

Harris Creek Baptist Church
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Unseen Battles: Battle Ready
April 24, 2022

Battle Ready
Ephesians 6:10-18

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.

(JP walks on stage using crutches) Did you guys know Waco has a skate park? In case you didn’t: they have one. It doesn't have a sign up, and I think it should, “No one over the age of 40.” I think that needs to be there. But it wasn't there. These are for that moment (JP holds up his crutches) I can make do without them. But yeah. Weston, my nine- year-old wanted to go ride his scooter at the skate park. So, I'm like, “Sure, let's go!” And we drive over there, and I dust off the old board. When I was his age, I rode a skateboard everywhere I went. We had a little ramp in my backyard and all the things. So, I'm like, “Hey, let's go! It's been a minute, but it's like riding a bicycle, I'm sure.” Turns out it's not.

And so, we go over there, and I'm thinking he's going to jump out and kind of just do his thing. And he's in the back. He's like, “Hold on, dad. Let me put my pads on.” And I'm like, “Well, we can do that over there.” He says, “No, I don't even want to get out, I don't even go out there without my pads on.” And so, he's taking his time, puts his knee pads on, his elbow pads, pads, wrist guards. Got his helmet. I'm like, “Are you ready?” “Yeah, I'm ready.” And I'm thinking, what a terrible influence I am, right? Because I just got my running shorts and a T shirt, and—I don't use the running shorts for anything else other than every now and then trip to the skatepark. So, we go out there, and I just go up to the little top of a ramp and drop in and hit a bowl. I mean, I was there for about 37 seconds. Okay, true story. First, I go on Instagram, let the whole world know I'm there, about 37 seconds later; and it was the least graceful fall you could imagine. Like, I go up a ramp, and this foot just gets stuck. It slips off the board, it gets stuck, and the rest of my body goes forward and I fall. Somehow this side of my knee is bleeding, and this side of my

knee is bleeding, and over here is bleeding, and just there's random wounds around me. And I'm lying there and Westons like, "Are you okay, dad? Are you okay?" And I'm like, "I'm going to be okay, son, but I need some space." And I'm thinking, "I'm not sure because there's a lot of pain." And he's like, "Between one and ten—" (Crowd laughs) Not that question. He's like, "Between one and ten. How bad does it hurt?" I'm like "11, 11!" This is everyone's entertainment at the moment. I get up and I hobble to the bench where I sit, and I just tell him I was like, "Hey, you can keep going, you can ride. And I'll sit here." And here's the reality. I wasn't ready. That's what's going on there. If you said, "Hey, why did that happen?" Old and uncoordinated; those could all be appropriate answers. But the truth is, I wasn't ready. I didn't stretch, I didn't prepare. I didn't have pads on.

I wasn't ready for that moment, and I got hurt. And when you're not ready, you get hurt. And this is how I see so many Christians living the Christian life and entering into the spiritual battle, because that's what happens when you profess faith in Jesus. The second you say Jesus come into my heart; I trust that you died for my sins. God raised you from the dead, which you give me your Holy Spirit. That moment you set foot in a battle, you entered into a spiritual battle that candidly you and I don't think enough about. And we're in that battle. And the enemy's coming after. He's after our beliefs. He's after our children. He's after our purity. He's after our marriage. He's after our business. Anything he can do to make us unsuccessful; he's attacking us. And for a lot of us, we're not ready. We're not ready. And if you're not ready, you're going to get hurt.

So we're in this series Unseen Battle, a series on spiritual warfare. And as we recap, week one, we talked about how Satan is a fallen angel. God sent him to the Earth. He's here, not in hell, on the Earth. And he takes one third of the angelic realm with him. And week two we talked about how he has a lot of authority to do terrible things to us here. It's quite unsettling. And that was where we said, "Hey, you've got to stand *firm*." And that was an acronym: *Fall* into worship, *identify* what is good, *resist* sin, and *maintain* hope. Stand firm in the face of the enemy. And then week three we talked about how Satan is no match for Jesus. Jesus can effortlessly say, "2000, demons come out, go into the pig, sure, whatever. See ya." He's no match for Jesus. And then in week four on Easter last week, we talked about how the cross triumphs over evil, it makes a spectacle of him. How Satan is defeated at the cross. But in reality, Satan's running this scorched Earth strategy where he's defeated, but he's not gone. He's in this middle ground where he's just destroying everything. He just wants to burn the place down.

