

Ephesians 6-10-13
Strength for the battle!

Scripture reading...

Ephesians 6:10–13 (ESV) — **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. **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.

Prayer for illumination:

Sermon introduction:

A few decades ago, Christian author Os Guinness, went to England to give a lecture series at Essex University. While being introduced to the audience, he noticed a young lady in the front row with a look of extreme anguish on her face.

Remembering that he had heard that many non-Christians planned on disrupting the lecture series he said a quick prayer, asking God to restrain the evil one. He then proceeded with his lecture.

After the lecture the young lady from the front row approached him and angrily said, “How did you do that?”

“How did I do what?” asked Guinness

“What sort of spell did you cast on me to keep me in my seat?” the woman asked.

“You knew that I had been sent here by the witches’ coven to protest your talk, didn’t you? And you put some kind of spell on me to keep me silent!”

“The only ‘spell’ I used,” Guinness gently replied, “was to pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

A few weeks later, when Guinness was back in America, a Christian friend asked how the Essex lectures had gone. “The reason I ask,” she explained, “is that at the same time you were about to begin your lecture in England, I was suddenly overcome by an impression of your standing on a platform and a woman seated in the audience in front of you. I had a sense that a great battle was going on between you—a spiritual battle between the power of God and the power of Satan. And I immediately went to my knees and prayed for you and for the woman in the audience.” (Stedman, Ephesians, 337-338)

This true story is a vivid reminder that spiritual warfare is real. It rages all around us.

When it comes to spiritual warfare, most Christians fall into one of two camps. Some are totally naive about spiritual warfare, while others are obsessed with spiritual warfare, convinced that Satan is behind every bush and tree.

How should we think about spiritual warfare? This brings us to Ephesians 6:10-20. In these verses Paul reminds us that Satan is very real and dead set on destroying our lives.

This morning we will focus on the first three verses (6:10-13). In these verses, Paul tells us how to gain victory in our cosmic battle with Satan. To gain victory, we must know two things.

We must know our enemy!

We must know our friend!

First, we must know our enemy!

What do we need to know about our enemy?

We must know our enemy's identity!

Ephesians 6:11 (ESV) — 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

Who is the devil?

The word devil means accuser. He is always accusing the saints of sin—Rev. 12:9-10.

The name Satan means adversary, since he is the adversary of God's people.

He is also called Apollyon which means destroyer (Rev. 9:11), the tempter (Matt. 4:3), the evil one (1 John 5:18-19), and the prince or God of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:4; cf. Eph. 2:2; 1 John 5:19; Rev. 12:9).

His destructive ferocity comes out in the description of him as a roaring, devouring lion (1 Pet. 5:8) and as a dragon (Rev. 12:9).

Jesus said that Satan was always a murderer and is the father of lies.

Summarizing the Bible's teaching on Satan, J. I. Packer writes,

"The picture (of Satan) is one of unimaginable meanness, malice, fury, and cruelty directed against God, against God's truth, and against those to whom God has extended his saving love." (Packer, *Concise Theology*, 69-70)

Where did the devil come from? At one point, he was a powerful angel, created by God to serve God's purposes. But at some point, between Genesis 2 and Genesis 3 Satan decided to rebel against God.

We must know our enemy's identity! In addition, ...

We must know our enemy's strategy!

Ephesians 6:11 (ESV) — 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

The Greek word for schemes includes the idea of cleverness, crafty methods, cunning, and deception. Satan has been scheming or inventing ways to destroy the human race for thousands of years. This means that he has lots and lots of practice.

Illustration:

"I am no genius at mathematics, but even with my limited capabilities I could be terrific at math if I worked at it for 100 years (maybe!). If I labored hard at it for a 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 (we could curse or preach in a thousand languages). Satan has had multiple millennia to study and master the human disciplines, and when it comes to human subversion, he is the ultimate manipulator." (Hughes)

Satan is a superb philosopher and theologian.

He understands the complexities of the human heart.
And he is a master deceiver.

Application:

Fundamentalism tries to keep Satan at bay by demonizing alcohol, tobacco, dancing, card playing, and theatre going... but Satan is often much craftier than this.

One author writes,

“What would things look like if Satan took control of a city? Over half a century ago, Presbyterian minister Donald Grey Barnhouse offered his own scenario in his weekly sermon that was also broadcast nationwide on CBS radio. Barnhouse speculated that if Satan took over Philadelphia (the city where Barnhouse pastored), all of the bars would be closed, pornography banished, and pristine streets would be filled with tidy pedestrians who smiled at each other. There would be no swearing. The children would say "Yes, sir" and "No, ma'am," and the churches would be full every Sunday...where Christ was not preached.”

