

Stand and FIGHT!

Read Ephesians 6:10-24

Throughout the book of Ephesians, we have learned God's design for the church. We understand our relationship to God and that He is the cause of our belief and has eternally loved us and made us His own. We then saw the need for a unified relationship with others in the church whose varying gifts help grow us spiritually in maturity and unity. And finally, the beauty of loving and sacrificial relationships in our families that help incorporate and reflect the grace of God through Jesus.

The passage this morning might seem out of place due to Paul referencing battle and warfare and armor but the reason why Paul explains at the end is because we need a working knowledge of the previous 5 chapters to understand how and why we are to stand and fight. This call to stand and fight is not an isolated thought for Paul. To stand and fight is crucial to your survival as a Christian. Clearly, I am not talking about fighting with each other, the Bible expressly forbids that and preaches unity and cohesiveness, but what I am talking about is found in verse 12. (READ verse 12)

But Pastor, Christians are to be loving and gentle. Yes, to each other in the church, serving with humility. But when it comes to Satan and his demons, we are to stand and fight. Neither personal resolve nor church walls insulate us from Satan's attacks. It doesn't matter how mature or immature you are in your Christian walk, you will battle Satan and his demons daily. And we are all a slave to something, we are either a slave to Christ or a slave to Satan. Our slavery becomes apparent when we continuously pray for release from compulsive, addictive and repeated sin. But how do we become victorious in spiritual warfare and over our compulsions and sin? The hope is found in understanding the nature of our enabling, our Adversary, our weaponry and Christ's empowering love.

**OUR ENABLING:** verse 10

**Godly patterns** – There are not shortcuts for preparing for spiritual battle. We must put ourselves under sound biblical teaching, seek prayerful association and accountability to others in the church, and serve one another in healthy relationships with humility. These things help to nourish Christlikeness within us. Immersing yourself in the correct beliefs and correct conduct as Paul has taught us in Ephesians helps us both individually and as a church grow in godliness. But these two things are not enough. If all we are depending on to help us overcome Satan are our own correct beliefs and conduct, then we are in grave danger.

**Godly power** – Ultimately God's power alone equips us to grow spiritually. It is God who motivates our hearts and enables our wills to follow the patterns for godliness found in His Word. Paul first instructs us, "Be strong in the Lord". This is Paul's common phrase referring to our relationship with God, which is only made possible through our union with Christ. We are in him: covered by his blood, members of his household, sons and daughters, in union with him. Because we are in him we have access to a power that is far greater than we are. Just because you may have fallen or failed in your spiritual battle in the past, we gain strength from knowing that we are "in the Lord". In God's embrace, we regain our strength and zeal and passion and

reenter the fight. Our relationship to God is the first place where power comes from. The second place, and you can't have one without the other is, God's mighty power itself. "Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power". \*God not only provides us support but also the actual strength that we need for spiritual battle.\* Paul's specific wording indicates that God does not want us to supplement our strength with his, but so to invigorate the new life, the new self, that God has regenerated in us that he *IS* our strength. This mighty power that we are to be strong in is the resurrection power, the divine power that makes dead things live again. All throughout Ephesians, this is the power that Paul talks about. 10 times in the book of Ephesians does Paul reference something that is dead and then because of God and God alone, it is now alive. Because of the power of God's might, we have a new nature. Our old nature couldn't resist the temptations of Satan or the lusts of the flesh, however, our new nature, in Christ, operates with the power of our risen Lord.

We enter spiritual warfare with the strength born of the confidence that no temptation will assault us that is greater than our ability to resist. And that is all because we face our temptations with the same unconquerable force that raised Christ from the dead. You will never face a temptation greater than what you can handle. God will always provide a way of escape in the face of temptation.

However, that doesn't mean that circumstances or trials will come your way that are too much for you to handle. Look at 2 Cor. 1:8-10 "<sup>8</sup>For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. <sup>9</sup>Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. <sup>10</sup>He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again." Circumstances and events will come across your life that will be too hard for you to handle. These are designed to draw us back to God, rely on Him, trust Him, have faith in Him. Jesus told us "in this world you will have trouble. But take heart. I have overcome the world." You will have circumstances thrown your way that will be too much for you to handle however you will never have a temptation come your way that you cannot overcome through God's strength.

