Life Is War — Delivery Transcript

Ephesians 6:10–20 (ESV) · Wes Terry · Sunday, October 18, 2020 · *Winning The Invisible War*

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All right, thanks to Taylor and the team for leading us. Have you ever wondered why is life so hard? Is life hard for you? I know it's hard for me. The other day during church, I asked the question, how many of you could use an encouraging word? And everybody in the sanctuary raised their hand because life is hard. It's challenging. And you may be walking through a season of your life right now that's particularly hard. And some people ask the question, why is that? If God is good and so powerful, why is life so hard?

And the way the Bible answers that question is because sin entered the world and messed everything up. The sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve, kind of broke the system. And then our sin, my sin and your sin and everybody else's sin, that complicates matters because every time we deviate from the design of God, it results in brokenness. Not just personal brokenness, but global brokenness, brokenness in the creation. So, well, why doesn't God just get rid of sin? Why didn't he just kind of take off the blanket? If sin is a blanket that's infected everything else, just take off the blanket.

And the reason God doesn't do that is because if he was going to destroy sin, he would have to destroy us. He would have to destroy the whole world. Because the whole world's been infected, so thoroughly infected, that he can't uninfect it without destroying everything. And the Bible does actually say there will come a day when he does destroy everything again. He destroyed it once through the flood, he's going to destroy it again through fire upon the second coming of Jesus, and the whole thing's going to burn up. But now, for now, he waits.

And the Bible says he waits because he's not willing that any would perish, but that all would come to repentance. So the reason God hasn't destroyed the earth yet is because he has left the church, Christians like you and me, on the planet to do the work of the kingdom, to preach the gospel and to make disciples. To announce the good news that even though the

world is broken, you can be redeemed. You can be saved. You can recover God's design to some degree in your life right now. And there is coming a day in which his design will be reignited on the earth.

It will be restored in a new heavens and a new earth. But until then, life is hard. And it's especially hard for Christians because of that, what I just mentioned. Because Christians are not only battling the world, broken as it is; our enemies are not only sinful passions and flesh and the world; we also battle a thing called the devil. In your notes, I say Satan is real. And that's shocking to a lot of people. We don't talk about Satan much in church. We don't hear a lot of sermons on Satan, but Satan is real.

And he sees Christians as an enemy combatant. He looks at me as an enemy combatant. If you're in Christ, he looks at you as an enemy combatant. He looks at this, what we're doing right now, this worship service, as an invasion into his territory and he does not take it lying down but rather goes to war against it. That's why when you're trying to live for the Lord, it's so difficult. Not only are you wrestling with a world that's been broken by sin, but you have an enemy who wants to kill, steal, and destroy, whose goal is to disintegrate what God wants to keep together in your life, who wants to destroy your family, your integrity, your trust in people, your trust in the Lord.

And you need to be aware of that if you're going to win the battle. So what we're going to do over the next couple of weeks is a series entitled Winning the Invisible War, because Paul in this last section of the book of Ephesians, which we've been studying, he does this. This is how he ties everything together. He says, I've told you everything you need to know about the Christian life. I've told you the gospel. I've told you what the gospel means in your practical day-to-day life. I've told you what it looks like in the home, in the workplace.

Now here's what you need to know before I close. Finally, brothers, he says, we're in a war. Life is a battle, and here's how you win. So let's look at it. Ephesians 6, he says, Finally, brothers, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. This is such a powerful text, and ultimately what we're going to do over the next three weeks is to really go deep into what Paul's saying. But for now, I just want to give you a bird's eye view of this simple truth. Life is a battle. The Christian life is war. Life is war. It's not a playground. It's not a vacation. Life isn't easy, especially if you're a Christian, you don't live your best life now.

If you're a Christian, life is a spiritual battle, and we need to wake up to that fact if we're going to win the war for our soul. And by the way, it's not only your soul, it's the soul of your family, it's the soul of your friends, it's the soul of our nation, it's the soul of our world. We are fighting against an enemy that is incredibly powerful, that is extremely sophisticated. And we need to know our enemy and we need to know the resources available to us and we need to know how to fight in order to win.

So that's what we're going to do this morning. The first thing I want us to look at is understanding the enemy. And if you take a look at what Paul just mentioned here, he talks about the enemy in ways that give us some clues about what this warfare looks like. And the first thing I mentioned in your notes is that if you're going to win the war and understand the enemy, you need to know the battle isn't against a human being. He says we battle not against flesh and blood. Our enemy is not human.

