



The Battle of Our Lives

Ephesians 6:10-20
Week 14 | Apr 8, 2018

Summary: God has been in a cosmic struggle for the hearts of humanity ever since Genesis 3. God had made Creation very good—and then Satan incited human rebellion and plunged the world into ruin. Later, God sent his Son into the world to redeem humanity—and Satan opposed him the entire time until finally Jesus was hung on a cross. On both occasions Satan thought he had won. But, of course, Jesus rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, poured out his Spirit, and gave birth to *the Church*, the redeemed people of God from every tribe and nation. And now, “through the church, the manifold wisdom of God is made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms” (Eph 3:10). The church is God’s proclamation of “Game, set, match—you lose, Satan!” But that doesn’t mean it’s over.

We have an Enemy. Satan responds to God’s victory with his own “scorched earth” policy, doing whatever he can keep the world under his thrall and to make the church ineffective. He wants only “to steal, kill, and destroy” as Jesus said. But he is subtle, like the serpent in the Garden. We hardly recognize him. Paul says we “struggle” or “wrestle”—a word meaning hand-to-hand, close-quarters combat. What a sobering thought: We don’t fight Satan from afar, we grapple with this hideous evil up close.

We have Equipment. Close combat with Satan is hardly a fair fight. As Martin Luther wrote in his hymn, *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*, “Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing.” But thankfully the “right Man” is on our side: Christ Jesus. When we suit up in the armor of God we are simply applying Jesus to our lives: His truth, righteousness, and peace. Our faith in him, our salvation from him, the Word about him. But the six pieces of armor are not just qualities of Jesus; they *are Jesus*. He is the Truth (John 14:6); he is our righteousness (1 Cor 1:30); “he himself is our peace” (Eph 2:14)....

We have to Engage. This is not playing dress-up or having a dress rehearsal. This is the battle of our lives. If we were convinced that Satan had us, our families, our church in his sights...if we truly believed that lives hung in the balance and people’s eternities were at stake...we would suit up and do two things: Pray and proclaim.

We would **always** keep praying—on **all** occasions, with **all** kinds of prayers, for **all** of God’s people. Paul’s quadruple use of “all” shows how earnest he is about prayer. It’s not just what we do before the fight—much less before a meal—it is the fight! And one of our first prayers would be for the strength to proclaim Christ **fearlessly** (repeated twice) as is befitting God’s people.

Yet in today’s placid, flaccid church, laxity in prayer and proclamation shows that we’re simply ignorant of conditions. We’ve outfitted ourselves for a day at the beach, with umbrellas, flip flops, and sand pails, when we should have riot shields, combat boots, and sharpened swords. True, it is a day at the beach—but the beach is Normandy, and the date is June 6, 1944.

Discussion:

1. Read Ephesians 6:10-20 from three translations. Open with prayer, asking God to use this very discussion as further preparation—both strategic and tactical—for the war at hand.
2. Have you ever had an overt, unequivocal encounter with the demonic? Not just a situation where you thought *maybe* there was an evil presence, but one where you knew it without a doubt?
3. C.S. Lewis wrote, “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. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.” Which error do you think we’re more prone to make? Why?
4. Discuss each piece of the armor of God and apply it to your life:
 - **The belt of truth** (covering your most sensitive area and the seat of your emotions). What does it mean to be covered in Truth emotionally and sexually? What protection does it offer?
 - **The breastplate of righteousness** (covering your torso and vital organs). Why is relating rightly to God and each other so vital to our strength as believers? Where might we have “chinks in our armor”?
 - **The shoes of the gospel of peace** (giving us firm standing in God and traction in the world). Do you feel like you’re fully at peace with God and standing strong in him? If not, what do you need to do to change that? And what about moving out into the world with the gospel of peace—how is your footing on that front? What can make you feel more solid?
 - **The shield of faith** (protecting both you and your fellow warriors from attack). What “flaming arrows” have come at you lately? How has your faith responded?
 - **The helmet of salvation** (making you think like a saved person yourself, and regard others from a spiritual perspective). How hopeful is your outlook on life these days? How attuned are you to the spiritual state of others?
 - **The sword of the Spirit** (the essential gospel message of Christ, the “word of life” we hold forth in the world). It has often been said that we need to preach the gospel to ourselves, to keep ourselves grounded in grace. Do you do this? How? And what about proclaiming Christ to others—when is the last time you “reached out” to overtly speak a word for Christ to someone who is not yet a Christian? How can we step our game up in this area?
5. The entire congregation was given a challenge—all individuals, small groups, and ministry teams—to **engage** more actively in prayer and proclamation. What if we took that to heart? What could we do as individuals and as a group to be more engaged in the battle for human souls?