

The Battle Belongs to the Lord

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[0 : 00] Verse 13, Paul says, 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.

Stand firm then. As the famous John Knox lay dying in Edinburgh in the year 1572, he exclaimed to one of his elders around his bed, said, I have been in meditation these last two nights upon the troubled Kirk of God, despised by the world, but precious in his sight, and have called to God for it and commended it to Christ, her head.

I have been fighting against Satan, who is ever ready to assault her. I have fought against spiritual wickedness and have prevailed.

I have been in heaven where presently I am and tasted of the heavenly joys. At the end of his life, Knox confidently can say with the apostle Paul, I have fought the good fight.

I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. This is a man who underwent serious and relentless attacks from the evil one and fought the spiritual wickedness all around him, yet on his deathbed, he knows that he prevailed.

[1 : 28] Knox knew that the battle of the Lord, the battle belongs to the Lord. He fought in the confidence and in the strength and in the power and in the might of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so for Paul here in Ephesians, the battle that we face essentially belongs to the Lord. And because it belongs to the Lord, we can trust and depend upon him and his resources that he gives us to fight the good fight.

Paul comes at the ends of this marvelous epistle and gives the church at Ephesus one last exhortation. And it's about this spiritual battle, which he's been alluding to throughout this wonderful epistle.

So if the battle belongs to the Lord, this means that we can trust and depend upon our great King, the defender of our faith, and the resources that our King has given to us in order to fight the good fight.

So as we consider the text before us tonight, let us note first the nature of the battle at hand, verses 10 and 11. Finally, Paul says, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

[2 : 47] Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the evil, against the devil's schemes. Have you ever thought about where spiritual warfare really begins?

Is this question ever come to your mind? Is it within our own hearts? Is it within our minds? Is it with the devil and his minions?

I'm not sure if you've ever seen the movie Silence of the Lambs. I'm not sure if I would recommend it. But it's a story of a prolific serial killer. And when he is caught, one of the police women asked Hannibal Lecter this very question.

She says, what could have made you like this? Now behind that question is a view of flesh and blood only, whether it's a biological or sociological or a psychological reason why Hannibal Lecter, the great serial killer, is the way he is.

Yet listen to what Hannibal Lecter says. He says, nothing has happened to me. I happened. Can you stand to say I'm evil?

[4 : 09] You see, the nature of spiritual warfare begins with Jesus, who comes to free us from the fact that we have been imprisoned by that evil and bondage of slavery that we find ourselves in.

According to the Apostle Paul, the nature of our spiritual warfare begins with Jesus, because Jesus is the one who has come and picked the fight with Satan.

Paul says that we are to be strong in the Lord and in the dominion, or in the power of his might.

Paul's alluded already to this very theme back in chapter one, where he connects this power, this dominion, this might, to the resurrection of Jesus, which essentially was the death blow to death

and the fatal blow of Satan.

We are to live in the dominion or the kingdom of God that Jesus has ushered in on this earth. And so Paul and Jesus and even the writer of Hebrews teaches us that those outside of the kingdom, those outside of his power and might, are presently prisoners and captives to that of Satan.

The biblical language for those outside God's kingdom are bondage to sin, slavery, darkness, death, children of wrath, children of the devil.

[5 : 37] Paul says we are dead in our trespasses and sins. We've been under the bondage and slavery of the evil one. At one time you were in the kingdom of darkness, Paul says.

He also says elsewhere he's delivered us from the domain or kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved son in whom we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus says to the Pharisees in John chapter eight, you are of the father, your devil, and your will is to do your father's desires, for he is a murderer and liar from the beginning.

The writer of Hebrews says, since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things that through death he might destroy the one who had power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

We have all either been in darkness and been transferred into the kingdom of light or we remain in darkness. We all at one point have been children of wrath or we have become children of the most high God.

[6 : 51] We've all been slaves to sin or we continue to be slaves to sin. We at one point were children of Satan.

So when Jesus comes to this earth to usher in his kingdom, he said, repent and believe for the kingdom of God is at hand. This kingdom is not of this world.

And so when I say that spiritual warfare begins with Jesus, I mean that Jesus has come to establish his kingdom over that of Satan.

He has come to pick a fight with Satan to establish his presence, to release those who are in captivity under his domain.