Even though it's easy to think that the enemy is human. Why? Because it's a human being who made you angry. It's a human being who lied about you. It's a human being who sinned against you physically, whether it's some kind of abuse or just a fight or whatever the case might have been. And it's easy to boil down your attention to the human being, but what Paul is saying is they're really not the ultimate enemy. When Paul's talking to Timothy, who was one of his protégés, he reminds Timothy as a pastor, remember Timothy, your battle's not against these people.

They've been captured by the devil to do his will. I got to remember that sometimes as a pastor when people make me angry and I get my feelings hurt. I got to remind myself, in a way people are just as much victims as you may have been. Now that doesn't mean that they're not guilty and don't need to repent and don't need to say they're sorry and take responsibility. Certainly, all that's true. All Paul is saying is don't forget the real battle is against principalities and powers of this dark age.

So the enemy's not human. The second thing he says is the enemy force against which we're fighting is multifaceted. It's not just the devil, although it is him. But he's like a general of an armed forces. Just think about the United States. We have the army, which is the ground forces, we have the air force, which is the air forces, we have the Navy and the Marines and the Coast Guard, which are the water forces. We have Space Force now, I guess. We have these different levels, and just like we have different levels for different theaters of war, so also is the spiritual battle wired in that way.

And so you have different realms of attack in your life, different demonic forces, different principalities and powers. And again, we're going to look at all of that in the weeks to come, and what does that even mean? But for now you just need to know the enemy is multifaceted, which leads to the third thing and maybe most important thing. The enemy that we face is incredibly powerful and is much stronger than we are. And some people

might want to disagree with that. And I even see people talk about, oh, I'm a demon hunter, and I go and hunt demons and, you know, not today, Satan, and they kind of flippantly talk about spiritual warfare and I think to myself, that's nonsense.

You actually read the book of Acts about a guy who thought he was a little bit big for his britches, and it ended up not working out too well for him because he was ignorant of the power of evil that he was dealing with. And so you need to know the enemy that we face is incredibly powerful. You cannot fight them in your own strength. It would be foolish to do so. And so we need to have a strategy that takes into account all of these things about our enemy. And Paul's strategy is actually pretty simple.

He boils it down into two basic headings. The first heading is, number one, you need to be strengthened by the Lord. That's the first thing he says right out of the gate. Be strengthened by the Lord. Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Because your enemy is more powerful than you, you need to have a power at work in you that is more powerful than the enemy, and that power is only available through the Lord. And he actually takes it even further than that. If you were to ask yourself, well, what does this power look like?

Is it just some kind of generic power? If you go back to Ephesians chapter 1, he uses this word power again and he defines it very narrowly. He says in Ephesians 1:17, this general prayer for the church in Ephesus, a prayer for knowledge, but he also says, I pray that you would know the power of God. So look first, he says in verse 17, I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints?

So a prayer for wisdom, a prayer for knowing salvation. But then 19 says, and I pray that you might know what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might. Look at this, verse 20, that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the age to come.

That's mind-blowing to me. When you ask yourself the question, well, I need to be strengthened by the Lord, what does that mean? It means that the Lord is making available to you and to me a very specific type of power, and that power is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. That power is the same power that enabled Jesus to ascend to the Father. That's incredible power. If it can raise a dead human corpse from death to life, that means it's strong enough to help you overcome temptations and to get over woundedness and to forgive the people who've sinned against you and to win the invisible war that's raging all around you.

It is resurrection power. Resurrection power. The power that raised up Lazarus out of the grave. The power that raised Jesus out of the grave. The power that will one day reanimate your human flesh that's in the dirt or in the grave or scattered all over the ocean if you got cremated, whatever leftovers there are to be able to reconstitute that and make you a new person, a new body, in a new heavens and a new earth, that power is available to you, which is amazing. We don't think about that, do we?

Sometimes we get so discouraged and so down on ourselves and God help me, help me do this, help me do that. And all the while we forget. He's already given it to me. The Spirit of God is already alive in me, and resurrection power is available to me if I will but ask and if I will do what he's saying I need to do to receive the power. So what do you got to do to receive the power? Well, it's not some magic prayer. It's not some hocus pocus potion. What Paul says, battle strategy number two, you need to suit up.

You need to be strengthened by the Lord and you need to suit up in the armor of God. He says it two different times. He says it in verse 11. Put on the whole armor of God. And he says it again in verse 13, put on the whole armor of God. And between those two verses, he talks about the enemy that we face, and then he talks about the actual armor of God and what it looks like, the seven different elements. So you've got to suit up. Let's look at what this armor actually consists of in verse 14.

