

## Take Up the Sword and the Trowel Part 2

*Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*

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Now let's go to the Lord in prayer and just pray God's blessing on us as fathers and on our families.

*Lord, we thank You for Your goodness. We praise and honor You because, Lord, You have been so kind. Your kindness, Your lovingkindness is over all Your works and one of the ways we see that is in the way You have ordained the family to be a place to nurture children and to raise them up and bring them up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord. And we pray for these men that have stood and all the fathers in our congregation, that You would equip them, strengthen them. Lord, help them to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Help them to be godly leaders of their wives and their children. Lord, we know that we're inadequate. We are grateful that Christ is our adequacy, that we stand in His righteousness and in His faithfulness and not our own, and our job is to trust in Him and to rest in Him, and yet as we trust in Him and rest in Him to be about doing the things that He calls us to do in His word. So bless our families. Bless the marriages. Bless the parent/child relationships in our congregation and make them more and more like the glory of heaven, that every, as You said in Ephesians 3, Lord, every family on heaven and earth finds its ultimate antitype in the Triune God in the Father/Son relationship in the Trinity. So help us to, by Your grace, to manifest some of that, the wonder of that love that exists in the Godhead, may that love fill us and fill our families and may it shine with bright brilliance that will pierce the dark world that we live in and give people hope and may they see the glory of Christ. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Alright, so we are in Nehemiah 4 again this morning and we began a message last week called "Take Up Your Sword and Trowel," or "The Sword and the Trowel." I mentioned last time this passage in Nehemiah 4 is where that somewhat familiar phrase comes from. You may have heard that phrase, it's one that was popularized by a number of different people but particularly Charles Haddon Spurgeon in a newsletter that he sent out that was called "The Sword and the Trowel," taken from Nehemiah 4 where the people of God take up the sword and the trowel and a very relevant passage for us today. We mentioned, you know, and even as Kim was sharing before he sang, they sang about the goodness of God, think about the challenges that surround us today, the turmoil, the social unrest, the medical concerns and fears that so many across this nation have lost loved ones to the

coronavirus, then on top of that we see the racial tensions and so many people asking so many questions, so many emotions, raw emotions are on display, a lot of anger, a lot of fear, anxiety, and we see our society in a state of instability that we've not seen in some time, and as we look at these outer troubles, it can create inner troubling of the soul. We can become, we can be rendered inactive and ineffective just because of the things that are going on around us that distract us from the calling that God has placed on our lives and Nehemiah 4 speaks particularly in a particular relevance to that kind of mindset, that kind of challenge. How can we stay about God's business and the work God has called us to when there's so many things that are troubling us on the outside around us? And essentially what we see in this book, and particularly in the fourth chapter, is that we are called to build what God has called us to build. We're called to stay focused on the mission that he's given us. In the same way the people of Nehemiah's day were troubled with all kinds of social and political unrest, they were threatened with military attack and occupation, they lived in real fear and anxiety for their lives, physical lives, eminent attack was just over the horizon, they were called to build the walls of Jerusalem, to restore the glory of God, to be about advancing his kingdom purposes in the world. Their calling was clear but distraction and disillusionment were such an immediate challenge. They were hard-pressed to stay focused on the work and we see this in chapter 4 as we see the opposition growing to an intense level. We see the opponents of God and of his people actively planning, colluding to halt the work, to murder God's people. And in that time of turmoil, they are called to focus on what God has called them to do, they're called to build, to keep building, but to keep building in this particular circumstance is going to require more than just a trowel in your hand, it's going to require a sword.

The trowel is an implement used by a mason or a stone mason or a brick mason, and it's used to take mortar out of a, you know, like a wheelbarrow and just to slather it, I don't know what the right word is but to slop it on the wall, and then to smooth out the mortar so you can place the next level of bricks or the next level of rocks. So a trowel is an essential tool in building a wall. And so the word "trowel" doesn't actually occur in the text, it's clearly implied they were using something like that. And the word "sword" is in the text because to keep building, they had to have in one hand they had to be building and the other hand they had to be defending themselves.