And so today, I want to give you hope that you have everything you need to be victorious over him. That's what I hope you leave here with this morning, that you have everything you need to defeat the enemy. And so, we're going to talk about being battle ready, being ready for the battle. I'm going to be in Ephesians chapter six. If you want to turn there. This is the classic spiritual warfare chapter. If you ask a mature Christian, where am I going to go to talk about spiritual warfare in the Bible, they will typically take you here. Ephesians, chapter six. It's intense. This is a note taker sermon. Okay, stay with me. Lots of points. I'm going to fly. I'm going to move fast. How many points do I typically have? (Audience answers "3") I got seven. Okay, seven. And so, stay with me. This is going to be one you're going to want to go back and reflect on. Here's why

it's important. We know that the enemy is powerful, and we know that he's no match for Jesus. But I'm not sure that we're convinced that we understand that Jesus gives us everything we need to resist him and even fight him off to win in that battle.

And what Paul, to the Church in Ephesus and the Holy Spirit, is going to say to the Church in Harris Creek today is to be strong. But here's what you need to know about "being strong." You can't "be strong." Nobody goes to the gym, throws 350 on the bench press and says, "Okay, buddy, be strong!" No, if you didn't prepare for that moment, you're not going to "be strong." You *become* strong through training. And that's important to understand in this passage because if you grew up in Sunday school, you saw the felt board, Ephesians six, put on the arm, put on the helmet of Salvation and the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness. Have your feet ready in the gospel of peace. And you're like, okay, what do I do with that now as a 32-year-old or a 45-year-old, how do I put on the armor? And it's not very practical. And I want to make this practical.

You do these seven things, you're going to win. You don't do these seven things, you're going to lose. Plain and simple. There's an enemy. You have everything you need to be victorious over him. And it's these seven things preserved in the scripture. And I'm not talking about just make sure you put it on in the morning. I'm not going there with you. It's really a way you think, a way you learn and the way you train. You do it, you will win. You don't do it, you will lose. Matter of factly, that's the way that it goes. You don't have to turn there. I'm just going to read to you 2 Corinthians 10 to set this up. So, listen to this. **"For those we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolished 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."**

You cannot fight a spiritual war with worldly weapons. You must fight a spiritual war with spiritual weapons? If you want to win you have to fight a spiritual war with spiritual weapons and some of us are thinkers and so we get bogged down in that because we're like, "What does that mean? How do I do that?" And you have to renew your mind around what is true. So let's dive in.

I'm going to be in Ephesians 6. Let me just set up this up and tell you: so Chapters one through three in Ephesians, they're all about who Jesus is and what he's done for you. There's no moral commands in chapters one, two and three. This is who Jesus is. This is what he's done for you. You get to chapters four and five, and the word that's repeated is "walk." Walk in this way. This is what it looks like to follow Jesus. This is how you walk as a follower of Jesus. And then you get to chapter six, and the word that's repeated is "stand." Whenever we're talking about spiritual war, the scripture is constantly commanding exhorting, admonishing us to stand firm, to hold our ground, to not be moved, to be immovable, verse ten, **"Finally, be strong in the Lord and his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the**

Devil's schemes, for the 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.”

The Holy Spirit, through Paul, is saying to the Church in Ephesus, “Nero is not your enemy. The Sanhedrin is not your enemy. The Pharisees are not your enemy. Rome is not your enemy. Church. You have one enemy, and he is the devil. Satan!” It's not the Democrats, it's not the Republicans, it's not your boss, it's not your angry neighbor. It's not the guy on the road who flipped you off. You have one enemy who operates through people to discourage you. That's the truth. If you can even just get your head around that, you fight differently. You realize, “Oh, this person who's yelling at me and giving me a piece of their mind with their finger in my chest is not my enemy. There is someone greater than them working through them to discourage me. I have one enemy, and that's Satan, and the battle is not of flesh and blood.”

