

Date: September 11, 2022  
 Series: *In Christ - ONE*  
 Title: *"Living in a War Zone"*  
 Text: Ephesians 6:10-24  
 Preacher: Mark Adams

Ephesians 6:10-24

**10 – Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power.**

**11 – Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.**

**12 – For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world---and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.**

**13 – Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.**

**14 – Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,**

**15 – and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.**

**16 – In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.**

**17 – Take the helmet of salvation and the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.**

**18 – And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.**

**19 – Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the Gospel,**

**20 – for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.**

**21 – Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing.**

**22 – I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.**

**23 – Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**24 – Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.**

How many of you are old enough to remember the cold war era of our nation's history? For you "young people" I'll bring you up to speed by saying that back in those days the world was basically divided into two camps: NATO headed by the United States and the WARSAW PACT was led by the Soviet Union. These were both ARMED camps involved in a huge arms race including nuclear weapons.

For this reason, when I was in elementary school people lived in constant fear of "the bomb."

To show you my own fear, one time I was horsing around with my brother. We were standing on the back of our couch, with our heads near the ceiling and I felt hot air all around me. I thought, *"It must be nuclear fallout! The bombs must have fallen!"* Then I noticed I was standing next to the heater vent! That's how scary those days were.

Pretty much everyone was worried about a nuclear holocaust because everyone was always preparing for the worst. People built bomb shelters in their backyards—filled with food, water, and other supplies. In schools nuclear bomb drills were more common than fire drills. I remember being told to get under my desk as part of those drills—as if that would help. Of course, no one on either side wanted nuclear war to happen. The potential for destruction was unimaginable. But you could never know what the other side would do so the constant focus was on everyone always being READY in case the bomb did fall.

- Drills in school were designed to make the children ready for an attack.
- Bomb shelters in public buildings were designed to make the public ready for an attack.
- Constant drills and exercises were designed to make the military ready for an attack.

I'm saying the key to America being able to stand against an enemy as evil and powerful as the Soviet Union was our READINESS for their attack---however it might come. To me---it seems like this cold war restarted when Russia invaded

the Ukraine. Since then, nearby nations like Norway and Sweden have asked to join NATO. And---Russia is seeking alliances with China and North Korea.

Anyway, I bring all this up because as Christians we have an enemy who is far more powerful than the Soviet Union or the Warsaw pact ever was. In fact, he is far more powerful than any weapon man can build. I'm talking about an enemy that attacks each of us every day of our lives. 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:8 names him. It says, ***"Be sober. Be vigilant because your adversary THE DEVIL walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour."***

And—please hear me on this: this war is not an OPTION in the Christian life. Unlike the old or new cold war, we don't wonder IF war will come. If you are a believer and have chosen not to live for Jesus you are already a casualty and if you ARE trying to grow in Jesus' likeness and serve Him---if you are serious about your walk with Jesus—you can be sure the devil has his sights trained on you right now.

Coy Wylie is correct in saying, *"There is a great cosmic, invisible struggle between good and evil, light and darkness. The casualties are men, women, boys, and girls. In this war there is no cease-fire, no truce, no time-outs, no prisoners, and no quarter."*

Look back at our text from Ephesians 6. In verse 10 Paul says, ***"Finally"*** and that literally means, *"From now on."* In verse 12 he uses the inclusive personal pronoun, *"we"* which means that ALL OF US are involved in this great war with the adversary---and all of us will be FROM NOW ON---until Jesus comes back.

To make this war more visible---you are under direct attack:

- Every time you are presented with the opportunity to entertain a lustful thought.
- Every time you have the chance to do something vindictive.
- Every time you toy with the notion that you're just a little bit better than most of the people you know.

The sad fact is there is a force at work in this world who does not want you to win these kinds of battles. He does not want you to reflect God's love and mercy. And he will do whatever it takes to make sure you don't. Now don't misunderstand me—Jesus has already won this war I'm talking about. He did that when He rose in VICTORY from the grave. But that doesn't stop Satan from fighting. You see, he knows his time is short and his evil nature is such that---even though he knows he has lost, he still tries to do as much damage as possible. I mean, he knows that as Christians he can't have our souls---but he will stop at nothing to destroy our lives and especially wants to ruin our Christian witness.