Faith is critical in spiritual warfare. Faith that God has made us new, has made us his, and has made us able is essential before we will experience God's victory over compelling and compulsive sin. Faith is the effect, God is the cause. The reason we overcome sin in our lives is by the power of God, not by the power of man. In my own strength, I cannot overcome my sin but, with God, in the power of his might, chains are broken. The Lord hears our cries when we say "Lord, I am weak, evil, sinful and incapable to overcome my sin alone." And His reply is "be strong in Lord and in the power of His might." Your new nature as a child of God is capable to defeat sin because now God's power is in you.

**OUR ADVERSARY:** verse 11,12

**His nature** – Who are we fighting? Satan and his demons. Like any person going to war today, we must understand our enemy as best as we can. Satan is at work through dark forces that are in the world such as evil leaders, corrupt pursuits, poverty, injustice, racism, promiscuity, and materialism, just to name a few. The Evil One who parades as an angel of light blinds us to the

devastating effects of these forces upon our world. But Paul doesn't limit Satan's reach and power to only this world. He adds that we also wrestle against "spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places". Our natural, physical perspective does not normally allow us to know or see what's happening in the unseen, spiritual world, and yet the Devil is so clever and able that he operates in both the physical and spiritual realms to destroy God's kingdom and people. The Bible is warning us and alerting us that Satan's influence is powerful and persuasive enough to impact every sphere of life.

There is a reason the Bible specifically tells us the nature and power of our Adversary because we must regard Satan with the proper seriousness and see ourselves with the correct perspective. We are only inviting harm to ourselves when we see Satan as small or unthreatening. Listen to this quote from R. Kent Hughes:

"I am no genius at mathematics, but even with my limited capabilities I could be terrific at math if I worked on it for 100 years (maybe!). If I labored at it for 1,000 years and read all the learned theories, I would be a Newton or an Einstein. Or what if I had 10,000 years? Given that time, any of us could become the world's greatest philosopher or psychologist or theologian or linguist...Satan has had multiple millennia to study and master the human disciplines, and when it comes to human subversion, he is the ultimate manipulator."

You think you can outsmart Satan, never. You think you can take on Satan in a wrestling match and hold your own, never. He is exponentially smarter and stronger than all of us. You lose, on your own, every single time. And beyond his capabilities, the certainty of Satan's attack and the viciousness of his assault are guaranteed. There is a reason why we must take Satan seriously and we must recognize our limitations in confronting him. Before we enter spiritual warfare, we must understand our two great needs for spiritual warfare; which are our new faith in our new nature given by God, and we must confess our helplessness without God.

#### **OUR WEAPONRY:**

**Putting on God's Armor** – Confession of our helplessness prepares us, even compels us, to equip ourselves with the weapons of spiritual warfare. Confession of our helplessness apart from God must precede putting on our armor lest our preparations be perceived as righteous works we do. Wherever there is self-praising pride the Devil has much, much influence.

There is a two-step process to arming ourselves, first, we must put on the full armor of God. Paul identifies very clearly where the source of our strength in our armor comes from, it comes solely from God. We must put on the armor OF God. Not the armor of man. After stating how powerful Satan is, Paul again tells us to put on the full armor of God. Paul repeatedly emphasizes the divine source of our protection. We take our stand against the schemes of the devil and we stand our ground not by a more vigorous performance of good deeds or by a greater exercise of our willpower and resolve, but only through confidence in and dependence on God's provision and strength. Here's the key, we cannot expect a soldier to do well in battle if his diet and exercise had not prepared him to fight. Same with a Christian. If our spiritual disciplines and godly patterns of life that Paul has described for us are non-existent, then we are not prepared for battle. But if we exercise our spiritual selves under sound teaching, by seeking prayerful

association and accountability to others in the church, and serving one another humbly, and that's why Paul says, "and having done all", after you have done all that you can do in your strength, now put on the armor of God and have confidence in God's armor, might and strength and do not rely on your efforts alone, but on God alone. Hear me this morning, the armor of God is not powerful because you put it on. It's powerful because of who made it and who we trust in to save us. It's powerful because it's God's armor.

