

Week 14  
Ephesians 6:10-20  
6/20/21

### Introduction

Tim. Pastor. Happy Juneteenth and Father's Day! **Ephesians 6:10-20.**

Wrapping things up today with what on the surface might seem like a hard shift. Paul is winding down his letter to the church at Ephesus that we've been walking through over the past 3 months and right before he's done he devotes a big chunk of time to talking about spiritual warfare.

But while it may seem random at first glance, it is actually a **brilliant conclusion**. Think about everything we've talked about over the past 13 weeks:

- Living into and out of our gospel identity
- Creating reconciled relationships between us and those who are different from us
- Taking the gospel to those around us on mission
- Taking ownership and using our gifts to serve those around us
- Forgiving and blessing those around us
- Sex, marriage roles, parenting, work roles

All of this stuff. And I think it can be easy, particularly in the time and space in which we live, in an effort to live into these things to miss what Paul says in verse 12 - **to wrongly think that our struggle in the Christian life is only against flesh and blood.**

#### **Here's what I mean:**

- We can think the battle to read our Bibles is only a battle with our schedule or our sleepiness.
- We can think the fight to forgive and reconcile with one another is only a fight with our egos or boundaries.
- We can think the war to love and serve our spouse, to push back against sexual immorality, to parent our kids is only a matter of our self control, or anger, or whatever it may be.

And I think part of why that is is that we are pulled, by the world around us, to live in what Philosopher Charles Taylor called **"the immanent frame."** That more and more, tracing all the way back to the enlightenment, our society, particularly in the secular west, has become more and more disenchanted. Meaning what is real is what is right in front of us and that's it. We have lost our ability to live with the reality of the spiritual.

We need a reminder as we close this book and this series → This is not all there is - **our struggle is not against flesh and blood.**

There is a spiritual reality, and worse, a spiritual **war** happening in the midst of our lives attempting to live as followers of Jesus. And our secular age pushes us to ignore that, forget about it, and just live in the world of physical and what can be tested and proven by science or lived experience.

Now there are certainly some in Christian circles who can overemphasize what the church historically has called "spiritual warfare". You know what I mean? My car broke down - spiritual warfare man. The McDonalds McFlurry machine was broken - let's exorcise some demons. Like we can definitely take it too far on that side.

But I think for us, majority under 40, urban and suburban, living in the secular west, our greater threat is to ignore through thought or action the reality that we have an enemy, that we battle against the spiritual forces of evil, that there is a war.

And so here's what I want to do as we wrap up our series on Ephesians and look at these 11 verses. I want to show us four things. They all start with "W". Don't hate me.

1. The war
2. The weapons
3. The way
4. The winner

## 1. The War

**10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 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 primary imperative in this passage is for us as Christians to stand firm. For the majority of this text, we as Christians are in a defensive posture. 5 of the 6 parts of the armor of God are defensive. So there is a very real war going on with a very real attacking enemy - the devil.

And Paul summarizes the work of the enemy of God and the enemy of the people of God, the devil - he calls it - **schemes**. Here's what we know about the devil:

- The devil is a liar and the father of lies - John 8:44
- We know the devil is a slanderer and accuser - that's what his name - "Diabolos" means.
- We know he prowls around like a lion, slowly, methodically, looking for someone to devour. - 1 Peter 5:8

He is not neutral. He is not nice. He does not play games. He is scheming and plotting to disrupt and derail the plans and purposes of God in the world.

You, as a follower of Jesus, have a very real enemy, not just in the devil, but all who work with him - Paul says the rulers, the authorities (he's talking spiritual here not like government authorities), cosmic powers of darkness, spiritual forces of evil. **The Christian life is not a game or a walk on the beach, it's a war.**

I think part of the reason that a lot of people have such a hard time with following Jesus is because they have **wrong expectations**. I think a lot of us, myself included, expect following Jesus to be more like a counseling session, or a self help book, or a solid pat on the back. It's supposed to make life easier, more rewarding, better, more fulfilling.

Now, that's not all wrong—hopefully as you follow Jesus you are becoming more and more spiritually and emotionally healthy. Hopefully it does help you grow personally. Hopefully it does give you encouragement and faith to last through difficult seasons. We do believe the gospel is good news not just for death but also for life.

But it is also in a war. And if you begin to follow Jesus without expecting that, it will totally catch you off guard. It'll knock your feet right out from under you.

