

## Spiritual Warfare Ephesians 6:10-17

You are at war whether you realize it or not, and your enemy is far more powerful than you. A master of deception, he will ruin your life if you give him the chance. However, through Christ, you can fight back. Discover how to put on your armor and win this fight.

Turn to Ephesians 6

### **2500 years ago in China Sun Tzu wrote "The Art of War"**

- one of most influential books on strategy of war ever written – still used in military academies
- Most famous line: "All warfare is based on deception"
- War is won in the mind, not the muzzle
- You win by deceiving your enemy about when, where, how you will attack

### **You see that in WW2 – I love reading about because relatives fought in it & beat the Nazis!**

- Deception was a key to victory in WW2
- **North Africa:** disguised tanks to look like trucks and trucks to look like tanks
  - o Nazis had no idea where our forces were located
  - o Once they figured out a group of tanks was fake...
  - o Switch out in middle of the night; remain motionless till they pass; destroy from rear
- **Battle of Normandy:** we created an entire fake army – nicknamed "The Ghost Army"
  - o 1100 soldiers whose job was to impersonate real army units and confuse the Nazis
  - o Inflatable tanks, fake radio transmissions, double agents, dummy parachuters
  - o Worked incredibly well – deception is ultimately why we won Normandy

You win a war through deception and you need to know that because...

### **You are in a war right now whether you realize it or not!**

- You face a powerful enemy well-versed in the wisdom of Sun Tzu – best deceiver ever!
- Determined to use deception to destroy you

**So get ready to fight** – my goal this morning: get you ready to fight and win this battle

### **Read Ephesians 6:10-12**

#### **3 parts to this sermon:**

- Who you are NOT at war with
- Who you ARE at war with
- How to fight and win

#### **1. Who you are NOT at war with**

- "our struggle is not against flesh and blood" = human beings
- **We are not in battle with other humans – can't overstate importance of this truth!**
- **We live in a time when people are digging trenches for war**
  - o Includes literal warfare against terrorism or possibly N. Korea... all over news this week
  - o But also includes ideological warfare over politics or culture or morality
  - o People on one side of ideological spectrum don't just disagree... hate other side!
  - o Jimmy Fallon's Tonight Show has lost over 20% of its audience since last year
    - Why? He doesn't take political sides – keeps things light and comical

- But people aren't in to that anymore
  - Switching to shows where politics is front and center – where host is mad, jokes are cutting, and air is full of outrage
- **We can't change that hatred out in the world... but we can make sure it doesn't live here!**
- **Make this concrete:**
- Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, Roy Moore, Kim Jung Un, Harvey Weinstein
- Have all done things I don't like... But NONE are my enemy – don't hate any of them
- Why: Because Bible tells us all humans are made in God's Image
- And all humans are loved so much by God that He sent His Son to die for their sins
- **So when God looks at Trump or Clinton or Kim Jun Un... He feels love, not hate**
  - Doesn't mean He approves of their sinful deeds; but He loves them
- **Because God loves them, He wants them to be saved... Read 1 Timothy 2:3-6**
  - Note word in all caps: ALL – God wants salvation for all without exception
  - Therefore: God wants salvation even for the Hitlers of the world!
    - The people we want to see roast in hell God wants to see saved!
  - That's why Jesus died for all
  - So Hitler gassing millions of Jews... Jesus took that sin and placed it on Himself...
    - So Hitler would have an opportunity to be saved
    - We don't have any evidence Hitler took Jesus up on that opportunity
    - But doesn't change the fact that Jesus loved Him and died for him
- I know that's crazy! How could God love Hitler? Because Hitler was made in image of God
- Inescapable conclusion: there's no room in our hearts for hatred towards any other person
  - We can be angry and we can hate the evil people do to us and to others
  - But we can't hate them and we can't call them our enemies... because they're not
- **Instead of hating those "bad people" out there do these 3 things:**
- **1. Pray for those you're angry at**
  - Read 1 Timothy 2:1-2
  - Pray for all people, especially those in authority including those you disagree with
  - Don't pray fire and brimstone for them... pray for God's best for them
    - to bless with truth, grace, salvation, wisdom, protection
  - When you feel angry at someone in politics... let that remind you to pray for them
- **2. Turn off media that fuels hatred**
  - We must understand: ANGER SELLS!
    - FoxNews, MSNBC, Drudge, NYT – they know outrage builds an audience
    - Same with Facebook and Twitter – outrage generates clicks
  - Sometimes we need to be outraged
    - need to get upset about injustice or oppression to motivate action
  - However: if you are always feeling anger as you scroll your feed or watch the news...
  - Then it's probably time to TURN IT OFF and take a walk!
    - If watching FoxNews makes you hate liberals – turn it off
    - If watching MSNBC or John Oliver makes you hate Republicans – turn it off
  - Nothing in Bible says you must watch or read the news every day – take a break!
  - Don't let things into your life that fuel constant anger towards others – not good
- **3. Pursue spiritual conversations with those far from Jesus**
  - When you feel frustrated at the world – use that as motivation to share the good news
  - Remember our semester goal: initiate 2 spiritual conversations with...
  - Tell them that God loves them & Jesus died for them & all they must do is say "yes"
  - I've had mine, have you had yours?

