

## THE CHURCH AT WAR – KNOW YOUR ENEMY

**Ephesians 6:10-20**

**October 16, 2022**

Today we are starting Paul's concluding section of his letter to the **Ephesians** – and this last section (Ephesians 6:10-20) deals with the important topic of Spiritual Warfare. C. S. Lewis said this about spiritual warfare, *“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.”* Our danger here in North America is that we pay far too little attention to and often ignore our enemy and the enemy of God. The culture of the modern church tends to avoid this topic and the devil couldn't be happier as quoted by Charles Baudelaire, *“The single greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he doesn't exist.”* Our enemy loves working in the shadows, out of sight, but Jesus believed in the demonic realm, exposing them everywhere He went and so should we!

As Paul nears the end of his letter, he wants to teach the Ephesians believers one last important lesson – every believer needs to be aware of the devil's schemes, strategies, and deceptions so that we would not be caught off-guard and come to realize that God has given us everything we need to protect ourselves if we will only use them. Even though we have no power on our own to defeat the devil, the Good News is that Jesus has already conquered the devil, and that's why Jesus came into the world according to **1 John 3:8**, *“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.”* Jesus came because our human strength alone won't suffice to fight the devil, we need the spiritual power that comes from being in a close and intimate relationship with the Lord to give us the strength to fight the battle before us. As well, we need to be dressed in the full armour of God to stand against the devil's lies, schemes, and attacks!

I will be spending four weeks on these final eleven verses, because the church is at war, and it's essential for us as believers to know our enemy, how to be prepared to battle our enemy, how to fight our enemy, and how to win the battle. A portion of this material will be from Pastor Chip Ingram's book, *“The Invisible War – What every believer needs to know about Satan, Demons, and Spiritual Warfare.”* This first message will be based on **Ephesians 6:10-12**, and where we need to begin is in *“KNOWING YOUR ENEMY,”* because whether we like it or not, all Christians are engaged in a spiritual battle between two opposing kingdoms. And those least

aware are often the first casualties, so we need to know our enemy and how he operates, and thankfully Paul provides believers with a self-defence course in Spiritual Warfare here in Ephesians 6, and the very first thing we need to realize is that we fight *FROM* victory, not *FOR* victory – we are not defeated Christians because at this very moment Christ is enthroned at the right hand of God in the heavenly realms, fighting our battles.

Mentioning that we are in a war in the church can seem out of place for many Christians; however, the Bible, especially the New Testament is filled with military language. For example:

- **1 Timothy 6:12**, *“Fight the good fight of the faith.”*
- **2 Timothy 2:3-4**, *“Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.”*
- **Romans 8:35-37**, *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”*
- **2 Corinthians 10:3-5**, *“For though we live in this world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”*

While watching old footages of WWII naval battles – when a naval ship encounters the enemy we hear the words over the loud speakers, *“Battle Stations! Man your Battle Stations!”* I wonder today in a spiritual sense, if I was to cry out this morning, *“Battle Stations! Man your Battle Stations!”* How many of you would know what to do, or even know who the enemy is? Because the church is at war, Paul wants his readers to know that there is an invisible battle going on around us at all times. It’s happening right now, right here in this room; we just can’t see it with our eyes, and the problem for many believers is that they are totally unaware that they are in a spiritual battle. And that’s one of the enemy’s

tactics, he wants to stay hidden, he wants to stay out of sight; he wants to stay under the radar; however, the Bible is very clear that we have a real enemy that prowls around looking for victims to destroy, as Peter writes: ***“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour”*** (1 Peter 5:8).