I love the way Richard Lovelace puts it in his fantastic book *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*. He says,

**"Although part of the church pays lip service to the reality of sin and worldliness and even demonic agents, it seems to me that much of the church's warfare today is fought by blindfolded soldiers who cannot see the forces ranged against them, who are buffeted by invisible opponents and respond by striking one another."**

**So part of the goal here is just to help wake us up to the reality of spiritual warfare in our lives!**

- That your fight against depression or anxiety is not JUST chemical or physical, it's also spiritual.
- That your fight against gossip, bitterness, envy, jealousy, anger is not just a personality problem or a bad habit, it's also spiritual.
- That your fight against addiction is not just rewiring your brain and dependencies, it's also spiritual.

**“Opening Up”.** One of the battles of my life with Jesus has been the constant pressure to hide or to stuff what it is that God invites and commands me to confess to others. I want to give in to image management, faking, pretending - whatever it may be. And I see this in a number of different relationships but particularly in my relationship with Lindsay. For the majority of our relationship it has been hard for me to open up. To tell her how I'm doing. To confess my wrong and sin to her - all of that.

When I'm in these moments, and my wife is trying to draw out my heart, it's like I can feel this internal pull within me to want to pull back, escape, to disengage. Now, I could say - “well that's just my personality. That's my enneagram. That's my wiring.” I could chalk it up to ‘you know Olson men aren't great at sharing our feelings that's just how we are.’ Or I can acknowledge → **I'm in a war. There is a real enemy who is scheming with the spiritual forces of evil for my demise. He wants me to close off to others. He wants me to isolate myself in pride and self-protection. He wants me to act like I'm good and have it all together.**

And I must pray against that. Pray for the Spirit's help. I must stand firm.

You have a real enemy. With real forces working against you. I'm not trying to sound fanatical, this is the Word of God. You have an enemy, and Paul says → **Stand firm. Stand firm.**

Resist. Don't get caught sleeping. Don't get caught chillin. Stand. Not flat footed and easily pushed over. Knees bent, eyes up, balance - ready to stand firm.

Then he gives us the tools by which we stand.

## **2. The Weapons**

**13 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. 14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. 16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; 17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,**

Notice in vs 13 he says “therefore”. Because our enemies are superhuman spiritual forces. Because they are not of this world, we cannot rely on human resources or our own strength to battle them. We need the **armor of God.**

The admonition in this passage is to stand firm with God's strength and God's armor. You don't stand firm in the war separated from God. **It's part of your union with Christ.**

**Let me show you what I mean:** All of these parts of the armor of God are actually said to be true about Jesus throughout the book of Isaiah. (OT book w/ lots of prophecies) Truth, righteousness, peace, faith - **all of these are shown as part of the nature of Christ.** So that means the armor of God we are called to take up and put on is wrapped up in our relationship to Christ.

**“How do I put these things on?”** How do I utilize these weapons and armors of war?” Through our relationship with Christ. Through our unity with Him. Being with Jesus. Walking with Him. Being His disciple/follower.

And then Paul goes into specifics about these various aspects of armor. Let’s look at these briefly together:

### **Belt of Truth**

The devil is a liar (Jn 8). And one of the battles that you must fight and one of I would say the biggest areas in which you must stand firm in your walk with Christ is in the area of truth.

You live in a world of competing narratives. All of us in the world live inside of a story, and the challenge of the Christian is to both live in and proclaim the one true story - the story of God.

And yet the devil is consistently pushing you to live into a different story. A story where you’re the main character, you’re the hero, where the plot revolves around you, your dreams, your feelings, your desires. The spiritual forces of evil all around you in our culture are trying to get you to believe a different story. That the hope of the world is in something or someone other than Jesus - more money, romance, education, family - whatever it may be.

You must stand firm in truth. That the story is about God. His glory, His honor, His worship and praise. That our lives revolve around Him and what He has done for us through Jesus.

How do we do this?? Getting into God’s Word. Getting with Jesus. Training yourself and reminding yourself of the true narrative of God over and over and over again. **If you don’t know the Scriptures, you’ll be a slave to whatever sounds right or whatever you are wanting in the moment.**

We must put on the belt of truth.

### **Breastplate of Righteousness**

This part of the armor means two things.

**First, it’s talking about your personal righteousness or holiness.**

If the gospel is true, if you’ve embraced this new identity we keep seeing over and over in the book of Ephesians - child of God, chosen, adopted, all of that - then God’s righteousness should become more and more a part of your life, a part of your striving. You are called to put on a righteous that is not your own. One that is given to you through the work of Jesus.