He says, stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one, and then take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit with all prayer and supplication. And then he closes, to that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication or praying often for the saints.

So Paul mentions seven different elements that constitute the armor of God. He says, the belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the spirit, which is the word, and then all prayer. Now, obviously we can't go down deep into every single one of those seven elements, but I do want to this morning give you a bird's eye view of all seven and how they work together, because the main point of this text is not the individual elements of the armor of God.

The main point of the text is life is war. You're in a battle. Wake up. Suit up. Receive the power and fight and win. That's the main point. But I want you to see these elements and how they all work together so that you can weave these into your life because these are the things that must be in your life if you're going to put yourself in a position to be strengthened by the Lord. So he starts out with the belt of truth. And in your notes I say the belt of truth, the emphasis isn't on the word belt, it's on the word truth.

And all this means is you've got to be a person who affirms God's truth as your truth. Which in our culture is crazy town, right? Because our culture is shaped by moral relativism. Not just moral relativism; subjective relativism has been applied to every arena of our culture. So it does look like moral relativism where what's true for me may not be true for you. You do you, I'll do me, and we can just kind of not bother each other, and your truth is just as much true as my truth is for me, and it's invaded our ranks in every different way.

We are totally driven by subjective epistemology and morality and it's nonsense. There's no your truth or my truth. Now there may be truth as you perceive it, I'm not saying that, but there is actual truth in the universe because there's a thing called reality. God created the world, right? So when I say truth, I don't just mean truth that's in the Bible, although the things that are in the Bible are true. All truth is God's truth. And so we've got to basically do two things. We've got to discover what God's truth actually is from the Word, but also from biology and science and philosophy, moral philosophy.

We've got to discover truth. This is why you should love the life of the mind. You should pursue education. That doesn't mean everything your professor says is true. It just means all truth is God's truth. So first, discover the truth, and then secondly, more importantly, adopt God's truth as your truth. If God says it, I believe it, that settles it. You make his truth your truth. Why? Because that's what's going to put you in a position to receive resurrection power. Do the opposite. If you reject God's truth, whether it's spiritual truth or scientific truth, guess what's going to happen?

Reality is going to slap you in the face. It's like cause and effect because God created the universe. He created the laws of gravity, right? So what goes up must come down. You're going to violate the laws of gravity, it's going to hurt, right? You jump off a roof. You're going to hit the floor and break something. The same is true spiritually. You're going to deviate from God's design for relationships. Ouch. You want to deviate from God's design for finances? Ouch. Somebody I like to listen to says reality votes, and its vote's always the loudest.

So affirm God's truth as your truth. That's the belt of truth. The second thing he says is the breastplate of righteousness. And a lot of people get confused on this because what does righteousness even mean? And there's a lot of different ways that people try and define righteousness, but if you let Paul define this word for himself, he actually goes back and defines it in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 24. But on your notes it does say that the breastplate of righteousness is conforming yourself more and more to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's not just moral conformity, but it's conforming. You basically are identifying yourself with Christ so much so that you become like him in all of his ways. So if you go back to Ephesians 4:24, he says to take off the old man, corrupted by its deceitful desires, and to put on the new

man, which is created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. So for Paul, righteousness is looking like God. Forgiving like God forgives, loving like God loves, speaking like God speaks, being angry like God is angry.

In fact, you could go through the whole rest of that chapter, he says in verse 25, put away falsehood, speak the truth. Verse 26, be angry, do not sin. Verse 28, do honest work with your own hands. Be generous with what you've earned. Verse 29, put away filthy speech. Instead have words build up that fit the occasion, that give grace to those who hear. Verse 30 and 32, get rid of bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, get rid of all that. Replace it with kindness, tenderness, forgiveness what kind of forgiveness? Forgiveness that is like God's forgiveness in Christ.

In other words, make Jesus your identity. Identify yourself with God. Become like God in all of his ways. That's what it means to be righteous. Sexual immorality, impurity, those things must not even be named among you. Now that doesn't mean you're sinless. It doesn't mean you never fail. It doesn't mean you don't sometimes make mistakes. That's not what righteousness is; it's not sinless perfection. Jesus is the only human being who ever lived who will ever be sinless. But what it is, even though you're not going to be sinless and perfect, your breastplate is righteousness, your desire.