In this, the last text in our study of Ephesians, Paul both warns us about this enemy and tells us how to stand against him---how to be READY for his attacks. Before we look at Paul's strategy, let's review what the Bible tells us about our enemy.

### **(1) Who exactly is Satan? Who is our adversary?**

- In John 12:31 he is described as, ***"the prince of this world."***
- In Matthew 4:3 he is referred to as, ***"the tempter."***
- Matthew 25:41 and Revelation 12:7 refer to him and his minions as ***"angels."***
- Ezekiel 28:14 says that he is not only an angel but a CHERUB.

Now, that word *"cherub"* conjures up images of greeting cards on Valentine's Day, but CHERUBS in Hebrew Scripture are anything BUT cute, puffy little cupids. They are the highest class of angelic being, and Ezekiel 28 says Satan was the highest of them. So, Satan was the highest angel of the highest class of angels before he opposed God and fell from Heaven---which means Luther is right in his hymn when he says that *"on earth he has no equal."*

But of all these descriptive words or phrases, the Bible teaches that the best way to describe our enemy is to say that he stands in OPPOSITION to our Heavenly Father. His purpose is to destroy the WORKS of God---to discourage the PEOPLE of God---and to discredit the WORD of God. In our text from Ephesians Paul tells us three other things about Satan.

### **A. First, he reminds us that Satan is STRONG.**

And he is. As I said he was the highest of the angels—but hear me on this: Satan IS strong—but God is INFINITELY stronger, and GOD is on our side! He puts limits on what Satan can do and offers to empower us to stand against him! In your personal struggles with Satan remember that as 1<sup>st</sup> John 4:4 puts it, ***“Greater is He Who is in you than he who is in the world!”***

### **B. Secondly, Paul says that Satan is SUBTLE.**

I say this because in verse 11 he speaks of the ***“schemes of the devil.”*** The Greek word for “schemes” is *“methodeias”* and it is the word from which we get our word *“methods.”* So, Paul is saying that we must watch out for the subtle METHODS of the devil—and this is good advice to heed. I mean, Satan will not come at us garbed in red with a pitchfork, pointed ears, and a long tail. Satan is not going to come to you dressed up in something evil looking or unappealing so we can say, *“That’s Satan. I’d better watch out!”* No---he is much too subtle---to smart---to do that kind of thing.

Remember, he has been honing his battle tactics for millennia which means he has had thousands of years to study how best to inflict damage on the people of the Kingdom of God. I will be the first to admit that I am no genius in mathematics, but even with my limited capabilities I could be terrific at math, if I worked at it for 100 years. In fact, if I labored hard at it for a 1,000 years, and read all the learned theories, I could be a Newton or an Einstein. Think of what I could learn if I had 10,000 years! I might even get good at preaching!

And this is not to pat myself on the back. Given enough time any of us could become the world’s greatest philosopher or psychologist or theologian or linguist. Well, Satan has had multiple millennia to study and master the human disciplines, so when it comes to temptation---when it comes to human subversion, he is the best of the best. We must not underestimate him. He is a fool---but he is no dummy.

### **C. Finally, Paul warns us that he is SINISTER.**

As he says in verse 16 of our text, Satan is ***“the EVIL one.”*** Satan always causes pain and sorrow. He is indeed sinister. Remember that when you face temptation. Satan may promise you joy and thrills but in the end all he delivers is pain and heartbreak. I was shocked to hear that Disney-owned FX is releasing a new adult cartoon series entitled, *“Little Demon,”* about a woman who has a fling with Satan and bears his child. She is a female Anti-Christ. Here’s a description of the show: *“Thirteen years after being impregnated by Satan, a reluctant mother, Laura, and her Antichrist daughter, Chrissy---attempt to live an ordinary life in Delaware but are constantly thwarted by monstrous forces, including Satan, who yearns for custody of his daughter’s soul.”*

This is a sad example of how sinister our adversary can be---I hope all of you will keep your kids from this show because it will hurt them. Sin ALWAYS hurts! And that’s what the evil one wants. He wants us to hurt.