We talked about this a few weeks ago in the podcast, but most of y’all don’t listen to that (which is FINE) so I wanted to bring it into here. We somehow have started thinking that Christian maturity means we get to do more stuff. Like we become the “strong, mature believer” who can be more lax with what we watch, what we say, how we joke, what we do. That shouldn’t be the case. Maturity in Christ, longevity as a disciple to Jesus should necessitate more and more righteousness, self-control, defeat of sin.

This is the breastplate. It guards your vital organs. Protects your heart. Don’t let the devil have access to your heart - fight to stand firm in righteousness. To say no to sin and yes to God.

**Second, righteousness also means you start to look at the world how God looks at the world.**

**Isaiah 59:15-17** talks about a time when the world was full of injustice. And it reads: **“15 The Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. 16 He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one**

**to intercede; then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him. 17 He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head..."**

When you put on the breastplate of righteousness you begin to feel what God feels at injustices all around you. You see sex trade, poverty, oppression, racial injustice, lost people here in our city or across the globe - "I gotta step in."

To summarize the breastplate of righteousness protects your heart from apathy towards sin - your own sin and the sin of the world around you.

### **Boots of the Gospel of Peace**

Again, two things Paul probably has in mind here:

**First, one of the parts of the armor of God is a readiness to take the gospel where it needs to and should go.**

Understanding - God offers us true eternal peace through the gospel of Jesus Christ, and then you look out over the world and think - these people need to know the peace that is offered through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Paul says these boots give us a readiness. A readiness to take the gospel of peace to the world.

- You think about the almost one billion muslims across our world who read the Hadith, a collection of sayings from their prophet Mohammed. Where it reads that on the last day of judgement they have to carry the burden of their sins across a tightrope dangling over hell. The more sins they have the more likely they are to fall in and face eternal judgment. And you think about Jesus - *who bore our sins on the cross*, suffered and died alone.
- You think about the millions of Buddhists who think that they keep getting reincarnated over and over again, spending each new life paying for the sins of their previous life and you think about Jesus - *who paid the penalty for our sins one time through His sacrificial death*.
- You think about the fact that dechurched (people who have left the church) will be a greater percentage of the CLT population than churched will be in 5 years and you think about Christ, *who loves His bride and wants His people to dwell in the family of God in unity*.

I've got the gospel, I'm ready to go.

**Second, Paul also is addressing the peace we have with one another in Christ.**

That because of the gospel, we as Christians should be the first to forgive, to reconcile, to live in peace with one another. Remember Ephesians 4:27? What did Paul say gives the devil a foothold in our lives? **Anger**. Satan loves capitalizing on interpersonal conflict.

You take the gospel of peace to the world who doesn't know Jesus and to the church.

One of our 7 membership commitments, we think is a big enough deal to God that we make it one of our 7 core commitments - is that we will seek unity. If satan is going to take down our little church, it'll be through unresolved conflict, bitterness, lack of reconciliation, etc.

TRUTH. RIGHTEOUSNESS. PEACE.

### **Shield of Faith**

I love the imagery here so let's read this verse again - **16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;**

In all circumstances, no matter what flaming arrows are getting shot at you, no matter what is happening all around you - faith to say "I know who God is and I know He can be trusted."

Because the enemy wants nothing more than to shift your footing. "Can you really trust God here? (Gen 3) Is He really going to show up? You're going through THIS? Are you sure He loves you and knows what's best for you?"

Part of taking up the shield of faith is to look back and remember the faithfulness of God up until this point in your life. Remember what He has done - in your personal life, in the Scriptures, in the lives of those around you. Keep God's kindness and providence before you.

### **Helmet of Salvation**

The Helmet of salvation. To fight the war you must go back to your salvation. You see, our salvation has a past, present, and a future reality. **We have been saved from the penalty of sin, we are being saved from the power of sin, we will ultimately be saved from the presence of sin.**

One thing satan loves to do is convince you that your past, present, and future are all in question.

- **Past** - Do you actually have forgiveness through faith in Christ? Was Jesus' sacrifice truly enough? Did you have enough faith? Did you really mean it?
- **Present** - If you're really a Christian, why do you keep messing up like that? You think you're just faking it? You're never going to have victory of this, are you?
- **Future** - Eternity with Jesus actually a real thing or just some fairytale you believe to make yourself feel better?