So they had in one hand the trowel and in one hand the sword, as it were. This is what they had to do to do what God had called them to do. They had not just to build but also to fight and in the same way, you and I are called to exactly the same task. Now it's not a physical task, it's a spiritual task. It's not a physical wall we're building, it's a spiritual temple. But we are called to build. We are called to be focused. We are called to build and with the same focus and intensity that they had to build the physical wall of Jerusalem. And as we build, we're going to find that we also will have to have a willingness to fight because to build the kingdom of God in a world that is opposed to God and his kingdom will always require that we are at war. So we must take up both the trowel and the sword.

Last time we focused on the trowel. We talked about building and what that means, to continue building the walls of Jerusalem. What does it mean? What are we called to

build? We're called to build the church, not this physical church, not the physical building. We tend to think of that as the church. No, the church is the people. The church is the community of called out ones. That's the New Testament word for church, ekklesia, those who have been called out. Ek, out. Klesia, from kaleo, called out ones. Called out from the world to be an assembly of called out persons for God. To be a spiritual temple. We see so many places in the New Testament, 1 Corinthians 3:16, Ephesians 2:19-22, 1 Peter 2:1-5, all three places using the metaphor of you as the body of Christ, you as the people of God are the temple of God, the true temple. And so we're called to build the temple. We're called to be building one another up, edifying one another, and that means building the walls, building the temple, building a sense of separateness.

We've said Ezra/Nehemiah, the books Ezra/Nehemiah are one book basically in the original Old Testament, the Hebrew Old Testament, and so we worked through Ezra, now we're working through Nehemiah because we took them as one book, right? And so Ezra/Nehemiah are about separation, being separate and distinct from the peoples around them. They were to build the walls of Jerusalem and that was a physical barrier that spoke even to the spiritual separation that was supposed to be happening among God's people. There was to be a separation from those around them. They were not to be like the world. Jesus has called us out of the world to himself to be his disciples, to be like our Master, to be conformed to his image, or as Peter says in 1 Peter 1, "To be holy as He is holy."

So that's what we're called to do, we're called to pursue personal holiness. So you're building the wall, you're building the walls of Jerusalem when you are pursuing personal holiness and when you are helping others pursue their own holiness. Then you are building as God has called us to build and what we're gonna see is that as we do that, this passage teaches us and the New Testament confirms it, that as you build, as you try to pursue holiness, as you try to help others pursue holiness, you will be attacked. You will have to engage in spiritual warfare. You will have to actively engage in spiritual warfare. You must take up your sword and fight.

And so today the theme of the message is take up your sword. That's the overall theme. We're gonna have four points that we're going to try to work, begin to work through this morning. Four points but the first, the theme is basically that we must take up our sword and fight. Last time, take up your trowel and build. Take up your sword and fight. We have to do both at the same time. So we'll read Nehemiah 4 together and listen for all the words that describe, last time we really focused on the words that described building and the walls and all of the construction, listen for the words that describe warfare as we read the text particularly. Nehemiah 4:1,

1 Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furious and very angry and mocked the Jews. 2 He spoke in the presence of his brothers and the wealthy men of Samaria and said, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Are they going to restore it for themselves? Can they offer sacrifices? Can they finish in a day? Can they revive the stones from the dusty rubble even the burned ones?" 3 Now