You have a hunger and a thirst for righteousness, and you believe, as I pursue this thirst, God is going to satisfy it. He's going to make me more and more like him. This is the work of salvation, making me more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ. So the breastplate of righteousness, the belt of truth, the third thing is the readiness given by the gospel of peace. I think this is as simple as doing evangelism. Shoes shod with the gospel of peace means having a readiness and willingness to engage in personal evangelism.

And this is true. Part of our mission statement as the church, Broadview Baptist Church: we are Great Commandment, Great Commission, Acts 1. Acts 1:8 says, you will receive power. Again, this idea of receiving resurrection power, he says, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and then what? And then you're going to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the uttermost parts of the earth. You read through the book of Acts, the Spirit of God falls, he fills them with power. What do they do? They preach the gospel.

They speak. They evangelize. There is a connection between you experiencing the power of God in your life and you having a willingness and ability to share the gospel. And maybe one of the reasons you're not experiencing the power of God in your life is because you haven't been speaking the gospel. I can think of times in my life where I didn't want to share the gospel. I didn't feel like going door to door. I didn't want to go do the outreach event at the church, even though I planned it and put it on the calendar.

But you show up and you go and you start knocking on doors, you overcome that funky feeling of rejection and all the stuff that goes into that, you get over it, right? You start knocking on doors, you start sharing the gospel, guess what happens? God's power starts coming down. It's amazing. And you can go from having the worst attitude, and then four hours later, after you've been sharing the gospel all day long, it's like you're ready to scream at the top of your lungs. You are super pumped. You are excited.

Nothing can get you down because you've been sharing the love of Christ with others. There's a connection between you receiving the power of God in your life and preaching the gospel. So have shoes shod with a readiness, a willingness, an intentionality to preach the gospel of peace. So shield of faith, belt of truth, I'm sorry, breastplate of righteousness, belt of truth, shoes shod with the gospel. Then the next thing he mentions is the shield of faith. In all circumstances, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish the flaming darts of the evil one.

And in your notes I say the shield of faith is a trust that the Lord knows and will do what is best regardless of your personal circumstances. When I think about the shield of faith, I think about people who are suffering, who are in the hospital. They just got a cancer diagnosis. Their children just started running away from the Lord. Tragic events. And in the valley low, when you're questioning God's wisdom and you're questioning God's goodness, you say with Peter, where else can I go, Lord? Because you have the words of life.

And I don't understand your will and I don't understand your ways and I have no idea what you're doing. And I'm frustrated and I am angry. And I'm not hiding that. Maybe you shout and you cry and you yell at the Lord. But at the end of the day, you have a resolve in your chest that says, I will not shipwreck my faith. I will not abandon my trust in the Lord. Where else am I going to go? You have the words of life. That commitment, that faith, puts you in a position to receive God's power.

And I've seen people endure through incredible tragedy, unspeakable, unspeakable grief. But they make it and they hold on and they are stronger as a result of coming out on the other side, and God does things in their faith. They receive a supernatural power that they didn't even know they were able to have. People will say the same things, like, I don't know how I got through it. The Lord gave me what I needed, when I needed it, and day by day. That's what Paul's talking about here, the shield of faith.

Hebrews 11:1 says faith is the assurance of things hoped for. So you don't see it, but I believe it. It's the conviction of things not seen. So take up the shield of faith; extinguish the darts of the evil one. He's throwing the darts in your pain. C. S. Lewis says God whispers to us in our pleasures. He shouts to us in our pains. Well, if God's shouting to you in your pain, you certainly know the devil is. He is throwing fiery darts. His goal is to crush your faith, to cause you to give up trusting people, to give up trusting yourself, to give up trusting God.

And so every time he throws those accusations and those doubts, you throw up the shield of faith and you extinguish the fiery darts. The last defensive element is the helmet of salvation. Most commentators think that this refers to salvation itself, and in your notes I just say that it's remembering salvation is both an ongoing process as well as a future promise. So salvation isn't just a past decision. I prayed the sinner's prayer. I got baptized when I was seven. And then I forget about it. No, if you're going to do battle against the enemy, you got to remember I am daily being saved.

I was saved, I'm being saved, and I will be saved. It's a future promise of glorification. So you may get frustrated that you're not where you need to be quite yet. But don't abandon your faith. Don't shipwreck. Don't let the devil win. Remember, our salvation is a work in progress. He hasn't given up on you. Don't give up on him. And then Paul closes with two final defensive weapons. The first one is the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, and then the last one is all prayer and supplication.