I'm at the skate park—let me tell you a story—true story happened just like this. I'm sitting there on the bench; guy comes up—super nice. His fingernails painted black, has this Crystal around his neck. And we're talking. And I say, “Hey, do you have a faith?” And he begins to tell me for 30 minutes what he believes, which is some kind of naturalistic mysticism. And I'm listening. There's no mention of the Bible, no mention of Jesus, no mention of God for that matter. He's just kind of telling me how he thinks the world came to be. And so, I said, “Hey, what do you do with Jesus?” And he kind of thinks about it for a second, and he begins to tell me who he thinks Jesus is. Now, if you were here on Easter, I taught out of John chapter three, and I referenced Numbers 21, the bronze snake in the wilderness with the Israelites. Okay? And so in the midst of telling me who he thinks Jesus was, he mentioned serpents. I said, “Hey, you ever heard of the fiery serpents?” To which he says this, “Yes. In Numbers 21, when God sent fiery serpents after the Israelites, they would bite them, and they would die. And he asked Moses to make a bronze snake and put it on a pole, and if they look at it, then they would be healed. This is actually now in our day and age, the Rod of Asclepius, which we put on the sides of ambulances.” And he goes, “I don't know if you know this,” He goes, “It's actually in the medical sign, if you've ever seen it. There's the Rod of Asclepius there.” And I'm like, “Was he here?” Like, what in the world? And then he goes on and he kind of moves back to mysticism and talking about all this stuff. And I go, “Whoa, whoa, whoa, hold on, hold on. How did you know about number 21?” And he goes, “What are you talking about?” And I go, “Numbers 21, the bronze serpent in the wilderness with Moses.” He goes, “Numbers 21? Is that in the Bible?” “You said it was a minute ago. Yeah. Yes.” He goes, “Oh, I haven't read that far.” I go, “No, like the bronze serpent in the wilderness, the thing you were just telling me about!” And he was really confused. He's like, “No, I haven't gotten there.” I was like... “Come out?”

What? What just happened? Now, here's the deal. You might be like, “Oh, schizophrenia, multiple personality disorder, PTSD.” You may have some natural explanation. I was there. What I would tell you is it was like the enemy was saying, “Hey, I know what you're doing. I know you're here. I just want you to know I know you're here. I see you. I know what you're doing.”

Because we're smart. We're smart. We're so smart, so educated. We always have these natural explanations. Let me tell you what's going on. I'll tell you what's going on: you got an enemy, and it's not of flesh and blood. The battle is not of flesh and blood. And if you don't start there—we just don't think—we're just good Baptist, man. We're just living here, living our lives of comfort. We're not thinking about the war. We're not thinking about the war like the scriptures. So this book that we held and done devotional for a long time tells us so clearly about the war. But you and I were not thinking about that's weird battle is not a flesh of blood.

He says, **“Therefore, put on the full armor of God.”** This is the baked in illustration that I think we can make too much about. Most likely, Paul is just chained to some Roman soldier, and he's just grabbing for an illustration. And so he looks at his armor and he starts to attach it to these things, as Christians, you're going to need to win this battle. It's not about the armor in and of itself. You don't need to pretend to put on a helmet. That's not what he's talking about. But we're going to try to make this practical. So when the day of evil comes, when the enemy attacks you. When he comes after you, you may be able to stand your ground. And after you have done everything to stand, there it is that word again. Stand there it is again. Stand firm. Then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist. You want to win against the enemy. Do these seven things. The first one is all about the truth. The first one is know the truth.

1. Know the Truth.

Know the truth. Every battle, almost without exception, any war that you could probably think of right now was fought over real estate, an effort to control a territory. The spiritual war is fought over the real estate of your mind. The enemy is after your thinking. He's after your children's thinking. He's after education. He's after governments. He's after textbooks. He wants to control the way people think. This is the battle that's being fought over. It is over the mind. It's a battle for what is true. And we said week one: Satan is a liar. His tactics, he just bends the truth. And so, if you know the truth, you can defeat him because he will show up and he will say, “You're worthless.” And you're like, “I know the truth.” He will say, “You're a loser.” “I know the truth.” He will say, “I know what you did last night. You're so terrible. Don't you dare raise your hands and worship.” And you could say, “But I know the truth. I know the truth.”

