

In our walk through Ephesians, we've been told about all our incredible blessings from God, our new identity, our rewards and how all this impacts us living holy lives before God. So with all the blessings we have and all the promises God's given us, and with a new nature and the Holy Spirit living inside of us, I want to ask you a question. Why is it so hard to live a holy life? Now maybe for you, it's not so hard, but have you ever noticed that it doesn't take much to throw you off sometimes? Maybe you can be having a great day and everything's going well and your mood is good, and then one thing happens and suddenly, you're in a whole different place.

How much criticism does it take to throw your day off? How much discouraging news does it take to grab your mind and and quell your enthusiasm. One big reason that we have these struggles. One big reason you and I have such a hard time staying joyful and peaceful is because we have an enemy. You and I have an enemy and no, it's not the person you're thinking of.

It is a most powerful created being in the universe who is actively working against us with a scheme and a plan to grab you, to ruin your mood, to wage war against you, and to bring your walk with God crashing down. You can be sure the enemy of your soul knows exactly what buttons to push for you, because your buttons are probably different from my buttons, buttons, but we all have those buttons, and he knows every single one of them. Some days, it seems like he's just pressing all the buttons. Right? We have all experienced how easy or how easily we turn our hearts from faith to fear.

It just takes one thing. It just takes one bit of news. It just takes one diagnosis and suddenly our faith is struggling. So today it's time to take a stand and we're gonna stand on the word of God. We're gonna be in Ephesians.

We're gonna be in verse chapter 6 verse 10. Would you please stand with me for the reading? Ephesians chapter 6 will begin in verse 10. A final word. Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh and blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. Let's pray together. Father, we come to you today because we are powerless against this foe. It is only in you that we can stand.

And so, father, we ask you for the strength to stand today. We ask you for the wisdom to spot the ways the enemy is working and and, Father, that you would speak to us today through your word, so we would leave this place changed, knowing that we have been with you and, Father, better prepared to stand against these wiles of the enemy. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you.

You can be seated. In Ephesians, God reminds us of who we used to be. Now some of us may still some of you may still be there. Maybe you're here today and you're just checking things out,

and so you can kind of see in your life the darkness that still exists. God said we all were once but he wipes away our sin, washes it all away, gives us a new nature and he adopts us.

He makes us from children of darkness into children of light and then we are called to run away from that darkness and pursue the light and help others to do the same for the rest of our lives. He's shown us how this walk with him impacts our marriages, how it impacts our children, how it impacts the relationships around us and and He's given us this task of reaching people who are still caught in sin. This commandment, this great commission that we are to go and to make disciples. And so in all of this, we understand that sometimes it's hard because there is a battle going on. And here is what he says, the most powerful created being in the universe and all his demonic hordes are after you.

A final word. Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you'll be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. The words he's using here is a visual picture of wrestling, a physical wrestling match with unseen supernatural enemies who have a desire and a plan to bring us down. Now if you were a coach, you would watch the videos of the opposing team.

So you could kind of figure out their plan, their strategies, maybe some of their weaknesses. Then you can devise a game plan to come against that team and maybe have a victory. A good fighter will study their opponent, seeing if they're gonna drop their left or if they drop their right or if they move a certain way so that they can catch them with a punch. A good shopper will try to find opportunities to get a better deal at a better price. Well, if we are clever enough to do these things, don't we believe Satan is clever enough to study us, to watch us, and to know what to do and when to do it?

Our enemy is intelligent, wise, cunning and powerful. He has a strategy. He's watching you, watching me to wait to slip in a punch, to try to pull off a scheme, to get in a blow or to buy you off somehow with something else that would tempt you. God tells us who this supernatural enemy is. It's Satan and his demons.

Jesus says in John 10:10, he calls Satan a thief who comes to steal, to kill and to destroy. 2nd Corinthians 11:14 says that Satan can masquerade as an angel of light and works to blind men's minds to the truth of God's Word. He can do that through discouragement. He can do that through confusion, temptation, deception and then just flat out blinding their minds so they cannot understand. Have you ever been in an argument with somebody who was just so opposed to what you are talking about that they made no sense whatsoever?