Satan caused the great rebellion that led to our fall. And so we were all his prisoners at one point, meaning we were not fighting against Satan because we were dead and our trespasses and sins.

[7 : 46] And Paul says we followed him, the prince of the air. According to the Bible, we have been slaves to Satan and our own sins and trespasses, following him as our captive and head.

And so it is Jesus who comes and picks a fight with Satan. It is Jesus who comes to begin this spiritual warfare. It's Jesus who removes us from the bondage and rule of the evil one.

It is Jesus who comes in his power and in his might to destroy the works of the devil, to destroy the power of death itself.

According to Luke 10, Jesus is the one who saw Satan fall like lightning from the sky because it was him who punched him.

Jesus starts the warfare. And so let me ask you a question. If Jesus started the fight and through the first punch, that fatal blow to Satan, do you think the evil one is simply going to curl up and not do anything in retaliation?

[8 : 59] Of course not. Folks do not underestimate the hatred that Satan has for Jesus. He is not going to give you up without a fight.

This is why Paul says in verse 10, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Paul says remember that your positional stance is in the resurrection power of Jesus, the power that destroys the works of the evil one.

Jesus says, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. The church though is on the defensive, but it was the offensive power of Jesus that started the fight in the subsequent battle that ensues.

This means that the life of a Christian is not going to be easy because Satan doesn't like to let his prisoners go free.

Have you ever met a new Christian and their response has been, you know, I always thought when I became a new Christian life would get easy, but it's actually gotten so much more difficult.

[10 : 08] It's because Satan hates Jesus and he hates anyone who follows him. And so he will do anything to make our life absolute hell.

The nature of the battle begins with Jesus, but we also learn that the nature of the battle takes place in the heavenly realm. Verse 12, 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.

The arena of the battle takes place in the heavenly places. Paul has used this phrase five times in this epistle alone. He says we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realm.

Jesus is at the right hand of God in the heavenly realm. He has raised us up with Christ in the heavenly realm.

The rulers and authorities are made known to us in the heavenly realm. This is why Knox said that he was presently in the heavenly realm, tasting the joys of heaven while on earth, because he has been raised with Christ in the heavenly realm.

[11 : 31] The nature of the battle takes place in the heavenly realm. This is where severe spiritual conflict takes place. Satan has exerted power over you because you were dead at one point in your trespasses and sins.

You were his prisoner. And so in a sense you had no sense of the battle at hand. You were dead, unable to see the battle. But now you have been raised with Christ in the heavenly places and you can see the spiritual battle firsthand.

And yet you are the object of his vigorous attack. Think about the pictures of the tsunami that you saw at first.

They were pictures from an aerial view. You saw in a sense the power of the floods overtaking these small villages.

But a few days later we began to see other pictures, other videos of the power of the tsunami because we saw it firsthand. People who saw it coming right at them.

[12 : 42] They saw it up close. It was much worse than they could possibly imagine. It was much stronger, much scarier. It had greater force, greater power than from what we saw when we only saw it from an aerial view.

And in the same way, being dead in our sins and captives of Satan, we don't see the spiritual battle. We don't notice its power. But when Christ has raised us up with him in the heavenly places, our eyes are now opened and we have a real sense of the spiritual battle.

And so Satan seeks to destroy that blessed union that we have with Christ. He seeks to make us forget it. He seeks to make us doubt it, to hate it, to question the rich blessings of Jesus.

He wants to destroy all those who belong to Christ. I would encourage you to go read Revelation chapter 12. It's a very significant passage which highlights the brutal hatred that Satan has for his church.

It is that picture of the woman escaping the serpent or the great dragon and fleeing into the wilderness. The idea is that Satan is relentlessly attacking the church, bringing war against her.

[14 : 01] He's come in great wrath because he knows his time here on earth is short. So when we are nearer to Jesus, we are united with him, but we are also nearer to the attack of Satan.

Don't misunderstand me. We are safe in the palms of Jesus. But that doesn't mean that Satan doesn't try and pry open the grip of our Savior.

We can never be snatched from our Savior's hands, but that doesn't mean that Satan will not use every method to make our life miserable and to steal us away.

The realm of the battle is in the heavenly places. So this is why our union with Christ is so vitally important because the devil seeks to destroy that union.

He does not want to give us up. He'll do anything to take us back. But we have that great promise from Romans 8 that there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God.

