

Text: Ephesians 6.10-18
St Stephen's

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Sun AM

Fight for the Realm!

Don Billing's testimony...

For 8 weeks now we have been walking through the letter to the Ephesians... Paul believes that at the heart of what God is doing in the world is **a plan** *to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.* (Eph 1:9-10)

This is the purpose God is working out in all human history. Behind every headline, every cultural movement and every season of life, God is working to *bring all things in heaven and on earth together under Christ.* That is what is going on. That is what he is doing. That is what God is committed to.

When you get connected to that purpose **it changes your life.** It grips your heart. You see God-changed lives right before your eyes. They may be 5th grade boys. They may be single moms. They may be university students. They may be residents of nursing homes... but you see it happen right in front of your eyes. There is nothing like it.

As we turn to the final chapter of Ephesians we hear that none of this will happen without **facing serious opposition.** From ch 5's paragraphs picturing homes and workplaces flourishing under the healing hand of love, we turn the page and step into a world at war – an **unseen cosmic war** stretching up from the streets and neighborhoods of the earth right into the highest places of heaven. You're in it. Know it or not, you are in it. Is God planning to gather a family? There is an enemy who will try and break it up!

Let's start with a few reminders of the biblical perspective of this battle...

The Apostle John:

We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

1 Jn 5:19

There's a battle going on!

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

1 Jn 3:8

There's a battle going on!

- **C. S. Lewis** wrote: “*Enemy-occupied territory—that is what the world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed in disguise, and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage.*”

From the day of his baptism on, Jesus was fighting Satan... delivering people from demons, healing people from diseases, forgiving sinners. He fought Satan all the way to the cross and won there the decisive victory in this battle.

He said to Paul...

I am sending you to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God... Acts 26:17-18

Here’s the deal; if you are going to serve the Lord Jesus, you are going to have to face and fight this enemy. Because Satan never willingly surrenders. Never.

1) Know Your Enemy

Here’s Paul’s description...

*For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the **evil** rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those **mighty** powers of darkness who **rule** this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms.* Eph 6:12 (NLT)

Behind every, every moral temptation, every faith crisis, there is a spiritual battle with cosmic forces. Behind every ministry struggle... there is a spiritual battle with cosmic forces. Behind every relationship struggle in the family of faith, there is a spiritual battle involving cosmic forces. Wherever God is working to *bring all things in heaven and on earth together under Christ*, Satan is working to oppose him, frustrate him. The battle rages.

Be prepared. You’re up against far more than you can handle on your own.

Eph 6:13 (The Message)

“Roaring lion... wolf in sheep’s clothing... prince of this world”

...stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil.

Eph 6:11 (NLT)

I want to talk to you today about some of...**Satan’s Preferred Pathways...**

As I get into this, I want to remind you that **not all evil comes from Satan**. The old answer is that there are three sources for evil in our lives, **the world, the flesh and the devil**. I want to take just one of those sources today and talk about some of the places Satan seems to be most active.

He is active in...

- **Cults, Occult Activity and False Religions** (1 Tim 4.1; 1 Jn 4.1-3)

*The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow **deceiving spirits and things taught by demons**.*

1 Ti 4:1 (NIV)

Paul believed that when people took God's truth and distorted it, twisted it and changed it, that there was demonic activity behind it.

- **Wherever God's Covenants are honored...**

Marriage, conversion, ordination... battle zones! Because God's covenants in your life are the skeletal structure of your salvation, the bones upon which your life grows. Satan loves to attack the institutions God has established.

- **In human Imagination**

This is a massive place of demonic activity today. And you know, the deck is stacked against us. Because today there are no rules ("it's just a movie") and because the imagination is so powerful in life. Did you know that in a contest between the imagination and the will, imagination almost always wins. And because it is much harder to depict what is good than it is to depict what is evil. Because we are fallen. Evil comes more naturally for us. So guard your mind and your heart. Guard your dreams and your fantasies. Whatever is pure and lovely and good... think on those things.

- **Behavior & Addictions**

Moral temptation is Satan's most famous strategy. What can happen is that when you give in to temptation, a **pathway** for an occasional temptation can become a **parking lot** for permanent demonic residence. Some (not all) addictions are at root demonic bondage. I have seen people delivered from alcohol and drug addiction instantaneously by prayer to Jesus. Other people (like me) had to struggle through to their healing step by step and day by day.

- **Places Where Satan Has Been Active**

Homes or buildings... House blessings make a difference!

- **When God Is Strongest**

Every time you start building for God, you're asking for a battle. If you start trying to build a church (or an international communion), you are in for

a battle. If you start trying to build your marriage, you're asking for a battle. If you start trying to build up your own personal spiritual life you're asking for a battle. Every time you get into missions for Jesus or share your faith with an unbeliever you going to be in a battle. Why? Because Satan doesn't want God's family to grow.