For sure, Satan often ruins lives with drugs, sex, and illicit pleasures. But he takes down way more people with far subtler means...

He seduces with religion...

He seduces us with pride (leading to decimated churches, marriages, and businesses)

He seduces us with greed and rampant materialism (American's now spend more on gambling than food—Chapell, 336)

He seduces with anger and bitterness

He seduces with sensuality

He seduces us with good things (too much of a good thing becomes an idol, work a little harder, family turns into an idol, working out becomes an idol, etc...)

He masquerades as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14-15)

He tempts us to doubt God's goodness

He tempts us to doubt God's Word...

He tempts us to think that sin will satisfy...

He tempts us to think that he does not exist...

Satan is a subtle, crafty, deceptive, and experienced destroyer of lives!!! If he can't destroy us with the occult, porn, or witchcraft, he will destroy with pride, greed, or unbelief.

Unfortunately, Satan is not alone...

We must know our enemy's identity!

We must know our enemy's strategy!

We must know our enemy's soldiers!

Ephesians 6:12 (ESV) — 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 word for struggle is the word that was often used for hand-to-hand combat. Our battle against Satan is very up close and very personal.

It is also important to understand that we don't wrestle primarily against flesh and blood (other humans) but against supernatural darkness.

We specifically wrestle against four groups. Verse 12 describes-

The rulers

The authorities

The cosmic powers over this present darkness

The spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (i.e., the spiritual realm).

Way too much ink has been spilled trying to explain each category. Many explanations are heavy on speculation and light on biblical evidence. With that said, most scholars agree that these four designations describe a vast hierarchy of demons in Satan's evil empire, with a disciplined chain of command. Beyond that we don't know much.

Paul's primary purpose in verse 12 is to remind his readers that the forces of darkness are highly organized and intent on doing them (and us) great harm.

We see a glimpse of this in Acts 17.

Acts 19:13–16 (ESV) — **13** Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims." **14** Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. **15** But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" **16** And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

Sometimes, God pulls back the curtain and allows us to see what is really going on in the world of the demonic.

That fateful night at king's community...

Praying for member of GCF in the central conference room....

Praying for someone recently who was having horrible nightmares... they had recently come to faith in Jesus Christ, they had been involved in a false religion for years...

According to Ephesians 6:11-12, we must know our enemy's identity, strategy, and soldiers...

Application:

Here is the point. The devil must be taken seriously.

We are no match for him. He is very powerful, he has thousands of years of practice, and he has a highly trained, well-organized, and vicious army working for him.

Trying to defeat the devil on our own is like a five-year-old child trying to defeat Seal Team six (DEVGRU) or Delta Force on his own. These two groups are the two most elite groups of soldiers in the world. The child has nothing, while Seal Team six has years of training, sophisticated weaponry, a massive support system, year of experience, and over one thousand soldiers involved.

Martin Luther understood the odds well when he wrote...

For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe;

His craft and power are great,
And, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

We must take the devil very seriously.

At the same time, Satan is a finite created being.

The Bible does not present some sort of dualism—where there are two Gods, fighting it out. God created Satan and rules over every aspect of Satan’s existence. He has the power to disintegrate Satan with one single word.

Satan is not all knowing, all powerful, or every present. And, he is a defeated rebel, whose doom is sure.

In addition, we must remember that the devil is the enemy, not people made in God’s image.

According to verse 12, “we wrestle not against flesh and blood...”

Satan is behind all the evil in the world.

The devil stands behind abortion, drug addiction, the porn industry, racism, the sexual revolution, poverty, passive fathers, murder, and sexual abuse.

The devil stands behind every evil governments, godless universities, and evil businesses.

The devil stands behind every false religion and worldly philosophy.

This means that we must have great compassion on our enemies, that is those made in God’s image, who are under the sway of Satan and his minions.

Summary-

“What a terrible foe we face. He is immensely powerful, imitating God’s power and presence with his demonic hosts. He is evil beyond our comprehension and without conscience or principle. He is diabolically cunning. And he is after us!” (Kent Hughes)

Is there any hope for us???? yes, this brings us to the second point....

First, we must know our enemy!

Second, we must know our friend!

If you are a Christian Jesus is your friend and ally! And oh, what a friend and ally we have in Jesus!!! Because he is our friend, he is able and willing to help us overcome our enemy.

What kind of friend is he specifically?

He is a powerful friend (10a)

Ephesians 6:10 (ESV) — 10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

The word “Finally,” means, in light of all the things that Paul has written so far in this letter, we must be strong in the Lord.