Tobiah the Ammonite was near him and he said, "Even what they are building--if a fox should jump on it, he would break their stone wall down!" 4 Hear, O our God, how we are despised! Return their reproach on their own heads and give them up for plunder in a land of captivity. 5 Do not forgive their iniquity and let not their sin be blotted out before You, for they have demoralized the builders. 6 So we built the wall and the whole wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work. 7 Now when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repair of the walls of Jerusalem went on, and that the breaches began to be closed, they were very angry. 8 All of them conspired together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause a disturbance in it. 9 But we prayed to our God, and because of them we set up a guard against them day and night. 10 Thus in Judah it was said, "The strength of the burden bearers is failing, Yet there is much rubbish; And we ourselves are unable To rebuild the wall." 11 Our enemies said, "They will not know or see until we come among them, kill them and put a stop to the work." 12 When the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times, "They will come up against us from every place where you may turn," 13 then I stationed men in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, the exposed places, and I stationed the people in families with their swords, spears and bows. 14 When I saw their fear, I rose and spoke to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people: "Do not be afraid of them; remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses." 15 When our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had frustrated their plan, then all of us returned to the wall, each one to his work. 16 From that day on, half of my servants carried on the work while half of them held the spears, the shields, the bows and the breastplates; and the captains were behind the whole house of Judah. 17 Those who were rebuilding the wall and those who carried burdens took their load with one hand doing the work and the other holding a weapon. 18 As for the builders, each wore his sword girded at his side as he built, while the trumpeter stood near me. 19 I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "The work is great and extensive, and we are separated on the wall far from one another. 20 At whatever place you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us." 21 So we carried on the work with half of them holding spears from dawn until the stars appeared. 22 At that time I also said to the people, "Let each man with his servant spend the night within Jerusalem so that they may be a guard for us by night and a laborer by day." 23 So neither I, my brothers, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us removed our clothes, each took his weapon even to the water.

So we hear as we read that this dual commitment to build and to fight, to take up in one hand the implements of construction, and the other hand the implements of defense or warfare and so we must also take up our sword. And as we look at this, I want to consider

this under four points and they're really four questions. The first question is: why must we fight? Why must we fight? I mean, God is the God of peace, Jesus is the Prince of Peace, he has made peace between us and God, why must we fight? Because we are at war. A state of war exists because God is a God of peace but Satan and his kingdom are opposed to the God of peace and to his people. War has been declared and if you have come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to peace with God, you are now the renewed image-bearer being conformed into the likeness of Christ. You have been called to do the work of showing the glory of God to the world by becoming more and more like Jesus. Satan therefore hates God and he hates those who bear the image of God, all people, but especially he hates those who bear the renewed image of God in the glory of Christ being made known in his people, and he is determined to oppose everything that God is doing to build his kingdom.

So when you woke up this morning, if you belong to Jesus Christ, you woke up at war. A state of war already exists. I'm reminded of that when you've heard Franklin Delano Roosevelt's speech that he gave on December 8, 1941, essentially he made that statement. You know, the way it works in the United States is to declare war, the President has to ask Congress to make a declaration of war, but as he is voicing that after, remember, December 7, 1941 we're attacked by Japan at Pearl Harbor, thousands of Americans die, ships are sunk. It was a premeditated planned attack but we had no idea about it. And so Roosevelt when he goes to Congress, he says basically, "A state of war already exists. I'm asking you to formally declare us now at war but a state of war already exists. We have been attacked." And the reality is as a Christian, though we would prefer not to be at war, a state of war already exists and will exist until Jesus returns and vanquishes once and for all all of those who are determined to resist his righteous rule.

So that's why God says, "Take up the sword. Take up the fight." I mean, the key words in the passage, I mentioned listen for them as we read, the word "fight" occurs three times, verse 8, verse 14, verse 20. Verse 8, "All of them conspired together to come and fight against Jerusalem." Why do the people have to take up swords? Because the enemies of God are coming to fight them. Three times the word "fight." Guard. We begin with verse 9, "But we prayed to our God, and because of them we set up a guard." It occurs three times. Verse 9, verse 22, verse 23. The word "weapon" occurs twice. Verse 17, verse 23, with one hand doing the work, verse 17, the other holding a weapon. Then there's five different specific weapons mentioned: the sword, the spear, the bow, the shield, the breastplate. God's people were using these various weapons, implements of war, holding them in one hand while they did the work with the other. If you're going to build God's kingdom which you must do as a follower of Jesus Christ, then you cannot avoid the reality of spiritual warfare. It is inevitable.