[15 : 00] There is nothing. No principalities, no authorities, no trial, no suffering. Not even death can separate us from the love of Jesus.

So we learn that the nature of the battle begins with Jesus and it takes place in the heavenly places, not against flesh and blood, but against the powers of this dark world.

We know the nature of the battle, but now let us turn for a little while to see the enemy in the battle. What do we learn of Satan? How does he strike?

Paul says in verse 11, put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. The enemy of the battle is the evil one.

So let us consider briefly who he is. Satan is not a mere force. He is not simply an evil presence, but the Scriptures make it clear that the devil is a person.

[15:58] He has personality. He is distinct. He is a separate entity. He is extremely powerful, greater than that of man, but he is not divine. He is a created being.

Yet he is the ancient serpent, the father of lies, the murderer from the beginning. The meaning of his name simply conveys the idea of the great adversary.

He is the accuser of the brethren, the tempter, the great deceiver, the one who seeks to delude us. He is the great mimic of God.

William Steele of Aberdeen used to say that Satan has no creative power, but only imitative power, for he is the great ape of God.

Satan always seeks to mimic the triune God. We see this in Revelation 12 and 13. I encourage you to go and read those chapters.

[16:52] From John's perspective, Satan seeks to mimic the triune God, but yet John simply calls him the unholy trinity. This is drawn out in Revelation 12 and 13, where John describes three beasts.

The great beast, the great dragon, then the beast of the sea and the beast of the land. All three beasts derive their power and substance from the great dragon. They all resemble falsely characteristics of the triune God.

Even their purposes are similar in some ways, but they are false. We see in Revelation that there is incarnational language. There is resurrection language.

There is preaching language. The Satan mimics the holy trinity. He looked like the lamb, but he sounded like the dragon. This is who he is, the great imitator, the great deceiver, the great accuser of the brethren.

This is the ancient foe that we read about this morning in Genesis chapter 3, the serpent who deceived Adam and Eve. His purpose is to wreak havoc upon the church.

[18:08] Paul says we need to stand firm against the devil's schemes. Where does he work out his purpose? Where does he work out his schemes?

It's interesting in the previous section of this epistle, Paul begins to speak about husbands and wives, children and their relationship to parents.

The workplace, marriage. Paul says in order to accomplish all these things, to have a fruitful marriage, to have a solid family, to be a sound in your workplace, you need to stand firm.

Then all of a sudden he comes and says that the spiritual battle is at hand. You need to be armed with the armor of God. Paul suggests that the activity of the evil one and the schemes that he brings are in the mundane things of life.

Verse 12 says that we struggle. This word really is more like a wrestling match. This means that we are in close combat with him.

[19:16] That he is near to the things that we love, to the things that we do every single day. This is not some sniper fight, but it's a wrestling match.

The evil one seeks to bring havoc upon your family life, seeking to drive a wedge between you and your parents or between spouses, between siblings. He seeks to divide and cause havoc.

He seeks to bring havoc upon your relationships, tempting you in the most subtle and conniving ways with sexual impropriety and pornography.

He seeks to bring havoc upon your workplace, either at a job or in university. There is the temptation to cheat and to do things unethically, simply to get a little bit ahead of the next guy.

He seeks to bring havoc upon parenting, to saving parents, to not train their children up in the ways of the Lord, telling kids that God's promises are not sure and steadfast, that they are a lie and that it's not a good thing to honor their parents and to obey them.

[20:24] The mundane things of life is the area where we get the most relaxed in, and that is the area where Satan comes in to wreak havoc.

So we need to take inventory of our hearts this evening and understand the most basic and elementary things of life is where Satan brings his evil schemes.

We have to realize that we are not fighting against flesh and blood, but the supernatural power of the evil one. There is enormity in his power, and we cannot underestimate or overlook this fact.

We tend to think we can handle these things because we forget that we're not fighting against flesh and blood. As one minister reminded me as I studied for this, are you essentially greater than

Adam, Noah, Moses, David, or Peter?

For Satan brought them down decisively. We've seen the nature of the battle, the enemy within the battle, but finally let us consider the resources for the battle.

[21 : 33] This passage is often been suggested by many that Paul got the description of God's armor from a Roman soldier who was guarding Paul. Is this an accurate picture?

Well, I'm not quite sure. However, I think there is some historical inaccuracies from what we see.

We learned that no Roman soldier would have guarded a prisoner in full Roman regalia.

