

THE INVISIBLE WARFARE
Ephesians 6:11-13 (KJV)

Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

INTRODUCTION: Good morning brethren. The title of the sermon today is taken from the book entitled, "The Invisible War" by Donald Gray Barnhouse, which I consider "must" reading if one needs help on the role of angels in God's plan of redemption. My interest in the study of the ministry and role of angels in the Bible began over thirty years ago. What sparked my interest was why Paul, or the writer of Hebrews, would begin with the topic of angels in showing the superiority of Christ in various dimensions. It has opened up a new dimension for me into the understanding of the warfare between God and Satan, between good and evil, between the kingdoms of humility and servanthood and that of pride and dominion. It has also helped me to understand God's eternal purpose in Christ to put a man at His right hand to share His throne and rule the new heavens and earth. It has also helped me to see that Satan's main purpose is to prevent that from happening.

Ephesians 6:10-17 is a section of Scripture which contains a wealth of information which can be greatly enlarged upon in our thinking if time is properly devoted to it. William Gurnall, the noted Puritan divine, wrote more on these verses than anybody else in any language. His book entitled, "*The Christian In Complete Armour*," contains almost 1200 pages in double columns and very fine print. Martin Lloyd-Jones has made a similar, though not as long, attempt to expound the section. He has two books on these verses: "*The Christian Warfare*" which contains twenty-six studies on verses 10-13, and "*The Christian Soldier*" which contains twenty-six additional studies on the section as a whole.

This section confronts a trend which has developed in modern Christianity which is undesirable. The idea is given that upon our conversion, all trouble and strife will cease. We are told to think positively and peacefully as if there were no spiritual battles at all. Christian conversion is seen not as an entrance into warfare, but an exit from it. In reality, the conversion into Christ marks the beginning of a lifelong warfare in Christian service. Instead of Jesus being the solution to all of life's problems, by embracing Him, one normally has problems which emerge that unbelievers never face.

We will divide our message into two main sections: First, that of "Textual Considerations," and Second, that of "Contextual Considerations."

I. TEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are several words which deserve brief explanations.

1. First: **"wrestle"** - Greek word *"pale."* This is the only time the word is used in the New Testament. It refers to the sport of wrestling which was well known in ancient times in the Greek athletic games. It involved personal hand-to-hand combat. The conflict was real, heated and intense, and often a matter of life for the winner and death for the loser.

2. Second: **"flesh and blood"** - This expression describes the physical world which we can see. But our greatest enemy is not the world which we can see, but the world we cannot see.

3. Third: **"principalities," "powers," "rulers," "spiritual wickedness"** (Note, NKJV says "spiritual hosts of wickedness;" the ESV says "spiritual forces of evil.").

a. These expressions expose to us the nature of our enemy.

b. Their identity has been understood in two ways:

(1) The minority view as held by John MacArthur and others who contend they represent the varying ranks of authority existing in the fallen world of angels who are also known as demons.

(2) The majority view as held by Curtis Vaughan and others, including myself. While I believe the Bible clearly teaches there are various ranks and divisions existing in the angelic ranks, both of holy and unholy angels, I believe all of these expressions simply view the forces arranged against God and his people in a different manner. Vaughan says:

"Principalities," "powers," "rulers," "spiritual wickedness" are terms used here of the hierarchy of the invisible powers in rebellion against God (cf. 1:21; 3:10). Paul is not to be understood as enumerating four classes of demonic beings. Each term simply views the forces arranged against God and His people in a different manner. **"Principalities"** refers to their rank and rule. **"Powers"** suggest their investment with authority. **"World rulers of this darkness"** (ASV) points up their control over a world in revolt against its Creator (cf. II Corinthians 4:4). **"Spiritual wickedness in high places"** depicts them as an army of wicked spirits inhabiting, or at least bringing their combat to, the heavenly sphere. (Curtis Vaughan, *Ephesians*, p. 126, Founders Study Guide Commentary).