So we must fight and we must fight according to the Scriptures. It's so important because this whole idea of spiritual warfare is one that is very much misunderstood in our day and we need to understand it carefully. I want to show you, though, how this inevitability is really clear. I mentioned last week that the book of Ephesians was a really good book to look at as how the New Testament talks about building. If you heard the message last week, you may remember I pointed out how in two, Ephesians 2:19-22 he describes the

fact that we now as Christians, Gentile and Jew, who've been brought together in Christ, we are now being built into a spiritual temple, a dwelling place for God, okay, for his praises to be offered. We are a temple. Jesus is the cornerstone according to Paul in Ephesians 2:19-22. Then in chapter 4, he changes metaphors but the same idea is at work. He talks about now building one another up. Speak words that are for edification, that is, the building up of one another, and the image that he uses in Ephesians 4:1-16 is we are building a body, like a body growing up, now we are supposed to help one another grow up to be the full measure of the stature of Christ; that corporately as we grow in individual holiness and we help each other, we edify one another, somehow we corporately begin to look more and more and more like Jesus Christ. This is another way of saying the same thing: build the temple to the glory of God, build the body to the glory of God. And so Paul changes the metaphors and you see this a lot, there are different metaphors God uses in different ways to teach us different angles about the same reality.

So chapter 4 starts that and I mentioned that, 4:1-16 lays out this metaphor of the body, then 4:17-32 he talks about putting off and putting on, pursuing personal holiness by laying aside sin and putting on righteousness. Then chapter 5 he talks about turning from impurity and walking as children of light in the first half of that, first 14 verses. Then verse 15 he turns the corner and says, you know, don't live as unwise people. Make the most of your time. Be filled with the Spirit, Ephesians 5:18. Then he goes on to say this is what being filled with the Spirit looks like, you build one another up in your marriage relationships, 5:22-33. You build one another up in your parent/child relationships, 6:1-4. You build one another up in your working relationships, 6:5-9.

So you're building one another up, you're pursuing the glory of God by building God's kingdom, pursuing holiness and what happens? What's gonna happen if you do that? Turn with me to Ephesians 6:10. This is the classic passage in the New Testament, in the whole Bible on spiritual warfare. If you're going to be about building the kingdom, if you're going to really be someone who's rooted in the Gospel, building one another up, then you must, this is where Paul ends his letter,

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

Stand firm. Take up the armor. There's a sense in which really what's happening in Nehemiah is just really beautifully repeated right here. In Nehemiah essentially we're gonna see this, I hope today and next time, that he basically says to deal with the war that's going on you need to do three things: you need to stand firm; you need to take up your weapon; you need to pray; actually four things, and you need to watch. And stand firm is a key word that's repeated a couple of times in the New American Standard. He said he stationed them. Because there was the attack was imminent, he stationed people at

key places. When you look at that Hebrew word "station," it means "he stood them; he charged them to stand there and be ready for the attack." It's exactly what Paul is saying here in Romans 6, stand firm, right?

So how do you stand firm? Well, you've got to take up a weapon. You stand there with a weapon. Take up your weapon. This is the second thing Nehemiah basically says. This is kind of a thumbnail that I'm giving you that's really not the main points, I'm just telling you where we're going over time. Stand firm. Take up your weapon. Here Paul expounds on take up your weapon and he talks about the whole armor of God. Take up all of the weapons that you have in Christ. Take up the fullness of your weaponry. And I think he has in mind, at least a major part of his thinking is he understands the people Paul was writing to in Ephesus, they were familiar with Roman soldiers, they saw them every day. They saw them in their armor. They knew about the helmet, the breastplate. They knew the kind of shoes they wore and they knew about their sword, their shield. And so he says, "Think about that image that you see and you need to have that kind, you need to take up all of the armor that is yours in Christ."

So it's, you know, stand firm, take up your weapons and then it's pray because in Nehemiah they pray. They keep praying. When things get tough, Nehemiah prays. And the other thing they do is they watch and what you're gonna see here is that Paul says, "Stand firm," as you read from 6:10-18, he says, "Stand firm. Take up your armor. Pray and watch." Exactly the same things and so we're going to try to unpack this as a part of what we're going to do as we go forward, Lord willing, today and next week. But the question why must we fight? We must fight because as the children of God who have been bought with a price, the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, are now precious to God, we now have a sworn enemy. Satan hates us because he hates our Father. He hates us because he hates our Master. And to be, to stand with Jesus means that you will be opposed by Satan.