God wants you to be rooted in your identity in Christ. He has started it, he is perfecting it, He will complete it.

TRUTH. RIGHTEOUSNESS. PEACE. FAITH. SALVATION.

### **Sword of the Spirit**

This is the only offensive weapon in the armor. The only one in which we stop playing defense and starting going after darkness. How? Through the Word of God.

That's how we go on the attack as the people of God - filling our lives and our church with the Scriptures. Speaking the Bible to one another, preaching and reading the Bible together, meditating on and memorizing God's Word on your own time.

We ground ourselves in the Word of God - the Sword of the Spirit as a community to push back against darkness in our own lives and in the world around us.

**Those are our weapons.** We are in a war. We have the armor of God.

So then the question becomes - how do we fight? What is the way?

### **3. The Way**

**18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, 19 and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.**

This is Paul's means by which we "put on the whole armor of God" → Prayer. The way we access God's strength and His armor is through humble, dependent petitioning to Him. Paul roots all of the above in prayer.

How do we fight against the devil? PRAYER. Notice Paul writes → At all times, with all supplication, with all perseverance, for all the saints. That all of our lives would be one of constant communication - talking to and hearing from the Father.

**But our ability to be fervent in prayer, our desire to pray is so closely connected to our ability to grasp point 1 - that we are in fact in a war.** If life is a cakewalk and we're just chillin, what is the need for prayer? But if life is war - and we have forever and always access to a good and all-powerful heavenly father - that will drive us to prayer.

Pastor John Piper says it like this → **"We cannot know what prayer is for until we know that life is war. Life is war. That's not all it is. But it is certainly that. Our weakness in prayer is owing largely to our neglect of this truth. Prayer is primarily a wartime walkie-talkie for the mission of the church as it advances against the powers of darkness and unbelief. It is not surprising that prayer malfunctions when we try to make it a domestic intercom to call upstairs for more comforts in the den. God has given us prayer as a wartime walkie-talking so that we can call headquarters for everything we need as the kingdom of Christ advances in the world."**

You want to fight? You want to stand firm? You want to have a life marked by:

- Truth > lies
- Righteousness > apathy
- Peace > anxiety
- Faith > doubt
- Salvation > insecurity
- The Word of God > false teaching

### **Learn to pray.**

There is a war, God has given us weapons, He's given us the way - access to Him through the blood of Jesus in prayer. But let me end on some beautiful and rich news for us as we close.

There is a war, but we also know there is a winner.

#### **4. The Winner**

**Home Alone 2.** How many of you have seen Home Alone 2? Everyone's favorite movie about getting lost in New York. If you don't know the story it's basically the same as Home Alone 1. There's two bad guys trying to take down little 8 year old Macaulay Culkin and he booby traps an entire house and they get beat up a ton by all these gimmicks. But there's a part at the very end where he gets caught by these two guys. And one of them, Marv, grabs him, looks him in the eyes and delivers this dynamite of a line: **You may have won the battle, little dude, but you lost the war.** (Now forget about the rest of the movie and who actually wins. Not the point. The point is the quote ok?)

**You may have won the battle, little dude, but you lost the war.**

Citizens Church - you may lose some battles. You may have times where the schemes of the devil get you. Where you give in to temptation, to defeat. In all your best efforts to stand by the power of the Spirit you may fall.

And in those moments you can hold your head high in the gospel and declare in Christ - **You may have won the battle, little dude, but you lost the war.**

The devil has lost the war. The enemy has been defeated. The principalities and powers of evil that war against the people of God have been defeated!

HOW? Through the life, death, and resurrection of our savior Jesus Christ. Christ has trampled over death. Christ has defeated satan. Christ rules and reigns! Christ is the victor!

- Genesis 3 tells us He will crush the head of the serpent.
- Hebrews 10 tells us that His enemies will be made a footstool for His feet.
- Colossians 2 says that Jesus disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame.

**HOW? Through the cross! Through His shed blood! Through His broken body! Through the empty tomb!**

You, Christian, do not have to cower in fear. You do not have to live defeated. You do not have to give in. You can stand by the grace and power of the true King, the true Victor, the true Winner of the war → Jesus Christ the Son of God!

And His victory is our victory through faith in Christ. When you put your faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus His victory over satan, sin, and death is now your victory.

**Communion.**

**Pray.**