- **When I Am Weakest**

Do you know the weak seasons in your life? Satan does, I promise you. You have to be ready. I know some of mine. One of mine is when I am exhausted. Another is when I get discouraged. Another is when I am all alone. Another is when my family is vulnerable.

Satan's Preferred Strategies

- **Lies & Deception**

A liar and the father of lies...

Do you know **how powerful lies are**? If you believe lies about yourself or the world, it can really mess you up. Like, "There is no God; I am on my own." "God could never forgive me for that" "Did God really tell me not to do that?" "God could never love me again." "My life really isn't worth anything."

- **Temptation** (Matt 4; 1 Cor 10.13)

- **Counterattack**

After every mountaintop experience there will be a spiritual counterattack.

- **Unbelief or Overbelief**

There are **two mistakes** Satan would love you to make about him. The first is to disbelieve his existence, in spite of all the evidence to the contrary. He would like it if you do that. The other mistake is to believe that he is behind every instance of evil, to believe that demons are responsible for everything that goes wrong. He would like it if you believed that as well. It's important **not to underestimate them or to overestimate them.**

- **Let's Make a Deal**

Sometimes people say to me... "I just never have any sense of the warfare that you talk about." Let me ask you a few quick questions... Have you turned your life over to Jesus? Are you growing more like Jesus? Are you influencing your world for Jesus? I think Satan tempts us with a deal... "If you don't bother me, I won't bother you." Don't make that deal. He will not keep his part of it!

- **Get the Kids**

We live in a culture dedicated in large part to the corruption of children. Look at an A&F catalogue. Watch MTV. Listen to some rap music. Kids need help!

- **Attack Where I Am Exposed**

2) Find Your Strength

You don't want to try and fight this battle on your own. So Paul says...

Be strong with the Lord's mighty power. Eph 6:10 (NLT)

The same mighty power that he used to deliver people from demons he will use for you. This is the same mighty power that Paul says raised Jesus from the dead. That power in spiritual warfare is essential, and **it comes through Jesus**. One of the things that I have done in spiritual warfare again and again over the years is **to call on Jesus to come by using his name**. I will say, "In the name of Jesus we come against any demonic forces that are present here. In the name of Jesus, we command you be gone. In the name of Jesus we stand against you and tell you to depart." *Be strong with the Lord's mighty power.*

But then Paul also says...

*Use **every piece** of God's armor to resist the enemy in the time of evil, so that after the battle you will still be standing firm.*

Eph 6:13 (NLT)

Would you circle "every piece"?

Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation are more than words.

Learn how to apply them. *You'll need them throughout your life. God's Word is an indispensable weapon.*

Eph 6:14-17 (The Message)

We are going **to pray a prayer for spiritual warfare** in a few minutes. I know people who pray like that every morning, putting on their armor as a prayer discipline before they launch into their day. That is a good thing to do.

Jesus is essentially saying **this is war**, the biggest war of all. Jesus is saying you **can't walk away**. There is **no neutral territory**. There will be **no negotiations**. There is **no truce**. There are **no sidelines**. But he also says...

I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.

Luke 10:19

Paul believes that at the heart of what God is doing in the world is **a plan** *to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.* (Eph 1:9-10)

I love that plan. At St Stephens we have a vision of God's churches full... full of people looking for God-changed lives. People who are broken, who are looking for hope, looking for a Fresh Start. New family. Looking to find their God-given purpose in life.

That will only happen if you get into the battle for the hearts and souls of people. Strong in the Lord, launch out in his ministry. Armor strapped on, fight for people's lives.

A PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL WARFARE (From Ephesians 6:10-20)

Lord Jesus Christ, today I step forward to take up your battles. As I do so, I will be strong not in myself, but in your mighty power. I will put on every piece of your armor that I might be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil. For you have taught us that we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms. Make us alert to the dangers we must face.

Today I take the sturdy belt of truth around my waist and the protection of your holiness on my chest. For shoes, I take the peace that comes from the Good News, so that I will be able to stand strong in every fight. I will take faith as my shield to stop the fiery arrows of doubt and temptation aimed at me by Satan. I will put on the assurance of salvation as my helmet. I take the sword of your Spirit, the Word of God, as my sword; I will read the Bible regularly, following its guidance and holding fast to its promises. I will pray hard and long under the leading of your Holy Spirit. I will pray for all my brothers and sisters, keeping alert and keeping each other's spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out.

Finally, I pray that you would give me the right words and the boldness to speak to them as I witness to your Good News, no matter what the obstacles or difficulties, so that in every place your Gospel would triumph and your name would be glorified. Amen.