Now so why must we fight? Because we're under attack. The second question this morning is: whom are we to fight? Whom are we to fight? Well, in Nehemiah's day they were supposed to fight those who attacked them. They weren't supposed to go out and start picking fights with people. Go take your weapons around and just go attack people. No, they would attack, they would fight those who attacked them and so the same is true for us. We are to do spiritual battle against those who come against us.

Now it's important that the passage that we just opened to, Ephesians 6:12 is so important for us on this side of Calvary, we begin to see with even greater clarity what has always been true. What has always been true is that the ultimate enemy of God is Satan, and that he has been animating the forces of wickedness throughout history since the fall. He has been the god of this age. 2 Corinthians 4:4. He has been the ruler of this present darkness. Ephesians 2:2. He is the ruler of the world, Jesus called him three times. Jesus referred to Satan as the ruler of the world three times in John 12:31, 14:30 and 16:11. He's the ruler of the world.

Now Jesus was saying now as the ruler of the world cast out, because Christ came to defeat him. But it becomes even clearer that he is our true enemy in the New Testament. He was there in the Old Testament and we see him in places, 19 times in the Old Testament the word "Satan" occurs. The Hebrew word "satan" which means "the accuser or adversary." So the name actually means "accuse; to stand against." The word "devil," one of the favorite words in the New Testament for this same spiritual entity, "diablos." Dia, through. And bolo, throw." It's a word "throw through" but it's basically a word that came to mean "slander; to throw and to attack someone verbally; to cast at someone; to hurl insults." So the devil is the one who hurls insults. He's a slanderer, a blasphemer. That's what that name means, "slanderer; blasphemer; devil."

So the Bible is clear that there is a real personal spiritual being who rules over the kingdom of darkness. The Scripture is clear in that. Anyone who denies that is denying the word of God. Spiritual evil is a reality and Satan rules over a kingdom. As we see here in verse 12, it is described as, they're described as rulers, powers, world forces of this darkness, spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Other places powers and principalities and kingdoms, this idea that there's spiritual order and structure. Then the Bible shows us that this is a kingdom of demons basically. It's fallen angels. A third of the angels fell from heaven in Satan's rebellion and now they work with him to try to defeat the work of God. They are in that ridiculous absurd task of trying to defeat the Lord of glory and the most high God and they are doomed to fail and they have failed already. They have been defeated yet their presence is real and so we still see the embodiment of evil and their fingerprints are all over history. I mean, the Bible shows that we have evil in our own hearts. Man is a sinner. Man turns away from God. Yes, everyone in themselves is at war with God. That's the flesh. The world system is against God. But ultimately there's also a spiritual kingdom and this spiritual kingdom animates through the lies that Satan brings, the world system, and it makes things, makes man much more heinous than even he would be naturally. As he gives himself to the lies of Satan and is deceived, man does greater and greater evil.

So we see the fingerprints of Satan and his kingdom all over history. You know, we see it in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Nazi Germany. Adolph Hitler. The Final Solution. Six million Jews murdered. We see it in Stalin's purges where upwards of like 20 million he murdered, the Communist leader of the Soviet Union. Mao Tse Tung, the Communist leader of China murdering. Pol Pot, another Communist leader in Cambodia murdering, "The Killing Fields," millions of people being murdered. That happens because evil is real.

I was listening to a sermon by John MacArthur and he referenced, this came to mind now, a book that was written by someone. It's not a Christian guy who's writing a book about evil and he said it was a really disturbing book for many people because they don't have a frame of reference to put this. They don't understand what the Bible teaches about human nature. But essentially this guy's thesis was when you look at the most heinous acts in history, when you look at, you know, horrible injustices, when you look at, you know, genocide and murderous rampages, what you see is, he says you find ordinary people do extraordinary evil. It's not extraordinarily evil people doing extraordinary evil, it's ordinary people doing extraordinary evil because the circumstances are right, because