This really powerful picture of this that comes from Lion King. I heard my friend Ben Stuart say this. And I was like, that is brilliant. And so, if you've seen Lion King, it's actually so theologically sound, especially this part. Scar is the bad guy, the uncle. And Scar comes to Simba, the Prince, the one to be the King of the jungle. And how does Scar, who wants to be the King of the jungle—how does Scar come against Simba? Does he come at him with his claws? Does he attack him in a fight? Does he battle him with his strength? You know what he does? Do you remember? He encourages him. He say, “Oh, man. So, your dad showed you the Kingdom, huh? Did he say you could go over there? No, he didn't? He's keeping something from you. Gosh, you seem smart enough to go over there. You seem strong enough to go over there. You seem like a King of the jungle. Wonder why he wouldn't let you go over there.” He says, “Hey,

he's keeping something good from you.” He says, “You can do it, man. You can do it. You're good enough, smart enough, strong enough. Go do it.” And then what has he done? What does he do? He comes behind that and says, “What did you do? Shame on you. You can't live here. You're going to have to go away. You can't worship there. You can't pray. You can't read your Bible. Don't you dare raise your hands. Don't sing that song. Shame on you.” And it's the same way the enemy works the day that's what he does. You got to know the truth. He's saying, “You'll never get married. Your marriage is terrible. It's never going to work. You can't even manage your own household. Have you seen your kids? And the way that they work? You make what? That's all? Gosh, you're gonna starve to death. You'll never have anything nice. This Church thing is not for you.”

What's his MO? He wants to discourage. To remove courage from you. See, if he can discourage you, you can't fight. If he can convince you that you're weak and you don't fight, then you don't resist him. And then he has his way. It's what he does. **“With the breastplate of righteousness in place.”** The breastplate protects the heart, the vital organ of the heart. And it's the breastplate of righteousness. My second point: Gain a heart of righteousness.

2. Gain a Heart of Righteousness

Now, we believe as Christians, it's Christ righteousness that is imputed upon us. Imputed is a big word that just means transfer. That we get to—in the test—turn in Jesus' grade. We get to point to his report card. That we're going to be measured by Jesus' work, right? And so we have his righteousness. So how do we live? We follow the ways of Jesus. We do what Jesus would have us do. That's so important in every situation for the rest of your life, for as long as you live, no matter how hard it is, no matter what it costs you or how difficult, you just do what Jesus would have you do. Now, there are people on the Earth that are committed to doing wrong. They see the world as their playground. The cool kids would call them toxic, okay? They're toxic people. They use others for their own advantage. They just want to be happy and experience their own pleasure. And you're just a pawn on their chessboard, right? Not so with followers of Jesus.

We serve people. We love people. We use everything that has been entrusted to us to care for people. And some of you are like, I've never met someone like that. You've never met a Christian then. Okay, I don't know what else to tell you. That is just simply how followers of Jesus lived. Let me illustrate it like this. When I became a Christian, I was a salesperson professionally. But even personally, I had these side hustles where I was flipping houses and selling cars and motorcycles. So, you come to buy my house or my car or my motorcycle. And I'm just like, “Oh, man, I've kept it under a velvet blanket. Those all highway miles, and it's never been in an accident. And I changed the oil every 2500 miles. And it's just been so well taken care of.” Right? By the book. You just say what you need to say to sell the car. No big deal. Sell the house. If I'm showing you my house, and there's a stain on the wall. I'm just putting a picture there. I'm going to hide that from you to make the house. It's just what you do. You just make it look as good as you can. And I get put in this life group, and there's this couple, and they're selling their

house, and they start investing all of their money into making this house, like, fixing things and stuff. And I'm like, "Oh, no, don't put any more money in the house that you're going to sell!" I'm like, "Hey, I'm a professional, trust me on this." And they're like, "No, we want it to be great for whoever takes it over. We want everything to work." And then when they would show the house, they would point out all the things that are wrong. They were like, "Hey, the AC is going to go out in two years. And I just want you to know that this thing over here, it's never worked quite right. I just want to bring your attention. You probably wouldn't see this, but I want to make sure you know this." And they would just show them. And I'm like, "Why would you do that?" It's because they don't care about their bottom dollar. They care about the King they serve. They operate in righteousness.