Now—if all this talk about our enemy makes you feel fearful—don’t be—because our almighty God has given us tools to stand against Satan and Paul writes about all this in our text. And---I need to remind you that when Paul wrote these words, he was under Roman house arrest. He was chained day and night to the wrist of a Roman soldier. As he began to write this final portion of his letter he searched for a WORD PICTURE—something to explain how we can resist the devil--how we can stand against his strong, subtle, sinister attacks—and as he was sitting there thinking about this—under the influence of the Holy Spirit of God he looked up---and saw the soldier in full armor. He took that imagery and used it to give us six tools to help us be prepared to live victoriously in this spiritual war zone.

#### **1. First, there is the BELT of TRUTH.**

Now, when we think of armor, a lot of times we think of the armor of medieval knights. We think of Camelot and the knights of the round table with chainmail and full-body armor. But that wasn’t the kind of armor that Roman soldiers wore. Yes---the Roman soldier’s armor contained some metal but was mostly thick leather—and the foundation to all of his armor was one simple leather item.

It was his BELT. His belt was the foundation because the breastplate and the rest of the body armor was tied into it. This belt was even used to hold the sword and helmet when not in use. But its most important function was to tie up the loose ends of the soldier's tunic. You see, in those days, the basic article of Roman clothing was a tunic. The typical tunic was made from two rectangular pieces of cloth. They were sewn together with a hole for the head and holes for the arms. It fit so loosely that the shoulder corners went to their elbows. And the bottom of it hung down to their knees.

Think all the ways you could get tangled up in that kind of apparel. I can't help but think of all the times I have almost tripped on the hem of my ministerial robe. That's why wearing this belt was so important. It pulled the tunic close to your body and higher up to give you freedom of movement. It may not seem like much but was a very important piece of his "armor" because it secured everything that could get in his way---all the things that could tangle up and hinder the soldier.

In any case, Paul was using this image to say that the first things we need to do to be ready for the attacks that will come from our invisible adversary---is to tie all the loose things in our lives down with "the belt" of GOD'S TRUTH. You see, if we are to stand when he attacks, we must have a firm grip on spiritual truth.

This week I read about a survey that was conducted shortly after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks and it showed that only 22% of Americans believed in absolute truth. The amazing thing is that the number had actually dropped from 38% the year before the attacks. The sad thing is 80% of these people who said they don't believe in absolute truth claimed to be Christians. It's no wonder so many of us lose more spiritual battles than we win. It's no wonder we get tripped up so easily by Satan's subtle, sinister schemes. You see, the only way to prevent this kind of defeat is to embrace the absolute truth of the Bible.

Let me put it this way: God's Truth is the only thing that will keep us from getting tangled up in our own doubts, insecurities and weaknesses. If we are not careful, Satan will grab hold of them and drag you down. But if you "tuck your doubts in" and "*secure them*" behind the truth of God's Word, you will be ready to stand. This is why Psalm 119:9 says, "**How can a young man keep his way pure?** [How will he keep from being tricked into fear or sin?] **By living according to Your Word.**" William Barclay writes, "*Others may guess and grope; the Christian moves freely and quickly, because in any situation he knows the truth.*"

Paul says that the second weapon that makes us ready to withstand the devil's attacks is:

## **2. The BREASTPLATE of RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

This piece of equipment covered the torso of the soldier. The breastplate of the average Roman soldier was either made of thick leather or metal. When the enemy shot the darts or arrows toward a person's chest, the breastplate repelled them, and thus protected that man's vital organs.

Paul says that the "breastplate" for the Christian is RIGHTEOUSNESS. You see, when we live righteously before the Lord, Satan can do nothing to us. When we allow God to empower us to live a righteous life, we become powerfully impervious to Satan's attacks.

For example, if you are known as someone who always tells the truth---it will be very hard for someone to accuse you of falsehood and make it stick. Righteous living is indeed a breastplate that protects the vital areas of life. Martin Luther was right when he said: "*The pagan does feel crowded by holiness---even if it is only made present by an imperfect, partially sanctified human vessel.*" A righteous life is a powerful thing indeed. How strong is your "breastplate?"

## **3. The third weapon Paul cites is what he calls SANDALS of READINESS.**

I have several pairs of shoes in my closet and it's not because I'm a shoe hog. It's because each pair has a specific purpose.

- I have dress shoes and a pair of *Tom's* when I'm doing something more casual.
- I have shoes to run in.
- I have shoes to paint in.

- I even have a pair of VANS---for those times when I want to look cool.