Satan is greasing the skids, because they're being tempted, because everything is working in that direction and the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places are laboring toward that end. The only thing that stops it is the restraining grace of God who holds Satan in. I love this image from Job, when Job is getting to see who God really is in the end of the book, he, God shows him that he has a ring in leviathan's nose. Leviathan is a metaphor, I think, for Satan himself, probably was some kind of dinosaur monster, a giant crocodile some people think, you know, like a prehistoric dinosaur crocodile, humongous, that was still around when Job was around because the dinosaur was around. You see that when you read Job, a couple of them, he describes a couple of them in the book that Job was able to see and one of them is leviathan. Well, leviathan's a metaphor, though, also because just like the serpent, who was the serpent? Satan. He's the dragon in Revelation. Well, he was leviathan in Job and God says, "I have a ring in his nose, that is, I lead him around wherever I want to." He's raging, he's full of hate, he wants to kill, to steal, kill and destroy and yet our sovereign God reigns over even what he's allowed to do for his purposes.

But whom are we to fight? This means our fight according to Ephesians 6:12 is not against people themselves. People are not the ultimate enemy. Even those who hate us are not the ultimate enemy, the ultimate enemy is the one who is animating and deceiving them. That's what Ephesians 6:12 says. We are to fight against spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Now the reality is Satan uses people. He was using people in Nehemiah 4. He's the one helping animate that intense antipathy of Sanballat and Tobiah, the Ashdodites and the Ammonites. He's motivating, he's lying to them, deceiving them and creating more and more antipathy and hatred for God and his people, and so Satan is working through them. But Paul helps us to remember it's not the human being that's attacking us because that person is in need of salvation. If they don't repent, then God will judge them fully for all the evil they're doing. But that the true enemy is Satan himself.

Now whom are we to fight? So we've said why must we fight? Whom are we to fight? Thirdly, where do we fight? Where do we fight? This is really important because there's so much, there's so much confusion in the evangelical church today and particularly in the last 50-60 years about spiritual warfare. We are not to go around looking to rebuke demons and bind demons. That's just not the way that the New Testament describes our responsibility. Yes, Jesus did that but Jesus, we are not him. We are not he. In his earthly ministry, he was claiming authority over them. How do we deal with demons? How do we cast out demons? Demons are still real. People become demonized and possessed. Yes, that still happens, but the way we deliver people is we proclaim the truth, we proclaim the Gospel, we proclaim the message of Jesus Christ. We call people to obey the message. This is what you find in the epistles which teach the church how to go about taking the Gospel, right? You don't find anywhere where people are told to go around, "Hey, this is the formula. You know, you say this particular formula to a person who's demon-possessed." No. That's something that's all extra-biblical. It's not the Scriptures. Or you'll sometimes hear people talking about spiritual warfare prayers that you, "Hey, the reason you're not making progress is you haven't prayed against these spiritual principalities over your particular area, or you need to pray against the demon of lust, or

you need to pray against the demon of greed, or you need to pray against the demon of anger."

There is nothing in the New Testament that teaches you to do that and our Bible is sufficient. If God wanted us to do that, he would have told us to do that somewhere. People are just making up things out of their own minds. Now many well-intentioned people. I'm not questioning in all cases their motivations, but they're not being sound biblically. The Bible describes how to do spiritual warfare and essentially the way you do spiritual warfare is you understand where warfare happens and where it happens is in the minds and hearts of men. That is where we battle. So we battle in the arena of ideas. We speak truth.

Now it's so clear when you put this in context. Think about it. We know Satan is a real living spiritual entity and all of that is true, absolutely, but how does he war? Think about it. How does he wage war? How does he kill? John 8:44, Jesus says, remember the people, the Jews are around him and he's talking to Jews who he's basically telling them, "You're not of your father Abraham." They say, "We're of our father Abraham." He says, "No, you're not. You're of your father the devil." Do you know why he said, "You're of your father the devil"? I mean, obviously it was true before they had this conflict but Jesus is saying, "In light of the conflict we're having right now, you're proving that you're of your father the devil, because what was your father the devil like? He was a murderer from the beginning and you want to murder Me. Therefore you're of your father the devil. He is a murderer from the beginning," John 8:44. He goes on to say how does he murder? He is a liar and the father of lies. When he lies, he speaks from his nature. What he's saying is he murders by lying. This is how he wages warfare. This is how he kills. This is how he brings people into bondage. This is how he brings people into demonic possession even, it is through lying to them and getting them to believe his lies and the only way they can be set free is to be set free by knowing the truth. You will know the truth and the truth will make you free and the truth is Jesus Christ in all of his fullness, in all of his glory, in all that he has accomplished to deliver us from sin.