Then there are those who believe the devil exists – but they try not to think about Satan and his demonic army because of fear. Fear will always paralyze you if you don't realize who you are IN CHRIST and that the ultimate victory has already been won by Christ on the cross and that has been the main point of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. There is no doubt within the kingdom of God how the battle will turn out, but even though Satan and his demons are a defeated foe, they are still a serious threat to us and are getting more-and-more dangerous, especially to unsuspecting believers, because their time on this earth is getting shorter-and-shorter with each passing day. So, even though the victory is won, we are to never let down our guard, and especially never head out our door without first putting on our armour, which we will talk about over the next few weeks. The crucial fact we need to know is this: ***“Believers living in Christ's power are invincible,”*** when believers know the tactics of the enemy and are trained, equipped, and dressed for battle they will not fear the enemy, but stand firm when the battle rages around us!

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians – we have already learned a great deal about our identity, who we are IN CHRIST and the power that we have been given to live as victorious Christians. We've learned that we've been rescued from sin and death to life, we have switched sides and are now adopted as a child of God to live a supernatural life of holiness, being a light in a fallen world, exposing the works of the devil. Although we have become a new creation, we still fight a war on two fronts: 1) internally, our flesh continues to wage war against the indwelling Holy Spirit, and 2) externally, we continue to battle against a supernatural, angelic being who fell from heaven, taking with him a third of the angels, whose goal is to destroy us spiritually, emotionally, relationally, and physically. So, as we fight these daily battles on these two fronts, we require all the help we can get, and our help comes from Jesus our Lord. And we no longer fear these battles because the entire letter of Ephesians promises that the victory has been accomplished. That's why, in the first five chapters of this letter, Paul has been telling us about the

victory we already have IN CHRIST before giving us these final instructions on spiritual warfare!

**Ephesians 6:10-20** is the central teaching in the entire New Testament on spiritual warfare, and it doesn't begin with two suggestions, but two divine commands: **Verse 10**, "*Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power,*" and **verse 11**, "*Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.*" The first command tells us that we can't win this unavoidable war before us in our own strength, the only way to win this war is to be strong in the Lord, which Paul spent most of Ephesians assuring us is already ours, but we need to reach out and take it. This isn't optional, but a command that applies to every believer at all times and in all places, because every believer, whether they like it or not, are in a war with the dark forces around them when they sign up to be a follower of Christ – it's unavoidable. To make this verse more easily understood, here's what Paul is saying: "*Allow yourselves to be continually strengthened by the power already available to you in your new position and relationship as a follower of Christ.*" And what makes this even more incredible, is that this mighty power available to us, is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. We are people of the resurrection!

The second command found in **verse 11** is a very specific command – telling us to be strong in the Lord, we need to be dressed and ready for battle to walk in His power: "*Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.*" To stand firm (upright and unmoveable) against the devil's schemes, we need to be dressed in the full armour of God, which Paul will explain later in **verses 14-17**, which be a daily way of life, because we are constantly bombarded by the devil's schemes, as he aims at destroying our witness and render us ineffective in bringing about God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Satan uses his schemes and well organized assaults against every Christian to neutralize them, so they won't use their God given authority and power against Him. The devil's schemes and assaults come to us in numerous ways: temptations to sin; blinding us to God's truths by deceiving us with lies and half-truths to draw us away from God (Eve fell in this way in the Garden of Eden); luring us into pursuing good things in the wrong way, at the wrong time, or with the wrong person; causing us to feel unworthy or inadequate; filling us with fear, worry and anxiety; causing us to believe there is no judgment or hell, giving us a false sense

of security because of our good works, or church attendance, so we become complacent and not engage the enemy!

Then **verse 12** gives us the reason for these two divine commands, *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”* We usually believe our struggles in life are with the people or the circumstances around us, but Paul tells us that’s not actually the case – the real issue is taking place behind the scenes in the supernatural realm, because we are in an invisible war. We in North America have difficulty understanding this concept, but in many places around the world, especially in third world countries, they know the demonic world far too well. So, our western worldview can actually hinder us so that we believe the problem is our spouse, a child, a friend, a neighbour, a boss or co-worker, or a circumstance, and we put the blame on them and end up fighting with them, rather than the real enemy, Satan and his demonic army who are manipulating situations and people around us. Paul is telling us that our struggle is not against flesh and blood; it’s not against what we can see, but against unseen forces. The real war we wrestle against are the evil forces that rule this world’s systems and are behind the present darkness, and we can easily exhaust ourselves by fighting the wrong war, against the wrong enemy, with the wrong weapons. The enemy forces are highly organized, disciplined, and focused, and the enemy assaulting the church of Ephesus is the same very real enemy we face here at SCCC. They had to wake up to the assault, and so do we!