The Roman soldier's shoes served a purpose too. Most people in New Testament times wore sandals but not Roman soldiers. Actually, they wore a kind of half-boot called a "*caliga*." Those boots were one of the things that made them superior to their enemies. As a matter of fact, they were such an important part of the Roman soldier's success, they came to be known for them. The foot-soldiers were often called "*caligati*."

The thing that made these half-boots unique was that they had spikes driven down through the soles making them into cleats. Why? Well---I apologize for the gruesome image but in those days combat was all done hand-to-hand. It was very bloody. And the longer the battle raged, the more blood was spilled. The more blood that covered the ground, the slipperier it became. In hand-to-hand combat, slipping and falling meant almost sure defeat. So inevitably, the combatant with the surest footing won the battle. Think of it this way. You have the breastplate on so your vital organs are protected—but what good would that do if you slip and fall down? Good footing was a matter of life and death. The Roman soldier's caligae gave him the best footing possible—no matter how thick the battle became---no matter what the conditions.

Now what does this mean to us? What is Paul saying? I've always thought he is talking about our readiness to witness---share the gospel of peace. But after my study this week, I think there is more to it than that. You see, if you are a Christian, you are no longer at war with God. You are at peace with Him. God poured His wrath out on His Son, to make it possible for us to be reconciled to God. So---when you are at peace with God---when you "wear THAT as cleats on your feet," you can stand in the face of the enemy.

- You can stand when Satan tells you you're no good.
- You can stand when Satan throws past sins in your face.
- You can stand firm when Satan accuses you of things Jesus has forgiven you for.

When you prepare yourself by putting on the cleats of the gospel of peace, you will stand. The more the enemy throws at you, the more your cleats will declare that you stand reconciled and forgiven---pure and righteous in God's eyes. In fact, let me stop at this point and ask you---are you reconciled to God? Have you accepted the relationship with God that Jesus died to make possible? If not, you need to do that because right now, you're standing alone and defenseless against the wiles of the devil.

#### **4. Next Paul talks about the SHIELD of FAITH.**

There were two types of shields that were carried by Roman soldiers. One was a small, lightweight round shield. The soldier would strap it to his arm and use it to protect himself against knife cuts and small sword blows in small skirmishes. The only time this shield was carried was when soldiers were used for crowd control or law enforcement. They weren't used in full-scale combat.

The second type of shield was the kind Paul is talking about here. It was a full-body battle shield that was about 2 ½ feet wide and about 4 ½ feet tall and was designed to protect the soldier's entire body such that he could hide behind it. Back then, one of the most feared military weapons of the day was fire. And the best way to direct that fire on an enemy was to shoot it at them with arrows. Combatants would wrap the points of their arrows in strips of cloth they had soaked in pitch. If those fiery "darts" struck a solid object, the flaming pitch would splatter and catch everything around them on fire. If they struck a person, the arrow would penetrate the skin while the pitch continued to burn. In short, they were a terrifying tool of war. But this shield would provide protection.

In addition to its size, most of the time the shield was made of metal that was covered with a thick layer of leather. Before the battle the shield would be soaked in water. The strength of the metal would deflect the arrows. And the wet leather would extinguish the flames.

Now, picture the ancient battlefield for a moment. An advancing army wouldn't just charge right into battle. No---first they would soften the enemy up by having their archers shoot fiery arrows into the ranks of the enemy they were facing---causing them to break ranks and throw them into confusion.

In a sense, that's what Satan tries to do to us today. Before the heavy battle even begins—before we start to do something that is sure to further God's kingdom—like proclaim the Easter message or plan a mission trip—or build a new building—or start a ministry to the under-resourced people in our community—before that kind of thing Satan wants to break our ranks and throw us into confusion.

How does he do that? What do his flaming arrows look like in the church today?

- Well, there's the "arrow" of apathy. When it's fired it sounds like this, *"That's somebody else's job. I'm not going to do that. Besides, I'm too busy to be involved."*
- There's the arrow of selfishness. *"If I don't get my way, I'm going to just stop participating."*
- There's the arrow of gossip. *"Did you hear who so and so voted for?"*

If we're not careful, those kinds of arrows will hit. And if they hit, they won't just affect individuals. They will cause us to break ranks before the enemy and throw us into confusion. With arrows like that Satan will destroy a church's unity—making it ineffective and weak.