## 2. Who you ARE at war with

- our struggle is against "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens" = DEMONS

- “What do we know about them?”... Not much!
  - o The Bible is not about angels and demons, it’s about humans
- Demons are fallen angels
  - o Chose long ago to rebel out of pride – would rather be gods themselves
  - o Have become fully evil – fully committed to fighting God
  - o Irredeemable – no salvation possible
- Ancient
  - o Created long ago, before Genesis – don’t reproduce, don’t die
  - o Therefore, lots of experience!! Very wise.
- More powerful and intelligent than humans
  - o Invincible to human weapons or human warfare
  - o Bible is clear that demonic powers are not to be trifled with – not even for believers
- Numerous
  - o Angels and demons number like the stars in the heavens
- Organized
  - o Demons make up what the Bible calls “the kingdom of darkness”
  - o Led by Satan, the most powerful of all demons
  - o They plan and scheme, they develop strategies and organize into armies
- Primary weapon: Deception
  - o Hollywood version of demons is wrong – they rarely use possession or terror
  - o Remember Sun Tzu – All warfare based on deception
  - o Satan is the greatest deceiver of all – “Father of lies”
  - o 2 Cor 4:4 – “blinds the minds of the unbelieving” – makes them POW’s
  - o Rev 12:9 – the serpent of old, the devil, who deceives the whole world
  - o So knowing that the weapon they’ll use against you is deception... how do you..

### 3. How you FIGHT... 6 steps

#### 1) DEPEND

- read v1 – before anything else: “Be strong in the Lord...”
  - o Passive: be strengthened by the Lord Jesus
- Must understand: if we try to make it through this battle in our own strength, we WILL FAIL
  - o Demons are far more powerful, intelligent than any of us
  - o We cannot stand up to Satan in our strength. Only God can defeat Satan.
- So, lesson 1 to winning this war: stick close to God! Rely on His strength.
- **Practically: pray often for God’s strength and protection**
  - o Pray that God would be a hedge of protection for you and your family / roommates
  - o Pray David’s prayer in Psalm 18... read Psalm 18:2

We start with dependence – praying for God to strengthen and protect us  
 But now it’s time for activity – for our part in this fight

#### Read Eph 6:13-17

Paul describes our part metaphorically as a Roman soldier putting on armor (pic)

- o Lists all armor a soldier needs to be ready for battle
- o Remember: at this time in history no one could stand up to Roman soldiers!
  - A Roman soldier was the Stealth Bomber of his day! Couldn’t be stopped.
- o So put on this armor and you’re ready to fight

#### 2) LEARN truth

- Describes truth as the soldier’s belt

- went around the soldier's cloths, protected his most vulnerable spots, and served as the anchor that all the rest of the armor attached to – the breastplate, sword, shield, gear – all anchored to the belt.
- Paul's point: preparation begins with the TRUTH
  - All the other spiritual armor you will put on is anchored to truth
  - Not a surprise that Paul would begin with truth – our enemy's greatest weapon is deception – so our first defense is truth
- Not just any truth, but the truths Paul has taught us in Ephesians
  - Truth about God the Father, Son, and Spirit
  - Truth about sin and salvation and the afterlife
  - Truth about the church and our purpose in life
  - Truth about how we are to behave and treat one another
- If you don't know these fundamental truths of the Christian faith, you are a sitting duck for the deception of the enemy
  - I heard long ago that when U.S. treasury agents are trained, they spend relatively little time studying counterfeits. Counterfeits can always change, always be improved with new technology. So instead of studying ever-changing counterfeits, they spend most of their time studying real bills. Memorizing every detail, every mark, every line. Because if they know the genuine article by heart, a counterfeit will be easy to spot even if it's very good.
- So, it is for us. If we're going to resist Satan's lies and stand strong against his attacks, we must know the truth cold. Need to know what the Bible teaches, where to find it, how to defend it.
  - Join a Bible Study
  - Grab a book off our book list (on holiday schedule – e.g. Delighting in the Trinity)

