



# gracefellowship

Series: Rescue+Mission  
Date: December 17, 2023

Title: Our Weapons for War  
Passage: Matthew 1:21

Advent Reading: Joy

If you are new with us, you are jumping into the middle of a teaching series that is not your typical approach to the Christmas story! We have been looking at Christmas as a Rescue Mission. There is a war that is raging for the hearts and souls of mankind and Jesus came to destroy the work of the devil (1 John 3:8b). For the past two weeks we have talked about our adversary and some of the weapons he brings to this war:

## **Satan's Weapons:**

- 1. Deception/ Lies**
- 2. Death/ Fear**

Today I want to discuss one final weapon, or tool, of Satan and then we are going to turn our attention to the weapons we wield in this spiritual battle. But before we look at those things there are two things I want to remind you of:

- Our struggle is not against flesh and blood! This is a spiritual battle and the powers of darkness are our real enemies. It's easy to make enemies and villains out of people, but from a biblical perspective, they are captives in this war who have been deceived to embrace lies that have lead them away from the goodness and glory of God.
- We do not have to live in fear of our enemy!

## **:: 1 John 4:4**

**4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.**

Satan would desire to keep us living in fear and believing that his schemes have power over us, but it is Jesus who has overcome and has given us victory!

## **:: Romans 8:31-39**

**<sup>31</sup> What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. <sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written:**

**“For your sake we face death all day long;  
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”<sup>[i]</sup>**

**<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,<sup>[k]</sup> neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

We don't have to live in fear of Satan, but we do have to be aware of his strategies and understand that he still has the power to trip us up and entice us to sin against our Savior. We have to constantly be alert as we walk through this world because our enemy has told us he is a roaring lion looking for someone to devour! If you were on a literal battlefield you would not just casually walk around in shorts and a tee-shirt! You would put on battle armor and carry your weapon with you and you would constantly have your head on a swivel looking for danger and being observant of anything that may exist to harm you.

In this spiritual battle, I'm afraid all too often that Christians are walking around completely unaware that danger looms around us to entice us away from God. And this is one of final weapon of Satan we are going to talk about before we start looking at the weapons we have in this war.

**Satan has devised what the Bible calls the “Pattern of the world,” or “System of the world.”**

**:: Romans 12:2**

**<sup>2</sup> Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.**

Paul is writing to Christians and telling us- actually commanding us- not to conform to the pattern of the world.

In Greek, the word for “pattern” means “to form according to a mold.” If you're doing any holiday baking you might use a mold to for a cake or sugar cookies to decorate. The goal of a mold is that everything is uniform and looks the same.

We are told not to look like everyone and everything else in the world. But the Greek word for “world” here is not *kosmos*, or created world, it’s *aion*, or age. We are supposed to fight against conformity to the things in this age. Think about it like this:

The devil has created an atmosphere that is ungodly. He wants you to get so comfortable in this atmosphere that you don’t even think twice about doing ungodly things because it’s what everyone is doing. The pattern of this world is defiance to the things of God.

**The world system opposes the Word of God, influencing everything from relationships to finances to government to entertainment to sciences and religion and everything in-between.**

Here’s what I think Satan does with this weapon- he bombards us with so much ungodliness that we became calloused to it and we sleep walk through life not putting up a fight against harmful, destructive things at all.

This is why it is often confusing to the people around us when we claim to be followers of Jesus but still operate in sinful ways. When we engage in racism or sexism or lie and cheat to save money on our taxes, or absorb unwholesome entertainment just like non-Christians, but we claim to be different than the world, they look at us and ask, “How are you any different than me?” “You go to church on Sunday? Or read your Bible occasionally? But in every other way you are just as engaged in the moral filth of this age as everyone else.”

I have to confess that I fall prey to this and have really convicted lately of my own lazy attitude toward fighting for purity and godliness and righteousness, especially in the form of entertainment. I can get so sucked into watching TV and movies at a mind-numbing rate with little-to-no concern for the language or violence or sexual nature of the things I’m watching. And if I’m being really transparent, when I’m not in the fight and standing firm against the lies of Satan, I crave those things. Why? Because of my dual citizenship as a citizen of heaven, but also a citizen of this world. Every day you and I have to decide which kingdom we are going to live for.

John says it this way:

**:: 1 John 2:15-17**

**<sup>15</sup> Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.**

**<sup>16</sup> For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.**

**<sup>17</sup> The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.**

Our eyes and our flesh lust after the things that make us feel good. Our pride says we deserve all the things the world can give us and we can still live for God at the same time. But we can't. We can't serve two masters!

Satan's weapon is conformity to the patterns of this age. As disciples of Jesus we are called to a different standard and we are called to be set apart from the world. That's what it means to be holy- to be set apart. We don't conform to the way everyone else things, acts or believes because our lives are guided by a higher power and a higher calling that is revealed in the Word of God.

Alright, for three weeks we have talked about Satan's weapons in this war and how God defeats those weapons. Here's where I want to turn the page today and acknowledge that we also have weapons to use in this war! We are not simply bystanders in the battle!

**:: 2 Corinthians 10:3-5**

**<sup>3</sup> For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. <sup>4</sup> The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. <sup>5</sup> We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.**

It's Christmas, and as we celebrate the birth of Jesus we need to recognize that He came to demonstrate the weapons we would fight with in this spiritual battle. Because Jesus came to be our hero and Savior, we need to learn from Him how to live in this world and fight like He did. When John introduces Jesus in his gospel he doesn't tell the story of angels visiting shepherds or magi bringing gifts. John tells the story of Jesus' birth as one who made His dwelling among us and moved in to our world with intentionality and strategy.