That's different. That's different than what the world does. And it ministered to me. I was like, wait, what? Oh, yeah, we're just ambassadors here. We just represent a King of another Kingdom. Like, this world is not our home. Oh, no, I'm not trying to make as much money as I possibly can on the house. I want to make sure that whoever would take possession of our house, that our King would be more attractive to them. I'm like, okay, my mind is blown right now.

I don't have a category for this, and it changed me. Like, it shifted something in my heart. You gain a heart of righteousness and you say, why would you do that? What does that have to do with spiritual war. Here's why. When you do something that lacks integrity, you give the devil a foothold. Are you tracking? Like, when you do something that is not of God, you say, hey, come here, Satan, have your way with me here. Here kitty. Make your home here. And he slips his foot in that stirrup and jumps on the saddle of your life. You gave him a foothold. That's what he says in Ephesians. He says, "**Do not give the devil—**" Ephesians 4:27, "**Do not give the devil a foothold.**"

Don't do it. Don't invite him into your life. He says, verse 15, "**And with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.**" That word for readiness, in the Greek, is a prepared foundation. A prepared foundation., what you stand on. My third point: Build on the Gospel.

3. Build on the Gospel

The gospel is your foundation in everything you do. It's why at Easter we just spoon feed it to you. Like, let me make it as simple as I can. The way that you get from death to life is Jesus. And here is the dichotomy of the Christian faith. What did I tell you? The second that you trusted in Christ; you step into a what? A war. A battle. A fight, the moment you became a Christian. So, the dichotomy is we're at war and we have peace. That doesn't make sense. Some would say it transcends all understanding that we can have peace and be at war.

Why? Most soldiers will tell you their greatest fear is a lethal blow. Death. That they are in a place where every day they are reminded the soldiers at war, they're reminded of death. It's all

around them. But for us, we're immortal. Let me tell you two realities. One, if you are a follower of Jesus, one, you will not die. You will not die one second before the Lord has ordained. Not one second. And secondly, death is the beginning of the beginning for you.

It's a new beginning, that you wake up in paradise with God, and that's our reality. So, it's like, what can the enemy then do to us? And so, we build our lives on the foundation of the gospel. He says, have your feet and prepared with the readiness. The gospel of peace.

Let me tell you something about war, or about soldiers. You wound someone's foundation, they're a sitting duck. They can't move. Easy target. It's dawned on me at the skate park, like, as Weston was riding a scooter. And more people got there, got crowded, and I didn't know these people. And they're talking to him. And I'm like, hey, Weston, stay out of their way, but stay out of their way. And it dawns on me, like, if something goes sideways here, I'm like, his protector. I'm not going to be able to protect him. I can't even stand. I can't even stand up because my foundation is wounded.

Let me jump metaphors if I can, follow me here. "Deconstruction" is a big buzzword right now. The way I think about deconstruction is like, you're rebuilding. You're moving rooms around, knocking down walls. And I don't know if I actually believe that anymore. You knock down that wall, you build a new room, and that's fine. You can demo the house. Don't mess with the foundation.

You have to build on the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. So, when someone says, hey, I don't know what I believe anymore. So, what do you believe about Jesus? Let's start there. What do you believe about Jesus? Okay, who is he? Let's make sure we agree on this reality. Verse 16, **"In addition to all of this, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one."**

The shield is not a plate like Captain America. The shield for a Roman soldier was about two thirds of his body. It was a big wooden shield. Now, the way that you beat a soldier with a wooden shield is with a flaming and arrow, because then the shield becomes kindling. So, what Romans would do is they would cover it in a piece of leather, and they would soak that leather in water, and they would make it wet. And so, when they were hit with these flaming arrows, it would extinguish them. And so, he's using this as a metaphor. Hey, this is what you need to hold on to. You hold this shield in front of you if you want to win. And so, my fourth point is hold onto faith.