And I'm not don't look at your husband or your wife. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about people spiritual things where people are just like, no, I don't believe that. I remember being in an argument with an atheist, and our actual argument's probably wrong or discussion. We were debating a little bit and he said, well, I don't believe that.

I said, well, let me ask you a question. Is there any proof I could give you that you would believe in God? He said, no. There's nothing you could show me. There's nothing you could do.

There's nothing you could say that would make me believe in God. Right. Okay. Well, our discussion is over. Because at that point, I understood his mind was blinded and only God could open that blind.

One of the greatest challenges in our church today is realizing that our battle is not against abortion clinics. Our battle is not against homosexual activists. Our battle is not against sex traffickers and or pagan witches. Our battle is with the forces of evil that are inspiring behind those events, the forces of evil that are enslaving people to do their dirty work. Even when there are willing people who are intentionally pursuing evil, we can understand through God's word they are lost and what they are doing, they are doing because they are enslaved by satan at this point.

Satan doesn't fight fair, and he doesn't fight alone. It says in verse 12, we're not fighting against flesh and blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. We're in a spiritual battle with unseen forces of darkness, and you can't sit on the sidelines. There are no sidelines. You are on the field in the game, and you are in this wrestling match right now, whether you are a willing participant or whether you are actively fighting or not, you can stand there and you can get thrown to the mat time and time again, or you can learn what God tells us to do in order to stand.

These unseen forces are in ours. When it says the heavenlies, he's not talking about roaming around in in heaven. He's talking about the heavenlies in this word means our atmosphere. In other words, they're in our world around us. Satan means adversary.

Devil means accuser. Satan is our adversary and our accuser. He can appear as an angel of light. He can even deceive people who mean well. And so we are told to be strong in the Lord.

Now what does that phrase mean? It's not we're not called to drink our latte even with 2 shots of espresso and then go out and battle Satan. We're not called to take stimulants and steroids or to train the hand to hand combat. Guns and karate won't help you. We could no more stand against Satan than a preschooler could stand against a grizzly bear.

The word for be strong means to make strong by putting on strength. It is not that we get stronger. It is that we we take strength and we place it on ourselves, and that is the strength that comes from the Lord. In the passive tense, it means continually be strengthened. So if we can kind of flesh that out, it's continually be strengthened by putting on the Lord, and that is where we are called to stand.

This type of strength comes only from God. It is not a call to try harder. You are not called to do better. Stop falling down doesn't work. It is a call to submit to God more, to trust him more, to have faith more so that we take on his strength in the battle.

This involves our relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. It involves prayer and being in the word. It involves the Holy Spirit indwelling us. There was a defendant who was on trial for murder and there was a problem because there was no body, but the prosecution had a lot of evidence and they made a fantastic case. And so at the closing arguments, the defense attorney was pretty desperate.

And even though they had no body, he knew his client was going down for the crime. And so he stood up and he said, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I have a surprise for you. He said, in less than 60 seconds, the man who is supposedly dead will be coming through that door. And everybody turned around. They watched the door and they watched the door and nobody had nothing happened.

Nobody came in, and the guy said, well, he said, you know, I'm supposed to tell you that you are not to convict if you have a reasonable doubt, and obviously you all had a reasonable doubt because you were looking at the door. Well, the jury went out and they came back in less than 5 minutes with a guilty verdict. And the defense attorney went, what are you doing? How could you do this? I I saw you all look at the door.

The jury foreman said, yeah, we looked, but your client didn't. No Christian can have spiritual victory in their life if you are living in disobedience to God and his word. You cannot sabotage yourself because you will you will take yourself down just like that man did in his own trial. Sometimes we are our own worst enemies. Sometimes, we are willing participants.