So Satan wages war by lying. This is how he wrecks, this is how he did what he did in Nazi Germany, he lied. He sowed lie after lie after lie after lie. We a few years back when Maggie, I think, was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, we went to the Breman Museum in Atlanta. It's a Jewish holocaust museum down like on 14<sup>th</sup> Street or 18<sup>th</sup> Street, somewhere, you know, midtown Atlanta, and it was really, it's really an impressive little museum. It's not nearly as big as the museum in Washington, DC but it's really powerful, nevertheless. And one of the things that I saw there for the first time is they go back and they show the history of how Jews had been being mischaracterized for just hundreds of years, really, but as it got closer and closer to the 1930s, it was ramping up. They were basically just lying about the Jewish people, that the Jewish people are robbing everybody, the Jewish people are corrupt, the Jewish people are the reason everything's wrong with us, the Jewish people are just lying and lying and lying and lying, and then The Final Solution happens. Then people are willing to stand by as six million Jews are herded off to death camps and killed in unspeakable atrocity. But it was all of that lying and lying and lying that began because what happens is a lie comes into your mind, in the realm of reason

you begin to ponder that and think about it and it starts to form your thinking, it starts to form your beliefs, it starts to affect your values and it starts to affect your commitments. So the mind is the window to the heart and then the heart is captivated and the heart is led wherever the lie leads it. This is how Satan does battle.

Now what this means is that he's always been on a, he's always on a plan of destroying God's people by lying. He lies about God. He lies about God's word. He lies about us, human beings. He continually lays layer upon layer of lies until he binds people up in abject misery and you and I are called to do spiritual warfare which is essentially speaking the truth in the face of lies and being willing to suffer for it. That's spiritual warfare. And when you speak truth to someone who's bound up, when you proclaim Christ, you speak the name of Jesus and you talk about what Christ has accomplished, you are waging spiritual warfare. Kingdoms are in conflict when that happens. And when you are taking the word of God and applying it directly against a lie that Satan has been sowing in someone's life and has become a belief or a commitment in their lives, often you will see intense opposition and hatred to you as you bring light to that, but when God is pleased, God will use the proclamation of the truth to grant a new heart. The entrance of your word gives light and into that darkness God will speak, as 2 Corinthians 4:6 says, the same God who said let light shine out of darkness, listen to this image, the same God who said let light shine out of darkness, he's talking about Genesis 1 when God said, "Let there be light," darkness was over the surface of the waters and God said, "Let there be light and there was light," Paul says the same God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness has shown in our hearts to give the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." He says he looked into the, if you're a believer, God looked into the darkness of your heart which was just like the primordial chaos of Genesis 1:2, and God spoke Christ. Someone, a human being, spoke to you, you read something that had been written down by someone, and the word came and God accompanied that outward call with the inward call of regeneration and suddenly life, light and life, and that is spiritual warfare when you speak truth.

So where it happens, it happens in the mind, and as I said, he's a liar. Think about this. Let me show you this. Look, turn from Ephesians 6 back to 2 Corinthians 10. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses." That's warfare language, right? He says we don't war, we don't make war according to the flesh. No, the weapons that we're supposed to pick up, the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but they are divinely powerful to destroy fortresses. What's he talking about? What's he talking about? What are these weapons? What do we take up? Look what he says next in verse 5, "We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." The word "speculations," he's saying that people, this is the word *logismos*, our word logic, logical comes from that. It's a word for reasonings, speculations, the thoughts of the mind, computations of the mind. You've heard things, you've learned things, you put them together in your mind, you formed opinions, you formed beliefs about life and these things that have formed like that are actually the components of fortresses in people's souls that keep them trapped in the

kingdom of darkness, and you see how it's still in the mind. Look what he says, every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God. And then one more term, we are taking every thought captive. Do you see that? Spiritual warfare, the mighty weapons of God are used in the realm first of thinking. This is what we're called to do and we're not to think this is something insignificant. No, this is where the action is. This is where the nuclear power of the Gospel is set loose. Now not in a trust in human reason. No, but in a proclamation of the truth that will smash and demolish the well-laid foundation of lies that Satan has built into fortresses that people think are fortresses which are really just prisons and you take the truth to them, you are setting them free. You're demolishing the work of Satan who has bound them and kept them captive to do his will.