**:: John 1:9-14**

**<sup>9</sup> The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.**

**<sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.**

**<sup>11</sup> He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.**

**<sup>12</sup> Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—**

**<sup>13</sup> children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.**

**<sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

Here are the first weapons we learn to use in this spiritual battle as we model the ways of Jesus: grace and truth!

## **The weapons Jesus gave us to use and modeled for us are grace and truth.**

Why are these important? Remember, Satan's first weapon was deception- lies. What do we need to combat lies? Truth? A world that has been deceived by lies needs to be shown grace and truth. The order of things is important. We need to show grace to people before we just start spouting truth at them! When we try to speak truth and don't show grace, we just sound hostile to people and it makes people feel like we view them as enemies. By all means, speak truth to people- but always do it with grace, not judgment or condemnation.

When we see Jesus we see someone who meets people where they are and shows extravagant grace to them, but then He never backs down from telling them the truth. Truth is best received when grace is demonstrated along with it.

The next aspect of Spiritual Warfare God instructs us in is being dressed for battle! My youngest son likes to play airsoft- think paintball with plastic pellets instead of paint. I can tell you from experience it doesn't feel good to get hit by those pellets. But the first time we ever went we wore blue jeans and sweatshirts and that was about it. Now when my son goes to play he looks like he's in the marines and going into live combat! He has a tactical vest with padding; he has padded gloves to protect his fingers; he has upgraded his helmet and eye protection- the kid is ready for battle!

In a similar manner, Paul writes to Christians and explains how we are to clothe ourselves for battle as we engage in this spiritual war. God doesn't leave us defenseless just hoping we survive! He gives us a way to engage in the battle that is taking place.

### **:: Ephesians 6:10-18**

**<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.**

**<sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.**

**<sup>12</sup> 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.**

**<sup>13</sup> 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.**

**<sup>14</sup> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,**

**<sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.**

**<sup>16</sup> 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 Lord's people.**

The first thing Paul makes us aware of is that we get our strength from God. We aren't trying to fight battles in our own power and ability. God fights for us and God strengthens us for battle.

Secondly, we are told multiple times in this passage to stand our ground. The Bible frequently uses language about standing firm in our faith. When we come to faith in Christ we are encouraged to abide in Him. Our strength in God is shown when the pattern of this world encourages us to walk away from God, enticing us with our lust and pride, and we stand our ground instead, staying true to what God has called us to as citizens of His Kingdom.

The armor that we are given equips us to stand firm in faith.

**Our Armor:**

- **Belt of TRUTH**

We've already talked this morning about the powerful weapon of truth in a world that has been deceived by lies and deception.

- **Breastplate of RIGHTEOUSNESS**

We need to be guarded by knowing and doing the right things as God has instructed us. This is not our own righteousness, but the righteousness of Jesus that guides us. The righteousness of Jesus covers us fully like a breastplate covers all the vital organs of a soldier.

- **Feet fitted with the gospel of PEACE**

When soldiers march in battle they have protective coverings for their feet. When we think of marching into battle, we are not seeking to bring chaos and destruction, but peace! And peace with God is accomplished in spiritual warfare through the acceptance of the gospel of Jesus. We carry His message of peace into the world- a peace that is renewing all things and restoring the world.

- **Shield of FAITH**

Faith allows us to fight off the flaming arrows Satan launches at us. Faith acts as a shield around us keeping those things which would deter us from following Jesus at bay.

- **Sword of the Spirit- the WORD of GOD**

The one offensive weapon we have is the Word of God. God's Word has divine power to help us know God and advance forward in His Kingdom. Remember how John describes Jesus- He is the Word of God. "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God." (John 1)

We are not only meant to know what the Bible says as the Word of God, we are meant to know Jesus, who is the Word made flesh! Knowing Jesus in an intimate way allows us to stand firm in the spiritual battle we are in.

- **Pray!**

At the end of Ephesians 6 we are told to pray. That is the next weapon we are equipped with:

**Prayer and Fasting are weapons we must bring to the battle.**

In Mark 9 Jesus has been with Peter, James and John on a mountain where He revealed His full glory to them. When they come off the mountain the rest of the disciples are in a tough situation because a man has brought his demon possessed son to the disciples and they can't cast the demon out. When Jesus removes the demon the disciples ask why they couldn't do it, to which Jesus replies, "This kind can come out only by prayer," (some translations say prayer and fasting).

In January we are going to lead our church into a period of 21 days of prayer and fasting. We believe that prayer invites God's presence into our lives, but it also brings His power into our lives! We need to learn to pray for big things! Ask God to wreck Satan's kingdom of darkness! We can wreak havoc on the spiritual world with the power of prayer. When we pray the kingdom of darkness trembles because we are no longer acting in our own power- we are asking for power from God to fall on us. When we couple prayer with fasting and we humble ourselves before God we make room for God to do even more in our lives that we can imagine.

What weapons are you currently using in this spiritual battle? What weapons do you need to familiarize yourself with? What weapons do you need to ask God to enhance in your life so you can stand your ground and stay true to the faith?

Pray

- Transition to Kid's Ministry Play with Skit Guys Video

Following the service today, if you need someone to pray with you, our Prayer Ministry Team will be available at the front of the church.