

War Games – Battle Stations

9/11/20

Ephesians 6:10-18

Sunday AM

From as far back as I can remember, whether it was w/ an Atari, an X-box, or a Play Station – I've been a big fan of playing video games. In fact, if I were being honest, I can get lost for hours on end – oblivious to the world around me. And of all the games I enjoy playing, I'm a big fan of 1st person shooters – especially war games. There's just something about engaging in the battle and in the strategy of warfare I find tantalizing. And yes, **I know it is all pretend!**

Yet there's a war going w/in and around us that's NOT pretend. It's a war being waged day-by-day and min-by-min that requires our full attention and engagement. But it's not a battle b/w flesh/blood – but a spiritual battle being waged in which the battlefield is our minds, our lives, our families/communities.

Listen to the Apostle Paul – Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle isn't 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. So, 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. Stand firm then, w/ the belt of truth buckled around your waist, w/ the breastplate of righteousness in place, and w/ your feet fitted w/ the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, w/ which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Pray in the Spirit on all occasions w/ all kinds of prayer/requests. W/ this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

A cursory reading of this passage speaks to the reality of a spiritual battle that's being waged and the (5) essential principles we must set into motion to if we're to successfully survive/thrive in this battle. We must:

1. *Be Strong in the Lord... b/c we're under attack*
2. *Put on the Armor of God... b/c the struggle is real*
3. *Stand firm... b/c we have a real enemy against us*
4. *Be Alert... b/c temptation is certain to come*
5. *Always Keep on Praying... b/c God is our hope*

As we begin this study, it's my hope that over the next few weeks, we can gain not only an awareness of this spiritual war, but that we'll also get equipped/prepared for when this battle breaks out in our lives. It's my hope we'll learn how to look beyond the physical realm to see what's happening in the heavenly realm, and that we'll learn how to take up arms.

This AM – I want to speak to the **reality** of the battle.

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so you can take your stand against the **devil's schemes**. For our **struggle** isn't 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.*
vs. 10-12

I The Battle is **DEFINITE**

Paul begins his encouragement (*be strong in the Lord and put on the armor of God*) w/ an essential lesson that requires a basic understanding – **absolutely, there is a spiritual war being waged w/in and around us.**

Yet sadly, when we talk about spiritual warfare, it's staggering how many people choose not to believe it.

- 61% of Americans believe in the devil... yet only –
- 55% of evangelicals think Satan is a real being
- 83% of Catholics see Satan as just a symbol of evil

This is one of Satan's best tricks – making people believe he doesn't exist. But let me assure you, He may be out of fashion, but he is NOT out of business.

I know the devil is in business for 2 reasons: (1) b/c the Bible says so; and (2) b/c I've had the unfortunate misery of doing business w/ him. *Billy Sunday*

W/out question, the Bible says the devil is real:

schemes (*methodeia*) refers to an orderly, systematic plan using trickery/deceit to win. The idea is that all of Satan's attacks, whether on a person, family, church, community, or country – are all **tailor-made**.

Meaning – Satan's tactics aren't random/haphazard, but specifically custom-designed w/ you in mind.

David Jeremiah suggested – If you could sneak into Satan's office and peek into his files, you'd likely be surprised to find a file folder w/ your name on it, b/c **he keeps a file on you** – and inside this file are all the strategies/tactics he's tried on you to cause you to stumble. Now, he doesn't waste his time w/ the ones that've failed; but on the one's that worked, he/the demonic use variations of these strategies to cause you to stumble today and in the future. And will keep using them until you, thru Christ, stop falling prey to them.

He will attack you sometimes by force and sometimes by fraud. By might or by sleight, he will seek to overcome you – and no unarmed man can stand against him. Never go out w/out all your armor on, for you can never tell where you may meet the devil. He's not omnipresent, but nobody can tell where he is not, for he and his troops of devils appear to be found everywhere on this earth. Spurgeon

Point – Satan isn't out there haphazardly shooting from the hip. He/the demonic are scheming/planning on how they can kill, steal, and destroy you and God.

struggle (*pale*) pictures two men in hand-to-hand combat – only there are no rules. The goal was to pin the other to the ground by his throat. At stake, the loser was to have his eyes gouged out. So, you can imagine, w/ no rules, the deception/cheating used to win.

See – Satan's aim is to **prevent/pervert** people from being saved, to **discredit/disable** the witness of any Christian and is to **fluster/frustrate** God's will in the lives of all people to hold them down and take them out. *Satan doesn't care if he gets you too right or too left – just off God's narrow road that leads to life.*

BTW – by all indications, he's winning more than he's losing. I fear that all too often, we minimize the work of the devil in the events of our lives. Of course, this doesn't mean there's a demon behind every bush or that the devil makes us do it – but you can be sure Satan is alive/well and at work in our world today.

II The Battle is **DAILY**

is (*esti*) a present tense verb tells us that our struggle is not a onetime encounter but a moment-by-moment and day-by-day struggle against a savvy enemy.

We can't drop our guard or go on a spiritual vacation – ***vigilance is essential***. The second we drop our guard is the moment satanic forces attack – and these forces are relentless in their attempts to thwart God's will in our lives. It's guerrilla warfare at the highest level.

This is why thru-out Scripture we're encouraged to ***be alert*** and to ***be on guard***: *Be alert, be on watch! Your enemy, the devil, roams around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.* 1 Peter 5:8

The lie Satan enjoys providing is that we have random battles here/there – so, we don't need God's armor at all times. But this is a lie; and to act on this lie will leave the believer vulnerable. Ask yourself, "Do you believe you're in a persistent/personal spiritual war?" If we don't believe this, then we're already in trouble! If we do believe it, we're still in harm's way – and in need of God's power/armor to see us thru to victory.