The command to be strong in the Lord is a present passive imperative, which means we must *continually* find our strength in the Lord, implying that we are always powerless on our own.

We do not find strength to defeat the devil in ourselves, our will power, our courage, or our grit. This power comes from the Lord. But what kind of power is it?

Paul is talking about resurrection power. How do we know? Paul uses the same phrase “**in the strength of his might**” in **Ephesians 1:19** to describe the power that raised Christ from the dead.

Yes, Satan is powerful, but we have access to resurrection power. Last time I checked; Satan has not raised anyone from the dead.

Application:

Jesus Christ is a powerful friend. He offers you his resurrection power to battle Satan.

When will you need Christ’s resurrection power this week?

When Satan tempts you to despair of life itself....

When Satan tempts you to doubt God’s goodness...

When Satan tempts you to doubt God’s word...

When Satan tempts you to ignore God’s word...

When Satan tempts you with anger, lust, greed, jealousy, etc...

Jesus offers his friends (all Christians) resurrection power to battle Satan.

He is a powerful friend! But it gets better....

He is a victorious friend!

Ephesians 6:10 (ESV) — 10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

I want to camp out a little longer on the phrase, “the strength of his might.” Jesus Christ is mighty in power. This mighty power not only raised Christ from the dead, but it also enabled Jesus Christ to defeat Satan on the cross, making him a victorious friend.

We read about the victory of Christ over Satan in Col. 2:15

Colossians 2:15 (ESV) — 15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. (See also Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8)

As a result of Christ’s victory over Satan on the cross, some amazing things happened. Like what? Ephesians tells us-

Once we were dead, now we are alive (2:1, 5)

Once we were objects of wrath, now we are objects of God’s fatherly affection (1:5, 2:3).

Once we were separated from God, now we have been brought near (2:12-13).

Once we were foreigners, now we are fellow citizens (2:19).

Once we were aliens, we are now members of God’s house (2:19)

Once we were ruled by the old self, now we are ruled by the new self (4:22,24)
Once we were darkness, now we are light (5:8)
Once we were under Satan's domain, now we are seated in the heavenly realms (2:2,6)

All of this was made possible when Christ defeated Satan on the cross.

Martin Luther reminds us-

The Prince of Darkness grim,
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For lo, his doom is sure;
One little word shall fell him.

That one little word is the word of the gospel.

Application:

One of the main ways that Satan attacks us is condemnation...

He will whisper in your ear...

God does not love you...
You have committed that sin so many times...
You are a miserable failure.... You might as well quit...
You are so guilty....

What will you say? You must remind Satan of Christ's mighty victory on your behalf.

Why is Satan still alive and active??? I thought he was defeated. He is a wounded dragon! When Christ returns again, he will vanquish Satan forever (Rom. 16:20; Rev. 20:7-14).

He is a powerful friend!
He is a victorious friend!

He is an armed friend!

Ephesians 6:13 (ESV) — 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.

"Therefore...." In light of your fierce foe... put on the whole armor of God. That you may be able to stand firm in the evil day (evil day is probably a reference to this present evil age, which will end when Christ returns).

The end of verse 13 tells us to "Stand Firm." We are told to stand firm three times (11, 13, 14). This is a picture of a soldier standing firm in battle (Phil. 1:27, 28).

Satan will throw the kitchen sink at you, especially if you are making progress in Godliness. When this happens, we must put on the full armor of God.

I will spend all of next week on the armor of God. With that said, permit me to make one brief comment...

The armor of God is God's armor. In other words, this is the armor that God supplies. Which means that once again, we are commanded to rely on God.

Application:

More on the specifics of the armor next week. For now, we must remember that God has given us everything we need to stand firm against the evil one.

Conclusion:

If you look very carefully, supposedly you can see a large ink stain on the wall of Martin Luther's study in Germany. How did the wall get stained with ink? Over 500 years ago, while Martin Luther was quietly translating the Greek NT into German, in order to bring the gospel to the masses, Satan came into his study to torment him. Why? Because Satan hates the Bible. Luther asked Satan to leave him alone. Satan refused. In a fit of rage, Luther threw his inkwell at Satan and the ink stained the concrete wall.

Is this story true? Who knows!!! But we know for sure that Satan hated what Luther was doing. When Satan came to tempt Luther to despair, Luther threw an inkwell at him.

Is this the best way to fight Satan? Probably not.

How should we fight the forces of darkness?

We must know our enemy.

We must know our friend.

If you are a Christian, you have a powerful, victorious, and armed friend. His name is Jesus! He is eager to help you fight your battles this week. Let's pray...