4. Fourth: **"Whole Armour of God"** - This expression makes use of the imagery of the Roman soldier fully equipped for heavy battle. The armour is provided by God and designed to cover the body. We are exhorted to put it on. We are exhorted to have it on before we engage the enemy, otherwise it will be too late to arm ourselves.

5. Fifth: **"to stand"** - to hold one's ground against Satan's "wiles" or subtle tricks or schemes.

6. Sixth: **"the evil day"** - refers not to the final day of judgment, but to the day or time of severe trials.

II. CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

Now I wish to place the text in the context of the invisible war existing between God and Satan, as seen in the warfare between God's kingdom and Satan's kingdom. There are two leading characteristics of God's kingdom. They are "humility and servanthood." Satan's kingdom has two opposing characteristics. They are "pride and dominion."

I now desire to give a panoramic view of history from the fall in the garden to the enthronement of Christ at the Father's right hand. This requires the reducing of much of the supporting evidence for the views to follow. I have devoted some thirty years in researching the Scriptures to produce this scenario. I have used the method of what I call, "connecting the dots" to come up with this picture. This may be a new concept for many of my hearers, so I ask you to be patient and give me a hearing. I think it will enlarge our understanding as to why God created the world and all that is contained therein.

1. God's eternal purpose in Christ.

This is stated in Ephesians 3:9-11 - ***"And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."*** This purpose involved placing a man on God's throne so as to rule at His right hand. Ephesians 1:20-21 says, ***"Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."***

2. The Fall of Satan and Man in the Garden of Eden.

a. Lucifer, also known as Satan, the Devil, along with other names, was created by God and placed in rank above all the angels, even including Michael, the archangel (cf. Jude 9). His beauty, wisdom, power, and authority exceeded all. He administered all of God's affairs in heaven and earth.

b. His fall into sin is described in Isaiah 12:12-14, and Ezekiel 28:12-17. These passages mark the origin of sin in the universe. In Ezekiel 28:17 we read, **"Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee."** Isaiah 14:13-14 describes his desire to dethrone God and become like the Most High God. He sets forth his goal in the form of five **"I wills."** Thus we read, **"For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."**

c. For years it puzzled me as to how a powerful, though limited, creature could think he could dethrone the Creator. As the texts which describe the invisible war began to emerge, I began to see his strategy unfold.

d. The error which has kept most Bible teachers from seeing this involves the time of Satan's fall. It is assumed that he had already fallen and was cursed prior to his appearance to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It is speculated that his fall and curse occurred in either a pre-creation world or a pre-Adamic world. This view totally clouds his purpose to destroy the lower creature, man, in the Garden. We are told that God created man a little lower than the angels (Psalm 8), with the intent of elevating man over the angels as headed up by the man, Christ Jesus (cf. Hebrews 1:13-14). I believe this understanding comprised the probationary test of the angels and was the catalyst that caused Satan to rebel. His five **"I wills"** were an expression of his wounded pride. He says, **"I will ascend,"** but I will not descend to serve a lower creature, especially one who originated out of the dust of the ground.

e. Thus Satan reasons that if he can demonstrate that God lacks the wisdom and ability to achieve His eternal purpose for man, then it would reveal that God has limitations just like those of a creature. Now, how did he think he could demonstrate to the moral universe that he could outwit God? He became aware that God has also placed the creature, man, on a probationary period. If man sins, then God has said he will die. If man dies, then God cannot put a man on His throne above the ranks of the angels. He devises a plan in which he believes God will be placed in a box. He, Satan, will attack the attributes of God. If he can deceive man, then God will be placed in a box or a dilemma. If God

destroys the creature man, then it will reveal that His wisdom and power are not almighty. But if He does not destroy man, then His word cannot be trusted and His holiness is defiled. God cannot escape. He must apologize for claiming to be the Creator, the Most High God, and step down from the throne and let a creature take His place.