We fall for this all too often. Satan wants to deceive us, and sometimes, we are disobedient intentionally. So take that off the table. Go to the Lord. Cleanse your heart and start over, because Satan wants to take you off.

We must allow the word of God to correct us. We have to allow the word to get in our hearts and our minds to to set us back on the right path and let the Holy Spirit become our source of truth so that we don't fall for the same tricks over and over and over again. There's no need for someone who trusts in Jesus and who is living in obedience to him to be afraid of the enemy. You have zero reason to be afraid of Satan or his demons, and that doesn't sound kind of normal when we're talking about the power of Satan, but God never says fear Satan. He says be strong in the Lord.

Realize he's out there. Realize he has a plan, but he never says be afraid of him. But we should prepare. You need to get dressed. Nobody in their right mind would prepare for a fight in their pajamas unless they're Batman pajamas, and those are okay.

Actually, the command is to put on all of God's armor, it says. Put on all of God's armor. The word for put on is enduo and it means to wrap and clothe ourselves in. And we have this picture of taking on God's strength, and now we have the picture of wrapping ourselves in this armor, these this armor and weapons that God has. In 2nd Chronicles, chapter 20, Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, received word that a vast army from 3 kingdoms had come together and it was marching against him, and it was so vast it the Bible didn't even count them.

It just said, vast, and the Bible counts a lot of these armies and so we we get the impression this was an overwhelming force that was coming. Like we do right now, Jehoshaphat faced an unseen enemy that was far beyond his power to comprehend and to to take out, and so he turned to the Lord. He immediately went to the Lord in prayer and the last line of his prayer is in 2nd Chronicles and it's verse 12. Oh God, won't you stop them? We are powerless against this mighty army that is about to attack us.

We don't know what to do, but we're looking to you for help. What is Jehoshaphat doing? He is clothing himself in the Lord. God answered through Jehazael, a descendant of Asaph, and he said, listen all you people of Judah and Jerusalem. Listen King Jehoshaphat.

This is what the Lord says. Do not be afraid. Do not be discouraged by this mighty army, for the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow, march out against them. You will find them coming up through the ascent of Zees at the end of the valley that opens into the wilderness of Jeruel, but you will not even need to fight.

Take your positions, then stand still and watch the Lord's victory. He is with you, oh people of Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid or discouraged. Go out against them tomorrow for the Lord is with you. God's answer was clear.

Don't be afraid. Don't be discouraged. Don't let this get you down. I want you to go out there and what God told them was to stand. Joshua fell, Jehoshaphat fell down and worshiped and all the people fell down and worshipped with him.

They bowed their heads, they submitted to the Lord and they praised God. And then some men stood up and started praising God. The Bible says, in a loud voice, they started praising God and and I think sometimes that we need to hear that in the assembly of God's people. The king gathered his people. He told them, have faith in God, trust God, and then as they marched out with the army as God had told them to, Jehoshaphat appointed the praise team to go in the front.

He wanted the worship team to go in front, so he put the singers in in front of the army. I don't know if they were expendable or if he would no. I'm just kidding. He put the singers in front of the army because he knew the battle wasn't his. And so he stuck the singers in the front and as they march to the battle, they are worshiping the Lord.

In 2nd Chronicles 20, listen to this. This is one of the coolest accounts in all of scripture. At the very moment, they began to sing and give praise, the Lord caused the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir to start fighting among themselves. By the time the worship team got to where they could see where the other army was, by the time the army came up, all those left were dead bodies. The other armies had attacked themselves and the Bible says not a single one escaped.

It took Jehoshaphat and the army of Judah 3 days to gather all the treasure and the plunder that was left from this army. There was so much there. We can learn from their example. The reason I took this unseen enemy and this unseen army is because God is trying to show us sometimes in the Old Testament, we have a living picture of what God's teaching us in the New Testament and so we can learn from what we just listened to. Number 1, have courage.