Now as a warning – we are not to go around blaming the devil for everything bad that happens either. We live in a fallen world, and bad things will happen; however, behind some of these issues there is an evil power, especially when the situation can’t be explained in any other way. So, whenever a dark moment strikes out of the blue for no apparent reason, it should sound the alarm that something is going on here that can’t be explained in normal ways. For example: one minute if you’re on top of the world and then the next moment you’re on a downward spiral of negative thoughts. Our enemy doesn’t want us to enjoy the abundant life that Christ offers, the joy of our salvation, and especially wants us to put the blame on God and question God’s goodness!

Paul point here is that as believers we have to face the facts that we are going to be attacked and will have to be prepared to withstand the onslaughts of the enemy. Paul is warning us that we may be in for a rough ride, so fasten your seatbelts and understand your enemy and the war you're in. Remembering when we fight, we're not trying to win; instead, we're enforcing the victory that Jesus has already secured for us on the cross. In His power we are invincible, because as believers **IN CHRIST**, we do not fight **FOR** victory; we fight **FROM** victory in these three areas:

1. Our first responsibility is to never be caught off guard but come to realize that there is an invisible world that is just as real as this visible world around us. Believe that the spiritual world of angels and demons is a reality, just as you believe the Bible as the Word of God. Remember that Jesus had personal interactions with Satan and demons and referred to them frequently in the four Gospels.
2. Our second responsibility is that this invisible war has eternal implications and consequences, the souls of men, women, boys and girls are at stake, so we need to fight on behalf of not only ourselves, but for our loved ones, neighbours and fellow workers, constantly interceding for them in prayer.
3. Then our third responsibility is to use the protection that God has provided, by making sure we put on the armour God has provided daily and understand the role of each piece. A cosmic conflict rages around us at all times, and the battle begins in our mind, as the enemy seeks to blind the minds of unbelievers so they can't grasp the truth, and dulls the minds of believers, so they are complacent and ineffective in reaching the lost. He will also try to disqualify you by fooling you into not picking up your weapons. That's what spiritual warfare is all about – it's a battle of the mind – Satan attacks our thoughts, our understanding, and our beliefs!

Who is Satan? God created Satan – as the most intelligent and most powerful angel of the highest class in heaven, more beautiful than anything or anyone created by God. Those qualities led to his fatal flaw of pride that led to his downfall, wanting to be like God, and convinced a third of the angels to rebel with him. As a fallen archangel, he now seeks to destroy all that is good and God-ordained, and his strategy ever since the fall of Adam and Eve has been to tempt us with the same agenda – to be like God. We saw his strategy in the Garden of Eden, and we continue to see his strategy today as humans want to control all

aspects of their lives, and not bow their knee and submit to God or anyone else in any way. Satan's deceptions are aimed at making us question God, to not trust God, concluding that God doesn't have our best interests at heart. So, to be effective in Spiritual warfare, we must not fear him, but become highly aware of his schemes, methods, and tactics.