So I would submit or suggest that the description of the Roman soldier is not so much a picture or that the armor of God is not so much a picture of a Roman soldier as it is the armor of God.

As we read in Isaiah chapter 59, God is pictured from the very beginning as a warrior. The first Psalm that we have of God is that of Exodus 15, which was our call to worship.

He is pictured as a warrior. The Lord is His name. The Lord of war. The Lord of host. The Lord of army. Not only is this true of God, but it's more fitting, I think, with what Paul has in mind as he used the description from Isaiah 59.

[22 : 41] We learned that God's hand is not shortened to save us. Those who were lost in their sins have done things to cause great separation between them and God.

There was no truth. There was no peace. There was no righteousness. There was no faith. And yet we learn from that passage that God sent one to save us, to bring peace, to bring truth, to bring righteousness.

Isaiah 59, 15 and 16 says, we learned that truth was lacking, that there was no one to intercede, yet God was going to provide salvation for His people.

There was going to be one who was going to come and put on the breastplate of righteousness in the helmet of salvation. So I would suggest that Paul had this prophecy in mind when he begins to write about the armor of God.

Now why is this important for us? The reason why we have confidence to wear what Paul is describing as the armor of God is because that was the armor that Jesus wore.

[23 : 45] Jesus wore this armor against the power of darkness. Jesus has forged it. He has worn it. He has tested it. And we can take the armor of God and put it on with confidence.

God's armor is perfectly suited for the spiritual warfare that we are engaged in. It's perfectly suited because Jesus wore it.

This makes all the difference in the world as we think about the armor of God, the armor that has been tested. We have an armor that has been fitted and suited for the defense against the evil one.

This is the armor that Satan couldn't penetrate, that Satan couldn't break through, that Satan couldn't destroy. This is the only armor that will never be penetrated by the devil and his schemes.

There is no other armor but the armor of God. So what is it briefly? First, the belt of truth. Jesus says in John chapter 8, if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth.

[24 : 50] And the truth will set you free. The belt of truth. We are called to put on the belt of truth. My old minister back in the United States taught me this principle.

He said the cause of truth is always more important than its consequences. We are called to put on the belt of truth, but we are not responsible for how people respond or react to the truth.

It's God's responsibility to usher in the response, but we are simply called as His people to bear witness to the truth. Hence the cause of truth is greater than its consequence.

So think about that. Are there consequences to saying that Jesus is the only way? Are there consequences of saying that homosexuality is wrong?

Are there consequences of saying that premarital sex is wrong? Are there consequences of saying that Islam is a false religion?

[25 : 59] Are there consequences when we say that abortion is wrong? We put on the belt of truth, but we don't change the nature of that truth in order to fit our cultural sensibilities or to be more relevant or to sound more tolerant.

God's word is truth. It is not relative. It is absolute, and it's reliable, and it's sufficient. We put on the belt of truth because everything hangs off the belts.

The truth connects everything else. The primary area that the enemy will seek to bring havoc is in the arena of truth. He's been a liar since the beginning.

He is the accuser of the brethren. He is the father of all lies. So Paul says, put on the belt of truth, for if we get the truth wrong, then everything else falls to the wayside.

The belt of truth. But also we need to put on the breastplate of righteousness. This is simply the righteousness of Jesus Christ, the righteousness that He has won for us, the righteousness which He imputes to us.

[27 : 13] It is the declaratory act of God accepting me through what Jesus has done. As the shorter catechism says, justification is the act of God's free grace, whereby He pardons all our sins, accepts us as righteous as in His sight, only through the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone.

Now why is it important that we put on the breastplate of righteousness? Because this is where the accuser will come and begin to bring up past sins, begin to accuse and remind you of your failures. He will seek to destroy your assurance and cause you to doubt and feel guilty and ashamed for the things that you have done. He will seek to confuse your justification, I think, in two particular ways. One through legalism. The accuser will come and say, has God really declared you righteous? Did Jesus really do enough for your righteousness?

Are you sure you don't need to do a little bit more to help Jesus out? Are you sure you don't need to keep the law a little bit better?

[28 : 35] Are you sure you kept the Sabbath last week? Legalism, he will come and cause us to doubt whether or not Jesus has actually imputed righteousness to us, but he will also come and say, hey, you were saved by grace, which means you can sin all the more.