Thus Satan appears to Adam, not as a fallen, cursed being, but in his unfallen state with a sinful purpose in his heart to dethrone God. How can this be discerned? How can this be reconciled with Isaiah and Ezekiel? Several reasons. First, you cannot have Satan being cursed more than once! Both Isaiah and Ezekiel describe, not only his fall, but his being cursed by God. He was cast out of his position and brought down to the ground in humiliation. But look at what God does to Satan in the Genesis account in Eden. It is here that God enacts the curse upon Satan for his destruction of man. In Genesis 3:14 we read, **"And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life."** Notice two things in the text. First, the place of the fall occurs in the Garden of Eden. This corresponds to Ezekiel 28:13 which says, **"Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God."** Second, the cause as to why God placed His curse upon Satan. It was **"Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field."** What had Satan, as incarnated in the serpent, just done? He has destroyed man! Then we read, **"upon thy belly shalt thou go and dust shall thou eat all the days of thy life."** The one who desired to ascend to the highest ranking position has been made to descend to the lowest of the lower creatures, namely that of a worm! This is stated in Isaiah 14:12 in this manner - **"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!"**

So how does Genesis 3 relate to Isaiah 12 and Ezekiel 28? Genesis 3 gives us both the time and place of Satan's fall and curse. Isaiah and Ezekiel serve as commentaries which give us the details of his fall and curse.

f. So it appears that Satan has won the battle, and now God must choose between destroying man or refusing to carry out His threat to destroy man. However, the deceiver is deceived. God announces that He will carry out His purpose for man by using, not an unfallen man, but out of a fallen race, One would bruise the head of the serpent and accomplish His eternal purpose. This is set forth in Genesis 3:15. Satan would be permitted to fight on in his attempt to dethrone God by attempting to destroy the bloodline through which this special Man was to come, or else to get God's saints to apostatize and renounce God. This would continue throughout the Old Testament era unto the birth, life and death of the Christ. Satan continues on in his assault upon God's people even after Christ is raised from the dead and seated at God's right hand.

3. Satan's attacks and the Permissive will of God.

An example of Satan's continuing attacks upon man is seen in the life of Job. In Job 1:6-7, we read, **"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, from going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it."** Here we see that the angels, both holy and unholy, have to assemble before the Lord on certain appointed times to give an account of their activities. Satan also is required to attend these sessions. They seem to consist of the angels being required to give reports of their activities to the Lord. It is for time sake that I will paraphrase the following verses.

In verses 7 - 12 - we have recorded a conversation between Satan and God. God asks Satan what he has been doing. Satan replies that he has been conducting his activities in the physical realms of the earth. This activity is described in I Peter 5:8 - **"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."** God then asks if he had observed His servant Job, and states that He has no better servant on earth than Job. Satan then reveals his theory about why men serve God. They do so for the blessings which God gives, not because they love God. He also pointed out that God had placed a hedge of protection around Job and his family. He has prospered his business and increased his wealth.

Satan then challenges God to a dual. He said to God, "You remove your hedge of protection, and I will send adversity Job's way, and he will curse you. God then said that Satan would be permitted to destroy all that he has, only he should not take Job's life. And the battle begins. Poor Job knows nothing of what was about to happen. He lost his wealth, his sons, then his health, then the support of his wife, and his reputation in the eyes of his friends. This was truly Job's **"day of evil"** which Paul describes in Ephesians 6:13.

There are so many lessons to be learned about the "invisible warfare" in the book of Job, which time will not allow us to cover. Joseph Caryl spent 24 years preaching through the book of Job. His sermons cover some 8000 pages. I have all twelve volumes. We will cover two points relating to our topic:

One: Satan's desire, in his attack upon the saints, is to get them to curse God. This means to apostatize from the faith. If he can regain one of God's elect so as to claim him or her as his own, then he can yet win the war. God has claimed that not one of His elect shall perish. If one should perish, it would prove that God's wisdom and power would be limited to that of a creature, and He would have to step down from the throne and thus fail to achieve His eternal purpose in Christ. Satan is not out to just cause us so many hardships

in life, he is out to destroy our faith, and in so doing embarrass the Most High God. This is why he is not giving up the fight even though he is being defeated time after time.