A vast unseen army was defeated when God's people were what, powerful in battle? No. When they were strong in the Lord, an unseen army was defeated. Jehoshaphat didn't consult Facebook for the news about the enemy. He didn't log on to the the latest news channel.

He didn't ask his generals, generals, what do you think we should do? He didn't run. He didn't hide. He went to God with his problem and in God he found the answer. The king didn't turn on the news.

He didn't listen to government experts. He didn't listen to talking heads telling him what he should think or what he should do. Too many times we look for the wrong answers in the wrong places instead of just going straight to the Lord. Satan has great success and discouragement and fear today. We can see it all around us.

The news cycle promotes it. Satan inspires it and those in power foment it because when we are discouraged and afraid, we don't fight back. When people are discouraged and afraid, they either hide or they run, and so Satan wants us to hide and run. Everything you see, everything you read, everything you hear is designed to crush your spirit. The world is trying to crush your spirit, but the world belongs to Satan and he is using every tool at his disposal to try to get you down when you have every reason to look up.

He is trying to get you afraid when you have every reason to be courageous. Being strong in the Lord means that we understand the might, the power, the majesty of our God. And when we do, we understand the weakness of the enemy. That enemy didn't lay a finger on God's people, but when we're afraid and we're discouraged, it stills our voices. It quells our worship and we should be of all people on earth worshipping our king.

Yes, it's dark and yes, there's bad news out there. And yes, I'm just gonna tell you it's you're probably gonna get more good, bad, good, bad. You're probably gonna get a a whole dose of bad news. It's probably gonna get a lot worse as we approach the election. There's probably gonna be stuff happening and, oh my goodness, somebody's sending nuclear weapons into

space and somebody's, there's a new virus and goodness, the economy and oh my word and blah, blah, blah.

It's an unseen enemy. Is it beyond us? Absolutely. Can we affect the world economy? No.

Can we stop a weapon in space? No. Can we keep China or Russia from doing something? No. Can we keep Washington from doing something?

I'm beginning to think no. But what we can do is we can turn to the Lord. We can turn to God in prayer, for this enemy is not beyond him. We can understand that our God is sovereign, that his will will be done when people say, oh, you know, all these nuclear weapons, they're gonna blow the crust right off the earth. I'm like, no they're not.

Well, how do you know? Because I read the back of the book and I know how it ends and that's not how it ends. I know what happens because he already told us what's gonna happen. So we're not to be surprised when all these things happen. Fear is what remains when faith is gone.

And so when you start feeling fear, you need to work on your faith. God is on his throne. He is over all these events. He's above every ruler and every nation and his will will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Don't be afraid.

Have faith in God even when you have no faith in yourself. Even when you have no faith in your circumstances, you can still have faith in God. We serve a mighty God. He is our father. If somebody tries to hurt 1 of my children, if somebody tries to take 1 of my children away, I am gonna do whatever I can to stop them.

If I was God, that would be enough. You are his child. You are his beloved child. He gave his son to purchase you. Don't you think he knows how to hold on to you well?

The second was stand firm. Standing firm means to stand against. You and I are called to stand against Satan. It gives this picture of bravely resisting, of standing face to face with an adversary, a foe, and standing our ground. In other words, not backing up.

We're not being pushed backwards. God didn't tell Judah to go out and fight, did he? He didn't say, gather your army. He didn't say, sharpen your swords. He didn't say, get your spear points ready.

He didn't say that you need to get a lot of arrows. He said, go and stand because this battle doesn't belong to you. It belongs to the Lord. When we face Satan, the battle is not ours. You and I aren't gonna ever confront Satan.

We don't have the power to order Satan around or or kick him out of somewhere. The only power that that is that powerful belongs to the Lord. The only one that strong is God. And so you

and I are called to stand in Him, wrapped in Him, wrapped in His armor, in His weapons, and in that strength, we are to stand. Because when Satan comes up against us, when we are clothed in Christ, as the Bible talks about, then what Satan encounters is not you and me.