4. Hold Onto Faith

You want to defeat the enemy? As you go out here in just a bit, you hold on to your faith because the enemy wants you to doubt God. And really, that doubt can be put in one of four categories. Is he real? Is he powerful? Is he good? And is he for you? You show me someone who is struggling

in their faith, and I can almost promise you, nearly 100% of the time, it's their questioning: Is he real? Is he powerful? Is he good? Is he for me? One of those have been compromised. The enemy has come in and caused someone to doubt with one of those arrows. He's hit them with a flaming arrow, "He's not good. He's not powerful. He's not for you. He's not even real."

And if he can't get you to doubt God, he'll get you to live in shame. "You're not good. You're not smart, you're ugly, you're worthless. You're all alone." And what is he trying to do? He's trying to discourage you, to remove your courage. You don't have courage. You can't fight, right? Martin Luther is a guy who's responsible for the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther was a man who suffered from deep, dark depression. And there's a lot of heroes in the faith that this is true of Spurgeon, C. S. Lewis. It's really a long list of people whose books we read and theologies we study. Martin Luther's was well documented. I mean, there were times he felt like he couldn't get out of bed. And he's a professional. Like, this is what he does for a living, right? And he said everything turned around for him when he began to see the burden of suffering as a blessing, "How privileged am I that God would trust me with this kind of attack from the enemy?" And he said that was when he began to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

And he realized, like, "Oh, the enemy's after me because God wants to use me." And what he began to do is he began to reflect, meditate, contemplate on truth. And he would put these Bible verses to tunes of songs that they would sing. And he began to sing the truth. That's how he would fight the enemy, he would begin to sing the truth. Hey, this is what is true. This is what I know of God. And he would sing it and it gave him great hope, and it turned his suffering into motivation to do something that we would now talk about him this morning.

Says in verse 17, "**Take the Helmet of Salvation.**" That is, be mindful of salvation.

5. Be Mindful of Salvation

What is the most important piece of protective equipment? It's true in the skate park. It's true on a bicycle. It's true in a football game, and it's true in a spiritual battle. The helmet, the helmet of Salvation that you remember that you are saved. And you guys have a hard time remembering this because I have a lot of conversations with people here between one and ten, ten being certain Salvation, the word "saved" is baked into that word, right? And there's nothing else we really struggle with like this. If you were drowning and the lifeguard grabbed you and put you on the side of the pool, and I walked up and I said, "Hey, how saved are you right now? Between one and ten, ten being you're saved and one being not so sure." You're not going to be like, "I'm a seven." You know you're not in the water anymore, right? You know you're not flailing for your life anymore, right?

But why do we do this with Salvation? "Well, I'm just not sure. I'm just not sure if I'm saved. I'm just not sure." If you have trusted in Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection for the forgiveness of your sins, you are secure, you are saved, and Salvation means you're going to be with God

forever. And that means that you live this world and you see everything through the lens of you are going to be with God forever.

And what that does is it gives you what I call the vacation mentality. You guys know what I mean by that? Vacation mentality? People are different when they're going on vacation. And I'm not talking about when you're on vacation. I'm talking about right before you go on vacation. You ever seen, like those guys, they're the hardest to get to work because you're like, "Hey, man, the stock's plummeting." They're like, "Yeah, but I'm going to Cabo, so I don't really care." You're like, "Man, nobody showed up for work today." I was like, "That's going to be me next week because I'm going to be in Cabo and it's all good!" And you're like, "The coffee machine is on fire." "Yeah, but I already got my plane tickets, and so everything is going to be fine because I'm about to go on vacation." And when I'm about to go on vacation, my mind is on vacation. I'm not going to get sucked up into the worries of that week. And all of us, you and me, what Salvation means is that we're about to go on vacation. We're going to be with God forever and ever and ever in paradise. There are no copy machines on fire. They don't even have email there—I heard. So, like, praise be to God Almighty, right? And so, you want to be mindful of Salvation.