Two: The permissive will of God controls all of Satan's wiles or schemes. While the Devil is the Devil, he is still God's Devil. He cannot go further in his attacks than what God permits or allows. This is seen in the following expressions: Satan says in Job 1:11, **"Put forth thine hand now and touch all that he hath."** The Lord says to Satan in Job 1:12, **"all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand."** Notice Satan was God's instrument in afflicting Job, and Satan acknowledges this. We have two hands at work in the events which occurred. Hands speak of power or ability. Both sets of hands are involved in Job's trials. God's hands are designed to test Job, and Satan's hands are designed to tempt Job. Satan has power, but that power is under the control of God's power. This is further confirmed in Job 2:3 where God says to Satan, **"and still he holdeth fast his integrity although thou movest me against him to destroy him without cause."** (Note: the word "destroy" means to swallow up). Satan has one purpose in tempting Job, and it is for evil. God has another purpose in testing Job, and that is for good. This is why **"We know that all things work for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."** (Romans 8:28). So while God has pledged to preserve His elect, His elect must persevere in the faith to manifest openly they belong to God's elect. This Job does, though not without sorrow, depression, despondency, and confusion of mind at times. This section of the warfare leaves us with a sobering thought. None of us are exempted from Satan's attacks. Are things flowing pretty smoothly for you at the moment? The bills are being paid, the doctors are giving you good reports, the family is well. Stop! Reflect on this. There may be a new assembly of angels being gathered by God, and your name is being discussed. And Satan is requesting that God's hedge of protection be removed from you so that he may prove that you are a phony, a hypocrite who is only using God to gain temporal blessings! And God is laying out the rules for the conflict coming for your "day of evil!" Or you may already be in the midst of your "evil day!" **"Put on the whole armour of God!"**

4. Satan's attacks and the delays to our prayers - Daniel 10.

Let us now turn to Daniel, chapter ten. In this chapter we are given the insight existing within the invisible war. We who are teachers, and believe the Bible as being God's word, have all too often failed to instruct our people in the message about Satan, angels, and demons. I hold that demons and angels are the same beings, not two separate classes of beings. God wants us to know that, in addition to the human forces of evil on the earth, demonic forces are constantly at work, sometimes through national leaders and national governments. But He also wants us to know that none of these forces, be they human or demonic, can defeat the armies of heaven.

a. In this chapter we find Daniel in a state of much sorrow and confusion in his mind. We read in chapter 10:2-3, ***"In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled."*** In the previous chapter we find him in much prayer concerning the future of his people. For 21 days he has spent in fasting and prayer. In verses 4-11 God sends a powerful angel to give an answer to Daniel's prayer. Then in verse 12 we read, ***"Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words."*** The first day mentioned by the angel refers to the first of the three weeks or 21 days when Daniel began his special period of fasting and prayer.

b. Now, why did it take the angel so long in delivering the message? Verses 13, 14 give us the answer. ***"But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days."*** The prince of Persia is not the physical ruler of Persia, but is the demon or angel who is ruling the empire of Persia. Whenever nations give themselves over to the worship of idols, then demons are said to rule those nations. This prince fought with and withstood the angel sent from God for 21 days, and thus he could not get the message through to Daniel. He then had to call in help from an angel which outranked him and the prince of Persia. This was Michael, one of the chief princes referred to as "the archangel" in Jude 9. After that battle was settled, the angel with the message from God, was able to deliver the message to Daniel. In verse 20 we are further told, ***"Then said he, knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come."*** Here, the angel returns to continue his warfare with the prince of Persia after which he will battle the prince of Grecia which was the empire which would follow Persia.