This bit about the Word of God is again pretty simple. It's just the Bible. Intake the Bible: read the Bible, have the Bible preach to you, listen to sermons about the Bible, read books that explain the Bible, listen to songs that sing about the Bible that beautify the Bible, the truth of the Bible. These are all kind of interconnected, these elements, this armor. The Bible helps you discover the truth. It helps you maintain faith. It helps you battle temptation. The Bible is how you come to know the Word of God.

How do they hear unless someone tells them? They all work together. So intake the Bible, and then the last one is all prayer. And I think it's interesting when it says prayer, it doesn't attach it to an object. You have the sword of the spirit, the word. You have the shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness. Everything has an object, whether a breastplate or a helmet or whatever, but prayer doesn't. Prayer is just this thing. And I think he says it that way to make the point that prayer undergirds everything else.

It's kind of like the Under Armour. It undergirds everything and it does. You think about doing battle in the Christian life; prayer is what interacts with all of these things. Prayer interacts with faith. Prayer interacts with evangelism. You pray before you evangelize. Prayer interacts with truth. You're going to read the Bible, discover God's truth, you want to pray first because spiritual truths are spiritually understood. Prayer is the thing that undergirds everything else. And so those are the offensive weapons and the defensive armor that enables us to win the battle. But again, don't miss the forest for the trees.

The point is not to get into the nitty-gritty of what do these different things mean. The point is you're in a battle. Life is hard. It's not supposed to be easy. You're not supposed to just have an easy Christian life. The Christian life is war. Because you have an enemy called Satan who has a multifaceted army that is hell-bent on ruining your spirituality. So wake up and fight the battle. How do you fight the battle? Allow yourself to be strengthened by the Lord.

Stop living life in the flesh. Stop trying to do things in your own power, according to your own wisdom; repent of that self-sufficiency and receive the grace of God and the power of God into your life.

How do I receive it? Suit up in the armor. Make God's truth your truth. Trust God even when it's not easy. Remember salvation is a process and a promise. Pray without ceasing. Do these things that we're talking about. And you'll put yourself in a position to win the invisible war. Now, what I want to do to close is just give you three quick challenges about how I think this lands. Some of us need to hear this text and we need to toughen up. Some Christians quit so early in the Christian life because they think the Christian life's supposed to be easy, and you just need God, your heavenly father, to come alongside of you like a dad would his son or his daughter and say, toughen up.

This is no reason to cry. You need to get real. Do not be surprised by the fiery trial you're going through. This is the life that we have to live. The world is broken. It's going to be unbroken one of these days, but until that day comes, you've got to toughen up. Second thing, wake up. And this applies probably to most of us. I posted last week, every time I preach on spiritual warfare, I start seeing it all around me. And I don't know if it's because I was blind to the spiritual warfare in those other seasons or if I'm just trying to see the devil under every rock, or maybe it just intensifies when you talk about it.

I don't know. The point is we got to wake up. Especially in the West, especially in America, especially now, when everybody's focused on flesh and blood, everybody's focused on the personalities. Our culture's on a razor-thin edge, partisanship and polarization, and it's so crazy. And we need to wake up to the reality the people aren't the problem. It's the ideologies and the demonic forces and the devil who's using this chaos for his purposes and we're not even fighting that warfare if we're not awake to what's going on, so wake up. And then lastly, some of us need to hold fast.

Hold on. Don't give up. Hebrews 12 says, consider him who endured such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary, so that you'll hold on. Look to him, the founder and the perfecter of our faith. Endure through these challenges. You are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, and so don't give up. Don't give up. Your failures may not be because you're such a failure. It just may be the attack of the evil one trying to shipwreck your faith. Do not give up. Ask the Lord for his help.

Be strengthened by his power. Suit up with the armor of God. And then stick with us for the next couple of weeks as we dive deeper and deeper into these truths. Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for this time in the Word. And I pray over these next couple of weeks as we delve down deep into your design and just the nature of the world as it is. You would inform our minds, illuminate the invisible war that rages all around us, help us to see it clearly, even more clearly than we see the surface level.

The surface-level battle, that's not what's most important. What is most important are the souls of men and women who are entrapped by darkness and satanic, demonic bondage and who are craving liberation. And we're here, you put us on the earth to preach the good news, to shine the light in the darkness and to rescue people out of the kingdom of darkness and bring them into the kingdom of your marvelous light, the light of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so help us to win the war, help us to be wise in how we fight, and help us to be courageous to step onto the front lines and to engage with the enemy in a wise and powerful way, defeating the enemy in your power and in your strength.

And now we thank you in advance because we believe you're going to use your word to accomplish those purposes. And we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.