'll tell a story from Star Wars. (laughs) In the third Star Wars movie, Revenge of the Sith, the main character, Anakin Skywalker, is on his journey to becoming the infamous Darth Vader. He was once a Jedi Knight on his way to becoming a Jedi Master. Yet because he listened to the deception of darkness and the promise of temporary power, the tragic story unfolds as Anakin joins the dark side, resulting in his physical body broken and burned, the death of his wife, and other horrific events. So the moral of the story, don't be like Anakin! Don't fall into temptation; the sin will lead you to death.

(build intensity)

As a point of application, I would encourage the church to always be on the defensive and offensive in this war. Be on the defensive and know your weakness and your enemy. Be on the offensive and destroy the sin that has enticed you and will lead you to death. Christ alone satisfies!! He is Life and we can run to Him into His refuge of holiness, knowing that He is good and perfect and true.

(pause)

So the other part in this second point can be seen in **verse 12**. In other words, our battle is not against political leaders, family, friends, or people who annoy you. Sometimes we hate others because they have wronged us. NO! Our battle is against spiritual forces, the devil who is trying to draw away from the real battlefield. The devil's deception is his diversion.

Paul knew this and that is why he laid out commandments to obey in the previous chapters. In our sinful nature, we tend to fight others different from us, we tend to fight our spouses because we are selfish and think worldly perfection

is the standard, we tend to not care about our parent's well-being or our children's spiritual health, and we tend to despise our bosses or employees because the unfair treatment they give us. Paul destroys this pattern of thought and gives us an example of what it is to live this life in Christ! In Christ alone, we are able to love others and care for them. We are able to submit to one another in humility. This way of life is right and will lead to joy.

I'll show you an example of this from one of my favorite superhero movies, Captain America: Civil War. The group of superheroes known as the Avengers are put in a situation in which they are to be accountable to the government. The hero Iron Man is for it, but the other hero Captain America is against it. They fight throughout the movie but as certain events unfold, it is revealed that an enemy is manipulating these events in order to destroy the Avengers. There is a moment where they have to put aside their differences and fight the enemy together. Just like the Avengers had to realize this, we as Christians must know who the real enemy is, not against flesh and blood, but against the devil!

So what we've seen so far is that we need the full strength of God because we find ourselves caught in the middle of the cosmic war. It wages in our hearts and minds, yet we must know who the real enemy is and stand up against the schemes of the devil.

How do we fight against the darkness? I would like us to move on to **verses 13 through 17**. The third and final key idea found in these verses is that of **The Final Stand**. Notice that Paul states that we are to put on the *whole* armor of God. Not just some of it, not most of it, but *EVERYTHING!!!* We fight this war with the belt of truth, not giving in to the deception of the devil. We fight this war with the breastplate of righteousness, living in light of God's holiness and the

righteousness of Jesus Christ. We fight this war with the shoes of the gospel and of peace, proclaiming the Lordship, Beauty, and Majesty of Christ. We fight this war with the shield of faith, not doubting God's promises but holding fast and trusting in God's sovereignty. We fight this war with the helmet of salvation, knowing we are chosen by God, saved through Christ, and sealed by the Holy Spirit. Finally, we fight this war with the sword of the Spirit, which is God's Word, in which it has the very creative power to spark life in a soul or bring death to the enemy! Further, Christ is the Word, so therefore HE is the sword of the Spirit. We are armed with Christ and He has the power over life and death.

(build intensity)

There will be times when torrents of doubt and sin will crash upon you. There will be times when you will be called to be the only one proclaiming the truth of the Gospel. There will be times when all of who you know and love will vanish and pass away. There will be times when friends will betray us, family members will mock us, co-workers will hate us, and society will shun us. There will be times when we will question the very existence of God and all that is good.

(pause, slow)

But we must remember to put on the whole armor of God and it is then we are able to stand firm. We must remember the Gospel. "But this I know with all my heart, His wounds have paid my ransom." We must remember who we are in Christ and what Christ has done for us.

***Psalm 23**

In conclusion for today, I want to bring us back to **verse 10**. We can't do this on our own. If we tried, we would fail. But oh praise be to God that He is there for us and He is able to strengthen us!

(pause)

We are in a battle for eternity. The Christian life is not a cruise ship- lounging, resting, relaxing, having a good time, enjoying worldly pleasures. NO!!!!!! The Christian life is a battleship- we are warriors armed with the Truth, aware of our surroundings, obeying the King, and conquering the darkness. We still live in a sinful world. But as we battle against evil, we fight for the peace that is to come and invite others to experience this peace.

Challenge to the Church:

To those who know Christ- have you been faithful in the battle? Is your battle in the right field? I encourage you to persevere and never give up.

To those who do not know Christ- whether you realize it or not, you are in the battle, too. You have been on the wrong side all this time yet you have been given an offer to be rescued and restored. Have you felt this battle wage inside you heart? Have you felt God's call to the light? There is life in Him. Repent and believe in Him. Have faith. Call upon His name and you will be saved.

Let's pray. (prayer)