Briefly, here is the armor:

**Belt of Truth:** you need to study God's Word and speak God's Word with integrity

**Breastplate of Righteousness:** we need to act righteously in as many situations as possible

**Shoes of Readiness that comes from the gospel of peace:** proclaim the Gospel everywhere

**Shield of Faith:** faith that is from God and is for God extinguishes the flaming darts of Satan

**Helmet of Salvation and sword of the Spirit:** Do we supply any of the armor? No! Look at Isaiah 59:17 <sup>17</sup> "He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak." In the OT we are told that God himself has a helmet of salvation, and we are certainly not able to dress ourselves in such by our efforts. Eternal salvation is not something that our hands control. And how could we be responsible for the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God? Yes, I can quote from Scripture as Jesus did to resist Satan, but I do not provide the Spirit. The oft-cited note that the sword of the Spirit is the one offensive piece of armor Paul mentions still does not imply that the power of the Word comes from us. We wield the Word to fight Satan's influence, but the power of the Word is from the Spirit who inspired it.

In the book, "The Pilgrim's Progress" by John Bunyan, which I firmly believe every Christian should read for it is a gold mine about the Christian walk. Pilgrim has received from the Prince, armor for his travels. Now Pilgrim is walking through the Valley of Humiliation and while walking, a foul Fiend named Apollyon comes to him. They begin to converse and throughout the conversation, Apollyon continues to question Pilgrim and show Pilgrim all of his faults and sins that Pilgrim has committed in his life. Pilgrim responds to Apollyon's accusations by saying "all that is true, and much, much more. But the Prince I serve, and honor is merciful and ready to forgive." At this, Apollyon broke into a grievous rage. And tells Pilgrim that he will stop Pilgrim from making it to the Holy City. Pilgrim warns Apollyon that he is on the way of holiness and that he is on the King's highway. Apollyon says that he will kill Pilgrim and throws a flaming dart at Pilgrim but Pilgrim being armed with the armor that the Prince gave him, raises up his shield and blocks the dart. Then Christian draws his sword because he knew it was time to take a stand and fight. And when Apollyon saw him reaching for the sword, he hurled darts as thick as hail and wounded Pilgrim in his head, hand and foot. The battle went on for half a day. Then Pilgrim tripped and fell, dropping the sword and Apollyon moved in for the kill. And just when Apollyon was going to strike the killer blow, Pilgrim reached out, grabbed the sword and with a deadly thrust screamed, "Rejoice not against me, O Enemy. When I fall I shall arise!". Seeing that he mortally wounded Apollyon, Pilgrim stood up and said "No, in all these things we are more than Conquerors through him that loved us." And Apollyon fled.

We put on armor that is powerful because its God's armor and by his might, we are strong.

A more unequal match can hardly be:  
 Christian must fight an Angel; but you see  
 The valiant Man by handling Sword and Shield,  
 Does make him, tho' a Dragon, quit the field.

**Praying in God's Spirit** – each piece of the armor must be put on with prayer, drawing upon divine strength. Praying in the Spirit is an admission of a believer's ignorance and dependence on God. By humbly submitting our wills and desires to God's, the Spirit takes the limited wisdom and zeal of finite creatures and uses them with infinite wisdom and power to work all things together for good, for those who love him. We pray in the Spirit because the power comes from the Spirit and we know that only the Spirit can change a heart to desire the things of God.

**CHRIST'S EMPOWERING LOVE:**

Paul ends this book all about love. When we love God with all that we are, we gladly put on the armor and fight for his purposes. Despite the hardships, setbacks, roadblocks or circumstances God's people may face in battle, they will stay strong in the power of HIS might. Paul recruits the Ephesians to join him in his own spiritual warfare by praying for him and by doing so communicates how much he values their role in his life. Church, we all need prayer. We need to pray for one another and if I may, I am asking all of you, pray for me. I am a wretched sinner and need wisdom for doing what God has called me to do here at this church. I need God's help. But with your prayers, and with the armor of God and the strength of his might, I will stand. We all need prayer. This church needs prayer. Prayer changes everything. Can I count on all of you to pray for our church and everyone inside? I'll leave you with this:

Tender words build strong hearts.

Pray