

Take Your Stand
We Are Called to Battle
Ephesians 6:10-18

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Text Introduction: I am beginning a series this morning that will take 8 weeks on this passage—Ephesians 6:10-18. I think most everyone here this morning will agree with me that we are in a battle for what some have called the soul of America. My interest is not political. I certainly have interests there, but that's not my concern in this preaching series. My concern is as a believer in Christ and as a believer in His word as the ultimate authority. As Christians, we are in a battle. We are in a battle for our convictions, our culture, and our churches. As a result, we are in a battle for our families and our future. We are called to take our stand in this battle. So our text will be Ephesians 6:10-18. I want to challenge you to memorize this text with me over the next two months.

Text: ¹⁰ Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and by His vast strength. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the tactics of the Devil. ¹² For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens. ¹³ This is why you must take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand. ¹⁴ Stand, therefore,

with truth like a belt around your waist,
righteousness like armor on your chest,
¹⁵ and your feet sandaled with readiness
for the gospel of peace.

¹⁶ In every situation take the shield of faith,
and with it you will be able to extinguish
all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation,
and the sword of the Spirit,
which is God's word.

¹⁸ Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert in this with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints.

Introduction: As Paul sat in a Roman prison, presumably in constant contact with Roman soldiers, perhaps he saw in their uniform a perfect illustration of the Christian life. We must have the armor of God as we stand against a very real, although allusive enemy. Paul takes the pieces of the armor and launches into a description of the spiritual armor that every Christian has as resources. In the coming weeks, we will look at this armor, as Paul described it, piece by piece.

Today, however, I want to zero in on that which is even more important than even the armor—that is what we do once we are dressed for battle. I want us to focus on the battle itself.

We are in a battle. You probably don't need a lot of proof—you have your own examples of spiritual battle that you are facing. But, just to add some illustration, without a lot of digging, I ran across these

examples just this week. Here is just this week's news of illustrations of the battle that we face as a society.

1. A group called the New York Satanic Temple has raised the necessary \$20,000 and submitted plans to the government officials in Oklahoma City to gain permission to erect a 7 foot tall goat-headed monument that will pay "homage to the historic/literary Satan." On either side of the figure representing Satan will be a child—one boy and one girl. They want it 7 foot tall to be large enough that passersby can sit in its lap. They chose OKC because there is a monument to the 10 Commandments.
2. Then, there was the CNN poll this week dedicated to how Americans viewed sin—or that which is "morally wrong" as they worded it. Here is what they found...
 - Only 57% believe abortion is morally wrong
 - Only 50% believe engaging in homosexual behavior is wrong
 - Only 40% believe looking at pornography is wrong
 - Only 35% believe smoking marijuana is wrong
 - Only 32% believe that living together without or before being married is wrong

All of this reveals that we are in a battle. So, let's talk about that battle this morning.

We are in a battle

So, we must

- Be Strengthened

Now, again, we are going to be talking about the resources available to us in subsequent weeks, but let's get this understood today. Our strength is in the power of Christ. Ephesians 1:19-21 says,

¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power to us who believe, according to the working of His vast strength.

²⁰ He demonstrated [this power] in the Messiah by raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavens — ²¹ far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

We have to be trained. What happens to a soldier when he/she is enlisted? That recruit goes off to basic training. Can you imagine someone being sent to the battlefield without training?

- Be Armed—Likewise, can you imagine not being armed? You want every protection that is available.
- Be Engaged—Many are not even engaged. Two things are in this text about engagement for the battle. We are engaged in the battle first by resisting and then by standing.

When I look at this passage there is one idea that seems to dominate the entire passage—the idea of fullness. “Put on the full armor of God.” It’s all of it or nothing. It’s fully engaged or not engaged at all.

With Satan

Who is

- Personal

A 2009 Barna report revealed these findings about Christianity’s views about Satan.

Four out of ten Christians (40%) strongly agreed that Satan “is not a living being but is a symbol of evil.” An additional two out of ten Christians (19%) said they “agree somewhat” with that perspective. A minority of Christians indicated that they believe Satan is real by disagreeing with the statement: one-quarter (26%) disagreed strongly and about one-tenth (9%) disagreed somewhat. The remaining 8% were not sure what they believe about the existence of Satan.

The evidence of the Bible is that He is personal. Satan is not merely a symbol of evil; he is the personification of evil. We will never really realize the seriousness of the battle until we recognize Satan as a real enemy—more than just a concept. For example, what are you more afraid of—the idea that crime exists or that a criminal exists?

- Powerful

We ought to recognize his power. He is described in Scripture as a roaring lion. In this text, especially verse 12, he is described as one with power—he is a ruler, an authority, a power, a force. The more you get tuned in to how powerful he is, the more you will be in tune with how ready you ought to be for the battle.

- Tactical

The Bible uses here the word schemes. He lies. He is deceptive. All of this calls us to be ready, to not go to sleep, to resist, to stand.

So, we must fight with spiritual weapons.

This passage is also clear that our opponent is a spiritual one. This is tricky, because this means that we cannot see our opponent. But here is the thing—we cannot fight spiritual battles with anything less than spiritual means. That is, we cannot use human weapons in spiritual battles—we must use spiritual weapons—weapons that, as we will see, this passage gives to us.

He is an evil one and we live in an evil day. The weapons that we probably are most familiar with in our politics don’t work in spiritual battle. The strategies that we are most familiar with in military campaigns and athletic contests don’t work here. Spiritual battles can only be won with spiritual means.

George H.W. Bush and Margaret Thatcher both recount in their memoirs a phone conversation in the months leading up to the beginning of the Persian Gulf War. In a disagreement on how to move forward in enforcing sanctions, Margaret Thatcher says to Bush, "This is no time to go wobbly, George."

Christian, this is no time to go wobbly. This is no time to go wobbly on our view of sin, the Bible, heaven/hell. This is no time to go wobbly in our engagement in the battle- that our strength for the battle comes from the Lord.