He encounters the living God. It means we don't allow ourselves to stray away from the truth of God's word in our beliefs, because when we allow ourselves to stray, we are not clothing ourselves in the Lord. We are clothing ourselves in our own beliefs and our own thoughts and our own preferences, and those won't save you. When people say, you know, my God wouldn't do that, but the Bible clearly says that God does do that, then what they have is a different God. They've allowed their beliefs to stray.

When people say I don't believe God would send anyone to hell, if they don't believe or if they do believe, it doesn't matter. Everybody's going to heaven. Well, you have obviously a different belief system. It's not based on the truth of God's Word. It's not based on what God said.

That belief system will not save you. It has no effect on the enemy. Satan loves compromise. He loves sin and he loves perversion and we can see it all around us. His desire is for us to love it too.

His desire is to maybe not, you're not gonna go, yes, I just all of a sudden love perversion. It doesn't start there, does it? It starts in compromise. It starts in tolerance. It starts when you and I just put up with something, when it becomes normal to us and when everything starts to become normal, when when sin starts to be tolerated and and when Satan can slip that sin in close enough, then suddenly we find ourselves not just tolerating it, but accepting it.

And then we start wrestling against those words that try to come out of our mouth or those thoughts that start coming into our head. We accept it in the entertainment and we accept it in our families because, well, it's cultural. Everybody's dealing with it. Everybody's doing it and we have all these things coming into our homes and our families that 20 years ago, 30 years ago, 40 years ago, people would have been arrested for and now it's tolerated, protected, even celebrated. So you and I have to stand.

These people are not our enemies, but before you know it, if we don't stand against Satan's schemes, before you know it, marriage is redefined. Before you know it, abortion becomes women's health care. And before you know it, pedophiles are relabeled as minor attracted persons and they're gonna be a protected class of citizens. You can bet that's what they're working on right now. They're not gonna stop.

Evil's not gonna stop. That is why you and I are called to stand against it with the truth to be salt and light in a place that is dead and dying and dark. The people are not our enemy, but the one behind them is. The dark forces behind their deception, the dark forces behind what's going on in their minds and in their hearts. That is our enemy and we are called to stand against his lies and proclaim the truth of God's word to a lost and dying world.



We can hate the sin of abortion. We can hate the sexual perversion and sex trafficking and gossip and lies and and division and all those things that the Bible calls sin. We can hate those things, but we should speak out to people so they can hear the truth. We should live lives that show them what the truth looks like and we should tell them the truth not to defeat them, but to free them because they're enslaved to sin. Jesus loves sinners enough to die for us, but he never compromised the truth.

People will say, oh, Jesus is just love. Jesus would get along with everybody and that is not true. Jesus did not get along with everybody. Did he talk to people? Absolutely.

The worst sinners Jesus would approach and tell about the kingdom of God. The worst sinners could receive his forgiveness. The thief on the cross dying, suffering the death penalty beside him in his last moments of life received forgiveness. God will forgive, but standing firm means not giving ground. What ground is Satan seeking?

Satan is not seeking your backyard real estate. He's not seeking your prized Pokemon collection. He is not looking at your bank account. Satan is coming after your mind and your heart. That's the real estate he wants.

He's coming after your thoughts with lies. He wants to destroy your purity. He wants to steal and kill your worship. And so Satan has all kinds of tricks. He knows your buttons.

He knows what gets you. He knows what gets me and he works at it. He's good. And if we don't clothe ourselves with Christ, we're going to be falling. Last one is worship our king.

Satan wants to claim our worship. He wants to silence our praise. When that army began to worship, it says the moment they began to worship, God started to move. When we magnify God, when we lift him up and we understand the battle belongs to him, then God is fully capable of taking the enemy out. The army that led with faith and worship saw a miracle, a mighty miracle.

You and I need to lead with faith and worship. The enemy is real. The enemy is after you. He's after me. There is no getting around that.