c. What can we learn from this? The power of fallen angels or demons can hinder our prayer lives. When we are in the midst of our "day of evil" and no answer to our prayers is coming forth, then we must not think that God has left us to ourselves. When the heavens seem to be like brass and God seems to be far away, remember that the answer to our prayers is on the way. Help is coming! Continue to cry out to God for help. Help me Lord! Help me Lord! We do not have to have some profound theological knowledge to get God to hurry up. The answer will come in God's preordained purpose and time. After clothing ourselves with the whole armour of God, we are told in Ephesians 6:18, ***"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication . . ."*** Don't turn away from trusting God, for if you do

your back will be exposed to Satan's darts or arrows. And there is no piece of armour given to protect the back! Satan works in our minds and seeks to bring us to despair and to harbor hard thoughts about God. Stand firm and fight the good fight of faith remembering the promise found in I Corinthians 10:13-14, ***"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry."***

5. Christ's promotion to the throne and Satan's demotion to the earth - Revelation chapter 12.

My time has expired and I will not be able to expound the material found in Revelation chapter twelve. I will only give you a gist of the chapter. I have some eighty sermons available on SermonAudio on the internet on the angels and the invisible war. You can see my challenge in trying to downsize these into one sermon! You are welcome to look these up on the internet if you have further interest in the subject.

a. Revelation chapter twelve contains vivid imagery, of which various interpretations have been given. In relation to our topic today, it places the casting out of Satan and his angels from the realms of the heavens as occurring at the time of the man child, (which is Christ), being seated upon His throne. This occurred at Christ's ascension. This is seen in verses 5, 7-9. ***"And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne." . . . "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."***

b. This had a profound effect upon heaven and its inhabitants. We are told in verses 10-12 that what God had been saying He was going to do, He finally got done. The throne of His kingdom has now been taken from the administration of the angels and placed upon the head of a man, namely the God-man. There is now a Mediator on the throne and man is elevated above the angels in rank and power. In verses 10-12 we read, ***"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in***

them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."

c. Notice that the ***"accuser of the brethren"*** which had been accusing them continually throughout the Old Testament era, can no longer accuse them. Who were these brethren? They were the Old Testament saints who had died and entered heaven. This is confirmed in verse 12, ***"Therefore rejoice, ye heavens and ye that dwell therein. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth."*** Why has Satan been able to accuse these departed saints? Because God has taken them to heaven without any sacrifice being paid for their sins, and no mediator to intercede for them! Thus Satan has been able to slander them by saying, "You have no just right to be here in the presence of holiness." He could also slander God by charging Him with unrighteousness for bringing guilty sinners into His presence without any means to justify them. Thus Satan's accusation was that God was an unjust God and the brethren were unjustified sinners! This all started back in Genesis 3:15!

d. But now the brethren have overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb. God can now be the just and the justifier of those who have come to faith in the Savior! All the charges which Satan has been making, He no longer can make any charge against them. Thus we are told in Romans 8:33-34, ***"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."***

e. The war is over. Christ has won the battle! Satan failed to dethrone God in the Garden. He failed throughout the Old Testament era. He failed to destroy the Man-child in His birth, He failed to keep Him in the grave. Now, Christ holds the position which Satan held before his fall. It is time for the Hallelujah chorus to break forth. Bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all! The way into the holy of holies has been opened! You would think by this time that Satan would be ready to throw in the towel and acknowledge defeat. But no, he is still attacking those here on the earth, and making war with the elect here on earth who are called "the remnant in verse 17. How are they known? ***"They keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."*** He takes out his wrath upon them with the goal in mind of getting but one of them to renounce Christ and His kingdom of humility and servanthood and return back into his kingdom of pride and dominion. He is looking for anyone who seeks to obey God and trusts Christ as his Lord and Savior.

Stand firm my brethren, stand firm, put on the whole armor of God. Stand firm! Stand firm!