“And the Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

6. Have the Word Ready

The Sword of the Spirit. If you've studied this text at all, you know I'm supposed to say it's the only offensive weapon. All of the other weapons is protective gear. The Sword of the Spirit is how you attack the enemy. What is the Sword of the Spirit? It's 66 books that were written over 1500 years by 40 different authors on multiple continents in three languages with one central truth. God wins. He gets his children back. He defeats the enemy. And he tells you how to be victorious in your life. In this little collection of books right here, you want to know it, you want to live it out. You are operating in a battle. Make sure you have your sword. Some of you are leaving the house.

You ever had that dream where you show up to school naked? There you are. And you're like, all of a sudden, you're like, what do I forgot to put on my clothes. Some of you are leaving the house with just your helmet of Salvation on. You got no other clothes on. You're walking around with a construction helmet. Don't think about it too long. But that is your spiritual reality. I mean, it baffles me how people can be in Church for decades and not know anything about this book. Like not know how to navigate it, how to get around it. What it says, what it teaches, where to go for what.

Jesus, when he's tempted, he comes face to face with Satan, not some demon. Now it is the enemy himself, the Prince of darkness, the god of this world, little “G”, god of this world. And he tempts Jesus with his greatest earthly natural desires. He's hungry. He hasn't eaten for 40 days. Here's some food. And Jesus responds three times with memory verses from Deuteronomy. And

he's modeling for you. This is how you win against the enemy. You do this, you will win. You don't do this, you will lose. I'm going to be even more precise with you. You will either lose, or you will never get in the game. The enemy will leave you completely alone because you are zero threat to evil. You are stuck in your life of comfort. And the enemy like, "That one? We don't need to mess with that one." And the other option is you get in the battle and you win because you're equipped to do so. You know the word. Let me show you how this works. Satan, he's the accuser. He's going to shame you. You just respond with what is true.

So he comes to you and he says, "You're worthless. You're so worthless!" You're like, "Well, on the contrary, Satan. Mr. Satan. Lucifer. Lucy. 1 Corinthians 6 actually says that I've been purchased by a price. And everybody knows that the buyer gets to determine the worth and value of something. It seems that God, the creator of the heaven's Earth, actually thinks that I'm worth a lot priceless, you might say that I actually do have value. So you're wrong." Right? And he says, "Well, you're weak. You're so weak!" "Well, 2 Corinthians 12:9 says that His power is made perfect in my weakness. So it's actually good that I'm weak. Because then you can see the power of the God that I follow, the one who is infinitely stronger than you." And he says, "You're so stupid, you're so dumb!" And you say, "Well, Psalm 119:98 says that his commands are always with me and make me wiser than my enemies. And from doing an accounting, that's you which means I'm actually smarter than you. So if I'm stupid, then I'm rubber, you're glue. Bounce off me...and you're dumb." He says, "You're ugly." "Well, careful with that one. Because Genesis one says that I've been created in the image of the one that I know that you fear. So be careful what you say, you understand. And Ecclesiastes 3 says that he makes everything beautiful in his time. In Proverbs 31 says, the beauty is fleeting. So sticks and stones may break my bones. But you're stupid." "You are all alone!" "That one hurts. I'm all alone. I don't like being alone. Sometimes I feel alone." What's the truth? The truth is Deuteronomy 31:6, Deuteronomy 31:8, Joshua 1:5, 1 Kings 8:57, and Hebrews 13:5 says that I'm never alone, that he's never going to leave me and he's never going to forsake me. Not only am I not alone, Lucy, God is with me. Infinite Creator. He's on my side. In Romans 8:31 it says that if God is for me, who can be against me? Certainly not you, chump." Right?

Next, you've got to know the truth. It's a battle for the truth. Verse 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.**" Number 7, always pray.