III The Battle is **DISGUISED**

Our struggle is not flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. vs. 12

Paul is explaining that this battle we're in isn't obvious to us b/c it's taking place in the spiritual realm – although it'll often present itself in the physical realm.

Spiritual warfare is the conflict being waged in the invisible, spiritual realm that often manifests itself in the visible, physical realm. Frequently, the cause is something we cannot see, but its affects are something we cannot overlook. *unknown*

In fact, I think this is what is in effect around us now in our nation. From the virus, to the riots, to the sin of racism – and nearly everything in b/w – families and communities are being shredded by a systematic and evil plot against everything/anything decent/good. And while it might be manifesting itself thru the media/politics and thru social media/hype, our nation has been flung headlong into a spiritual battle that has made itself recognizable in the physical realm.

Folks, we can't be so naïve as to think there's not a greater war being waged beyond what we can see. In fact, it is w/out a doubt that this is as bold as the enemy has been in my lifetime, yet it's not the first time he's been so brazen. Satan is the ***great Geppetto*** pulling the strings. But make no mistake, while it's hard enough to fight an enemy you can see; it can seem *impossible* to defeat an unseen enemy – **but it's not!**

Thankfully though, God hasn't left us to fend for ourselves. The good news is in spite of the reality that the battle is *definite, daily, and disguised* – it's also **defensible**. Meaning we don't have to be defeated, demoralized, disheartened, or discouraged – we can overcome. We can win over the enemy.

IV The Battle is **DEFENSIBLE**

Before we go further, let me remind you of an essential truth – while Satan/the demonic can wreak havoc in the lives of people, but he can never totally defeat a Christian b/c he can never get us back into a position of lostness we were once entangled. Why? B/c we were once-and-for-all delivered from sin unto God thru the transaction of God's grace thru our faith.

If anyone be in Christ, he is a new creation, the old is gone, and all things have been made new. 2 Cr. 5:17

This is b/c of what Jesus accomplished thru His death, burial, and resurrection that is imputed to us by God.

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption thru His blood, the forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:13-14

In salvation, we've been rescued from the power and penalty of sin – colonized/given citizenship in God's kingdom – and bought back by the grace of God.

Thus, while the enemy might be out to kill, steal, and destroy, there are limitations to his abilities – and certainly we should be aware of his schemes to defeat us, to discourage us, to blunt, and even frighten us – yet b/c of the finished work of Christ on the cross now abiding in us – ***we can be more than conquerors.***

What exactly is required to defend ourselves – we must *be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so you can take your stand against the devil's schemes...*

While I'm going to go into more detail in a few weeks, today, I want to highlight these (2) encouragements...

A Be **STRONG** in the Lord

be strong (*endunamoo*) imp. pas. – ***to put power into.*** Like how gasoline must be poured into a car to fuel its power, the H.S. must be poured into a believer to enable them to engage in spiritual warfare.

Paul is explaining that for us to be able to stand under Satan's assault, we must continually be empowered and strengthened by the H.S. b/c God's power is the only power capable of overcoming the wiles of the devil to provide us w/ the strength to resist his tactics.

Such power can only be derived from one source – the Cross. In the Gospel, there is sufficient power to overcome any weapon formed against us.

The question is how can a person be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power? Listen to ***2 Corinthians 10:***

*For though we live in the world, we don't wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight w/ are not the weapons of the world. Rather, they have **divine power** to demolish strongholds. 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. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5*

- **RECOGNIZE** the Power of the Cross
- **RESIDE** Under the Influence of the H.S.
- **RESPOND** in Obedience to the Will/Word of God
- **REST** in the in the Promise of God's Provision

B **PUT** on the Full Armor of God

The armor of God isn't something we put on outside in by our flesh ability, but inside out by faith.

put on (*enduo*) meaning to get fully dressed or to put on clothes. The verb tense stresses – *to urgently do it now and to never take it off.*

Notice (2) things in this admonition:

1 – We're to Put on the **FULL** Armor of God

We're not to selectively put on some of it, but **all** of it – if we're going to w/stand the onslaught of the enemy.

Can you imagine playing in a football game wearing only shoulder pads but going w/out a helmet. Can you say concussion! The first thing I'd do in a football game if my opponent wasn't wearing a helmet, is make sure that we butt heads – b/c he's guaranteed to lose.

Safe to say, if there's a hole in our armor b/c we omit putting it on, Satan/the demonic are certain to notice – and certain to attack that area of our lives.

2 – We're to Put on **GOD'S** Armor

It's not man's armor or ability/ingenuity – it must be God's. Meaning – if we choose to go into spiritual battle on our own w/out God, we're certain to be defeated b/c spiritual success requires God's power.

When it comes to spiritual warfare, the battle is real. If we're to overcome, we can't live as Christian civilians; instead, we must live as Christian soldiers. Likewise, we can't be running around like a bunch *Christian* streakiers either – only wanting to wear the helmet of salvation – we must put on the full armor of God.

When I think of spiritual warfare, I'm reminded of the famous newsreel of President Roosevelt addressing Congress the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor – he called Dec. 7, 1941 a “day that will live in infamy.” The President declared to Congress what everyone already knew – the U.S. was at war.

Church, **we too are at war!** But this war is unlike any war in history. It's a spiritual war being waged for the souls of all people and for the souls of every nation – and ultimately, eternity hangs in the balance.