### 3) OBEY

- Idea behind the breastplate of righteousness
- Important to clarify: if you've trusted in Christ, you are already positionally righteous
  - In God's eyes you are righteous through faith and nothing can ever change that
  - We call that justification
- But that's not what Paul is talking about here
  - Justification is not something you have to put on – it's done
- Instead, Paul's talking about experiential righteousness – about how you behave in this life
  - He's talking about obedience
  - You are already righteous in God's eyes through faith
  - But now, will you live out that positional righteousness by obeying God today
- If we obey, we can resist Satan's attacks; if we don't obey, we're easy prey
  - read James 4:7
  - Two phrases are linked – you can't have the 2<sup>nd</sup> without the 1<sup>st</sup>
  - So, to stand successfully against the devil, we must "Submit to God" = obey God
  - There is no victory if we choose to walk in sin
- That's an important answer to the question, "Why must I obey God?"
  - NOT to earn, keep, or prove my salvation – that really is by faith alone
  - So having been saved by faith, why not run hog wild?!
  - LOTS of reasons – and this is one of them: because it will make you easy prey for Satan.
- Think about what a breastplate does: protects a soldier's most vital organ – heart
  - Obedience protects your heart against Satan's attack
  - Throw off that protection and it's easy for Satan to destroy you
- Sin always leads to blindness and slavery to Satan.
- So... take a moment and evaluate your life – where are you making compromises with sin that leave you vulnerable to spiritual attack
  - **Either you are killing sin or sin is killing you!**

- Pray for God's help to eradicate that sin
- Ask a friend to hold you accountable

#### 4) REMEMBER

- This one word is my attempt to summarize 2 pieces of armor which have a related function
- 1<sup>st</sup> "Shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace"
  - really complicated phrase about a soldier's shoes
  - Roman soldiers wore heavy sandals tied securely to their feet and ankles. The sandals had nails going through the sole into the ground. Result: they gave a soldier incredible stability – could stand fast even when an attack came.
  - We find that same stability in life when we outfit ourselves with the peace that flows out of the gospel.
  - Paul's challenging believers to reflect on the peace we have in this life and the next because we have believed the gospel. He wants us to remember that peace because that will give us strength when attack comes.
- 2<sup>nd</sup>: Same idea a couple verses later: take up the HELMET OF SALVATION
  - Doesn't mean, "Get saved" – they already were saved through faith in Jesus
  - Instead it means: bring to your mind – remember – the salvation you already have in Christ.
  - Fill your mind with that memory and you will be protected when Satan comes at you.
- So – we prepare for battle in the present by remembering what Jesus did for us in the past. That gives us strength to stand strong.

#### 5) TRUST

- Paul tells us to take up the SHEILD OF FAITH
- Again, that's not faith in the gospel so you can be saved – they are already saved
- He's talking about a believer's growing trust in God – hopefully we are growing to trust God more and more each day with more and more of our lives.
- That growing trust in God is what protects us from the fiery lies of the evil one.
- Roman shields – large wooden shields covered with leather that soldiers would soak in water before battle to extinguish the enemy's flaming arrows.
- Your trust in God protects you against Satan's attacks.
- So... here's a hard lesson to process.
  - Most of you are old enough to have learned that life is really hard and painful
  - Why would God let us experience such trials and suffering? He's God – He can make it go away in an instant.
  - I don't know all the reasons... but I know this one: He allows trials in our lives to strengthen our shield of faith – to grow our trust in Him so that we will be strong and ready when Satan attacks.
  - God does not ever enjoy seeing you suffer. But He knows that only through suffering can our shields grow strong to resist the lies of the evil one.
- When trials come... trust God to see you through. Pray that He would grow your faith. Cling to Him and your shield will grow and you will be ready to stand strong on the evil day.

#### 6) MEMORIZE the Word

- "sword of the Spirit which is the word of God"
- first and only offensive weapon
  - everything else defensive – withstand Satan's attack
  - but how do we hit back? With the Word!
- It's what Jesus did when Satan tempted Him
  - Attacked 3X... stood strong by quoting Deuteronomy 3X
- I'm going to challenge you – don't just read the Word, memorize it like Jesus did
- When attack comes, you quote scripture

- Satan cannot stand against the Word of God – it is our invincible weapon against him

As the men go back to prepare communion

Back to WW2 – Allies weren't the only side to use deception – On the night of December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1944 thousands of rookie US troops went to sleep under a blanket of heavy snow and fog in the forests of the Ardennes in central Europe. They weren't worried because Allied command was certain the Germans didn't have any soldiers left to attack. Intelligence reports read, "The enemy has only a handful of beaten and demoralized troops in front of us and they are being supported by only two pieces of horse-drawn artillery."

But they were wrong. The Nazis turned the tables and proved just as good at deception as the Allies. There were 200,000 German soldiers hidden in the forest supported by 5 armored divisions and they unleashed hell at 5:30 the next morning in the Battle of the Bulge. And lots of Allied soldiers died... because they did not realize the danger they were in. They weren't ready for battle. They were caught off guard and beaten.

That's what will happen to us if we don't wake up and accept the fact that we are at war with spiritual forces far more powerful than us.

- read 1 Peter 5:8
- Peter's not writing to unbelievers. He's writing to us – to believers. Satan is out to destroy us like a raging lion. He can't destroy the next life for you – that's secure in Christ... but he can destroy this life for you if you don't fight back.
- Review 6 steps

We can do 1 of these steps together right now: REMEMBER

- communion is a chance for us to "put on the helmet of salvation" – remember what Jesus did for us so that we could be saved
- reflect on that truth and give thanks