We can't change those facts. What we can change is wrapping ourselves in Christ, being strong in the Lord and worshiping our King. Lead with worship. When you feel discouragement and doubt start to creep in, start worshiping and I don't mean just putting a song on the radio. That helps.

Definitely would encourage you to do that, but that is not worship. That's somebody else worshiping. You're listening to worship. You need to worship. And when I say worship, I don't mean you need to sing with an angelic voice that that just sounds so beautiful.

I mean you need to tell God how much you love him. I mean, you need to tell God how great He is, how awesome He is and whether your voice matches the voice on the radio or not, you need to worship the king. And men, I'm gonna tell you something. I love that part where some men stood up in that assembly and started to worship God with loud voices. That if there is just something that happens when you stand up and you take a stand, because everybody around you gains a little bit of courage.

Everybody around you, when they had that shooting in Houston, I was listening to some of the testimonies of some of those people and it said as soon as it as this guy starts shooting, people turned and started to rush him and tackle him. I'm like, yes, you know, and one guy's like, I turned and these guys were hitting them all together and and just took him down and and pinned it and took the gun away. That's what we're supposed to do to Satan in this assembly. Mighty men of God, trusting God, leading with worship. When we worship, we focus on Jesus, who Jesus is.

We we magnify Him. We tell Him how much He's worth. We tell Him how much we love Him. We we talk about His promises and His power and we talk about His, what He's done in the past, what He's gonna do in the future, by the time you get through that list, you're not gonna be fearful anymore because your God is in charge. The battle belongs to the Lord.

One day, the promise is Satan and his demons will be gathered up and thrown into hell, and we will get to watch. One day, he will be judged. One day, it is over and this victory will be permanent. What if Satan has won some ground in your heart or your life today? What if today you're sitting in here going, pastor, I know I'm here in the battle, but I've lost the battle.

Satan's already hurt me. He's already wounded me. Satan's already got some real estate in my heart or in my mind. What do I do now? I wanna tell you no matter what your sin is, no matter what your past is, Jesus can heal and forgive.

Jesus can restore you. God is willing if you will put your trust and faith in Jesus Christ. And well, pastor, I've already done that, but I'm still feeling that. I'm still fearful. I'm still seeing some of the ground in my heart and mind is compromised.

We come back to him. You know why the Bible says God's mercies are new every morning? Because we need it every single day. You're never done. The battle's never over.

Satan's not gonna stop until God picks him up and pitches him squealing into the pit of hell. Until then we have a victory in the Lord. Whether you're a satanist, a witch, gang member, a doctor, a lawyer, a mom, a dad, teenager, a child, whoever you are, whatever you've done, if you come to the Lord, you understand God sent his son to die on the cross for your sin and you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, the Bible says you are washed clean and you are adopted as a child of God and that's all it is. That's the gospel. The good news is that when you come to Jesus Christ in faith and you repent of your sins and you turn to him, it is done.

And the rest of it is just working out the of us of us in this room have lost some ground to the enemy. So can I start with us? Maybe not right now, you may be having a good day, but I know there are times when you struggle. We all struggle. We all fall sometimes.

We all fail sometimes. That's why we need the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ. That should fuel our worship. The forgiveness and grace of our God is unending and aren't you glad. So this morning, can we just go to the Lord?

To let God look at that real estate in our heart and our mind, to see what ground the enemy has taken, and let this battle belong to the Lord this morning, to repent and turn from it, to let God have it and and to turn back to Christ in that area of your life. Let's pray together. Father, the enemy has gotten far too many victories in my life. Father, there's too many times when I've allowed him to come in, when I have not stood my ground, when I've accepted the lie, when I've accepted the temptation, too many times when when I felt he has spoken through my lips. Too many times when he's acted out through my actions.

And Father this morning, I wanna say I'm sorry. I wanna ask you to forgive me, to cleanse me, to wash me clean again. Thank you for being so merciful and so kind Help me to wrap myself in you and your promises and your strength and your mercy and your grace and and to stand against the enemy for your glory.