So, how do we keep that from happening? By standing together in the faith—by obeying the Bible's teachings when it comes to apathy and selfishness and gossip—by agreeing with God's written Word when it comes to its teachings on how important it is to preserve unity. The Roman soldier's shield could be used individually but it was also designed to connect to the soldier's shield on either side of him to create what was called a "turtle." When a squad linked their shields together, side by side and above they created a "tank" of sorts. They would stay in that position until the enemy expended all of his ammunition. As long as they presented that united front, not one of them would fall.

That's why God created this wonderful thing called the local church. This is where we link our shields together. It's where we help each other grow in the Word. It's where we unite against a common enemy. And when we do it right, we will present front line phalanx of faith that the enemy can't penetrate.

##### **5. The fifth weapon Paul refers to is the HELMET of SALVATION.**

Roman soldiers wore helmets made of thick leather that were often covered with metal. These helmets were invaluable in battle. I mean, imagine standing on the battlefield in the midst of flaming arrows, swinging swords and thrusting spears—without something to protect your head! A hard blow to the body might maim or seriously injure but a hard blow to the head would kill instantly. So, the helmet gave the soldier confidence.

In the same way, the helmet of our salvation gives US confidence because we know that no matter what happens we will ultimately win the victory. Our eternal salvation infuses us with a steadfast hope that victory is assured.

- Let the enemy attack.
- Let the forces of Hell rage against us.
- Let them unleash their fiery arrows.

Sure—we may be wounded. We may suffer momentary defeats. We may falter and stumble. But, because of the cross and the empty tomb—we are not afraid even of death itself—because we know victory will ultimately be ours.

So—how's your head gear this morning? How's your confidence level?

##### **6. The sixth weapon Paul describes is the SWORD of the SPIRIT.**

The Roman soldier's sword was short—about two feet long—and it was designed to be used in close, hand-to-hand combat. It had to be easily accessible and ready to use—plus the soldier had to be very proficient in using it. You see, the sword was the only strategic weapon that could be used when the enemy was close, so, warriors spent hours upon hours with it in their hands—working on their dexterity, getting used to the feel and letting it become second nature—as familiar as their own limbs.

Paul defines the Christian's sword in verse 17 as the Word of God—but he doesn't use the Greek word "Logos" as he does when he talks about Scripture in other parts of his writings. This time he uses the word, "*rhema*" referring to the specific spoken word or words given to us by the Spirit of God—to do close, hand-to-hand combat with the lies and deceptions of the enemy. The perfect example of this is how Jesus responded to the devil's attacks in the wilderness.

Every time Satan said something, Jesus said, "***it is written***" and then He quoted from the Scriptures—the perfect RHEMA for each temptation. Satan attacked three times and each time Jesus expertly parried his thrusts with the Word of God until finally Satan gave up and left the field. This is a great reminder of Hebrews 4:12 which says, "***The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.***"

Paul is saying that to live victoriously in this Spiritual War Zone requires us to both study to memorize so as to UNDERSTAND Scripture. In his 1<sup>st</sup> epistle, John says, "***I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the Word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.***" (1<sup>st</sup> John 2:14b) I like how R. Kent Hughes puts it, "*The Word of God draws the blood of Satan himself.*"

Now—all this talk about armor is exciting—but we have to remember—the most important weapon in this war that we all fight is PRAYER. This is why Paul says, "***Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With all this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying.***" (vs 18) Those who would engage in spiritual warfare, regardless of how well they wear TRUTH and RIGHTEOUSNESS and FAITH and SALVATION—regardless of how well they are grounded in PEACE, regardless of how well they wield the WORD, must make PRAYER the first thing—because the Christian is a soldier who fights on his or her knees. Prayer is our link to our Commander in Chief. It's our supply line. It's EVERYTHING! Prayer is the ultimate weapon to use against "***the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms.***" (Vs 12)

We come now to our time of decision—and we all know from experience that in these moments each week battles will be fought. God will tell us things we need to do to be more in line with His will—and Satan will attack—he will do all he can to make us postpone our response to God. He'll say, "*You don't need to join that church.*" or "*You don't need to decide to follow Jesus today—wait.*" With that in mind, will you join me now in prayer?