So he will confuse our justification into licentiousness. He will come and say, Paul did say that you should sin more so that grace may abound, right?

It's just a sin. Jesus died for it. Don't worry, you can ask him later to forgive you for it. So go ahead, live like you want.

Do whatever you seek pleasure in. The breastplate of righteousness is our positional righteousness in Christ's redemptive work, but it's also our practical righteousness in which the work of the Holy Spirit is making us more and more like Jesus.

And so Paul comes and says, put on the breastplate of righteousness. Thirdly, the shoes of the gospel. Here you are ready and able to stand and to move in the service of Jesus Christ.

[29 : 55] There is a readiness that comes with this spiritual battle. What makes us ready? What makes us able to move and go about in our work for the kingdom?

It's knowing that we have peace with God. They are the shoes of peace. And we are then able to take that peace which we have with God to the ends of the earth.

If you know that you are at peace with God, there is no territory, no enemy, no people. Nothing can stop you from moving and serving Jesus. You are ready, fitted with the shoes of the gospel.

Fourthly, the shield of faith. Our shield of faith is simply the person and work of Jesus Christ. He is the object of our faith, the one who has defeated our enemy and done so with power and authority. And so when the flaming darts of the evil one come and seek to destroy us, all we do is hold up Jesus. For he is our object. He is our shield.

[30 : 56] He is our defense. He is our refuge. Fifthly, the helmet of salvation. This is the helmet Jesus has wore for our salvation.

He is the one who saves us. There is no other helmet to wear in this battle. There is no other helmet that protects us from the evil one. The helmet of salvation is our security and our assurance that we are saved from past, present and future sins.

That our salvation in Jesus is complete. And it's also the assurance of that future hope that what Jesus has begun in you, he will complete it.

The helmet of salvation that he will complete it all one day. Sixth, the sword of the spirit. And here we see the first offensive weapon we discover through Paul.

And Paul says it is the Word of God. Our hand-to-hand combat against the devil comes through the Word of God. Think about how Jesus defeated the evil one when he was tempted in the wilderness.

[32 : 06] It was through the Word of God. If Jesus depended upon the Word to fight Satan face to face, how much more should we depend upon the Word of God?

If you're under severe spiritual attack, you may need to ask yourself the question, have I consulted the Word of God? Have I pulled out the sword of the spirit for this fight?

Know the Word of God because this is your first weapon against the evil one. Seventh, prayer in the spirit.

This is the second offensive weapon. Prayer is most vital as we saw this morning in the Garden of Gethsemane. Our Lord Jesus was in constant prayer.

When we saw this morning, Peter, James and John who failed to utilize prayer, who failed to stay alert and watch with the Lord Jesus, they didn't pull out this offensive weapon to fight off the evil one.

[33 : 12] We were able to stand firm against the evil one when our knees have been worn out in prayer. Paul says we pray for everything on all occasions.

There is nothing that we do not bring before the Lord. Thus our weapons are what we call the ordinary means of grace.

The Word, sacrament and prayer. These are the offensive, powerful tools that we have to fight the spiritual fight. It's hearing the Word of God read, which is why we spend time reading passages from Scripture.

It's listening to the Word of God preached. Just reading the Word daily, it's praying the Word of God. It's seeing the Word of God visibly in the sacraments.

The ordinary means of grace become the supernatural resources we have to fight off the evil one. Thus the seven parts of the armor of God, which means they are complete and whole and perfect.

[34 : 19] This is the full and complete and perfect armor of our God. It has been tested and tried by our Lord Jesus and it is the only armor that will work in this spiritual battle.

We have seen the nature of the battle, the enemy within the battle and the resources for the battle. We have everything in this life which pertains to life and godliness.

God has not only saved us from our enemies, not only does he equip us for the fight, but he has given us everything to sustain us to the very end.

We have the confidence that our King Jesus will subdue us to himself, that he will rule and defend us to the very end, that he will restrain and conquer all his and our enemies.

The battle belongs to the Lord and we can trust our King because he gives us that kingly armor to fight against the power of darkness and Satan.

[35 : 23] So I would urge you this evening to stand firm, stand firm in the Lord and in the power of his might, putting on the indestructibility of the armor of God so that you can say with Paul, I have fought the good fight.

I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Will you stand firm in the Lord and will you put on the armor that our Lord has given?

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.