Even though every believer encounters spiritual warfare – we have every reason to be confident for the following three reasons:

1. Satan is a created being like us – he is not equal to God. YES! He is highly intelligent, but not all-knowing. YES! He is powerful, but not all-powerful. YES! He is an invisible spirit, but limited, there are things he cannot do and places he cannot go, and he is not always present with us like the Holy Spirit!
2. Satan can be resisted by the Christian who relies and trusts on God – **James 4:7** tells us, *“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”* The devil cannot compete with God in the life of a believer who is completely committed and submitted to Christ; the devil has no choice but to flee.
3. God places limitation on Satan – we read in the book of **Job** that Satan wanted to completely destroy Job's life, and God let him, that is up to a point, *“The Lord said to Satan, ‘Very well then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger’”* (Job 1:12). So, Satan is on a leash that is firmly held in the hands of our heavenly Father. He cannot do to us what God does not allow him to do. He can't destroy us; we can only destroy ourselves by giving him access to our lives.

The final thing we need to know is that at the cross Satan was defeated and overthrown, but it is a process that will not be complete until Satan and his demons are thrown into the lake of fire. The very first prophesy given with regards to Satan's fate was given in the Garden of Eden right after Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. Here's what God tells the serpent in **Genesis 3:15**, *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”* This verse tells us that there will be an ongoing battle between God and the devil, between Jesus and the devil, and between us and the devil for a set period of time. When Jesus died on the

cross that prophesy was fulfilled when the Messiah crushed the serpent's head, while the serpent only struck at the Messiah's heel. Satan thought he had won that day, but three days later Jesus rose from the dead and got the keys to God's creation back that Adam and Eve had given foolishly to the serpent that day in the Garden of Eden.

Then on the day of Pentecost there's another death blow to Satan as the church comes into the picture, given the spiritual authority by the risen Christ to continue the process that Jesus began in overthrowing Satan. This is made clear to us in **Romans 16:20**, "*The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.*" The Bible says we, the body of Christ, the church, also have been given the power to crush the head of the serpent under our feet. This means that we can have victory over the devil every day of our lives, because of the spiritual authority and power of God that has been given to the church. Paul had already prayed that over us in chapter 1 of this letter, "*I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead*" (Ephesians 1:18-20). The Good News of the Gospel message is that the church has power over Satan all because of the victory that was won on Calvary, and now the devil is retreating, because he is a defeated foe. Satan knows he's beaten, and his time is short, so as he retreats, he is trying to do as much damage as he can, and unfortunately, he is taking many unprepared and ill-equipped Christians down with him. We are warned in the last days that there will be a great falling away!

One of my favorite hymns is by Martin Luther, called – "**A Mighty Fortress is Our God.**" The devil often tormented Martin Luther and he was so enraged one time that he threw a bottle of ink at a wall, and the ink stain is still visible today when you visit his home in Wittenberg, Germany. He writes this about our enemy Satan in verse one of his hymn: "*For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe – his craft and power are great, and armed with cruel hate.*" Then Luther goes on to say in his hymn that in our own strength we cannot fight him, but Christ has won the battle for us. And even though this world is filled with the works of the devil, we should not fear him, because Christ has triumphed over him, and his doom is sure. The end of verse three gives us this wonderful line, "*One little word*



*shall fell him.” So we don’t have to be afraid, because one little word from our lips will fell him, and that word is “JESUS.” We have the name of Jesus and that name has great power, as Paul writes in **Philippians 2:10**, “**The authority of the name of Jesus causes every knee to bow in reverence! Everything and everyone will one day submit to this name – in the heavenly realm, in the earthly realm, and in the demonic realm.**”*

YES, the devil is still around pestering us – but our hope is in knowing that his overthrow will be complete in the future according to **Revelation 20:10**, “**And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.**” The devil and his demons knows their fate, so they are going about like wounded animals lashing out in every direction trying to do as much damage as they can, but their fate is sealed. YES, the devil is a defeated foe, but he is still our enemy, so we need to know him, resist him, and rebuke him in the name of JESUS, and when we know how to dress for battle by putting on our armour and stand firm – the triumph of Jesus is our triumph too!

May we all be diligent soldiers so that at the end we can say, with Paul, “***I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith***” (2 Timothy 4:7).