7. Always Pray

Always pray. Here's the deal. Five out of the six of this armor, it's not even anything you can tangibly hold. It's ethereal, it's mental, it's psychological, right? And so here's the way to think about this. If you have all of the armor and it's locked into a trunk and you need to access the armor inside the trunk, prayer is the key. Prayer is how you're going to get the armor. The armor comes from God. If we had more time, I could connect each of these to show you that they're all from God. That this is actually God's armor, that he's sharing with us every single scripture that

Paul cites here comes from an Old Testament reference talking about God's actual armor. And so he gives us his armor.

The way that we get that armor is through prayer. This is why we fight these battles on our knees, that we go to God. If you're going to fight someone stronger than you, you have to find someone stronger than them. It's the only way you'll win. The way that you defeat an enemy stronger than you is you find someone stronger than the enemy. At Easter, at the Crucifixion, rather Good Friday, the veil was torn. We have access to God. You can pray. You won't win without prayer. You will either be left alone, or you will be defeated. You will either not be in the game or you will be hurt. That's the only two outcomes without prayer. And so, in summary, we fight by knowing the truth. We fight by gaining a heart of righteousness. We fight by building on the gospel. We fight by holding firm to faith. We fight by being mindful of Salvation. And we fight by having the word ready. And we fight by always praying.

When I was young in school, we had the opportunity to visit the fire department. And I remember it being this kind of, like, profound experience for me because it was just like I was learning. And seeing on the inside is something you couldn't normally see on the inside. And what struck me as odd is how normal their lives. We went up into their living quarters, if you will, and it was just like an apartment. There was a kitchen and a table and a living room with a TV and even a game console. They play video games, and there was a pool table and a Ping pong table there. And they were just kind of living their normal lives. And it hit us on this little field trip, how many hundreds of hours they had trained to live their normal lives. Like, they could go about playing Ping pong, watching their favorite movie because they were ready when the battle came, and when the alarm goes off and there's a fire and they get notified, everything changes.

There's a shift in the atmosphere, and the first thing they would grab is their gear. In fact, they would have competitions who can put on their gear the fastest, who can get suited up the fastest? It was a little game they played, and there would be like a winner of the week. Like, this person is holding the best time for being able to get their gear on the fastest. They would never go out there to fight a fire without being suited up head to toe.

And somebody asked a question, hey, how do you, day in and day out fight one of the faces, one of the scariest situations that we can think of, a situation where people die. How do you run into something that everyone else is running away from and they said this, "Because we have everything we need to fight the fire. We have everything we need. We've got the right equipment, the right gear, the right tools, the right training. So, when everyone's running away from something, we're running to it."

And that's what I want you to leave here with. At this point in the series, it's so important that you understand you have everything you need to be victorious. Yes. The enemy's out there, he may be in here for some of you. He may be fighting you this whole time in your mind, trying to distract you and get you focused on other things. And I'm telling you, if you have trusted in

Christ's death and resurrection for the forgiveness of your sins, you have every single thing that you need to be victorious to defeat him. But it is a way of thinking. It starts with a way of thinking you understanding that the world is not your home. This world is not your home. And you got to know what he says and understand his desire for your life.

Let me pray that we would. Father, would you help us to be victorious in the attacks of the enemy? Would you help us, God, to know the truth? Help us to know what is true? Help us to walk in righteousness, the righteousness that you've given us through your son, Jesus Christ. Help us to live it out in the day to day, not giving the enemy a foothold. Help us to have the foundation of our lives. Be the gospel that offers us peace, knowing that truth and that we would be saved. That we would walk in Salvation, holding firm to faith, renewing our minds around the reality that we're saved. And God, would you equip us in your word? Help us to write it on our hearts that we would be able to defeat Satan and the lies and the flaming arrows that he shoots at us. Would you remove any strongholds that we've given him? Any footholds that we've given him in our lives? Would you remove them? Any strongholds of addiction? Any strongholds of habits, patterns of sin? Father, would you remove them? Help us in that God keep him far from us, give us victory in attacks. Father, I ask that you would help us to always do a lot of this and that we would talk to you and talk with you; converse with our creator. Help us to always be praying, inviting you into our challenges. We love you, Lord, and we pray this in the name of the father and of the son, on and of the Holy spirit. Amen.