He lies about God. He lies about his word. He lies about us. Think about just Genesis 3:1-5, the first temptation. What did Satan do? He questioned the word of God, "Has God said?" He cast down the word. This is his plan of operation. This is his normal, just his approach that he takes in dealing with human beings. He wants you to doubt the word of God. "Has God said?"

Then he says essentially not only doubt God's word, doubt God's character. Remember when he challenges Eve to think about it he says, "You will surely not die." She says, "The day we eat of that tree we'll die. God said that. Eat, at her touch it will die." He says, "You surely will not die." Just a bold-faced, blasphemous lie that he says. And then he says this, "God knows in the day that you eat from that tree, you will be like God knowing good and evil." You see, God is, his character is such that he does not want your best. He's holding you back. This is what he's saying. He's saying God is the kind of God that wants to keep you pushed down and he wants to keep you under his feet when in reality when you read Genesis 1, 2 and 3, God had crowned creation with man as his crowning glory. He gives man the noblest position. He calls man the image of God, that is, an image is like a statue, that we are like statues of God; that when you see a human being, you are seeing some visible, somehow a visible manifestation of who God is. I don't know exactly how it works but he makes it real clear in Genesis 1:26-28, three times he says, "the image-bearer." Image and likeness. We're made to look like God, we're made to be in his image in some way. God is a spirit, doesn't have a body like a man. What does that mean exactly? Well, it means we're made to rule. We're made to have authority. We're made to think and to speak and to effect productive change and create. And every human being is an image-bearer but what Satan wants them to, he wants to lie to you about God and say, "God, no God doesn't want to lift you up. God wants to put you down. His word can't be trusted. His character can't be trusted." Then he wants to tell you lies about yourself like he told Eve, "You can be like God. You're not what you, you're not what you need to be. You're not at all what you should be." That's what he's essentially saying. "As God made you, you're deficient but you can be something. You can be something if you listen to me and you stop listening to God."

Well, that's exactly what Satan does, he lies to people about themselves. Now today he doesn't tell people that they're sinners because that's the message now. We were something glorious before the fall, now the glory has been marred radically and we are in need of a Savior. But Satan doesn't want people to know that so he lies to them about

themselves. He's the one that lies and tells them that there are more than two genders. That's Satan's lies and people believe it to their own misery. You see, it's his way to lie and to sow lies and he uses the world's system to fill, to surround us with all of these lies and you and I can look at it and get really discouraged, can't we? Look at all these lies. They're just piling up around us. What's it going to be like for our grandchildren, our great-grandchildren?

We think these things but God's word through Nehemiah says, "Hey, you can be a realist and look at what's happening but don't get distracted. Build and fight. Keep building and keep fighting. You keep pursuing personal holiness, you keep loving Christ and growing to be more like him. You keep remembering the truth that He's sovereign over whatever's happening among the realm of man; that whatever happens around us, our God reigns. You keep that in mind. You keep aware of who you are in Christ, that you are heading for heaven, that you're just passing through, that your calling is to be faithful, to speak the truth in love to other people to help them become more like Jesus, to speak the truth in love to the lost even so that they can come to know Jesus, and to realize that you have to fight in your mind to not believe these lies, to recognize them, and to take the sword of His Spirit, to take the weaponry that we have." And I want to tell you, listen, we're going to unpack this next week, Lord willing, Ephesians 6, the six articles of weaponry but I want you to think about this and I encourage you to read it this week and pray, pray for me as we're going through this and to pray for all of us that the Lord will give clarity. But the weapons of Ephesians 6, Paul, I think, chose those emblems because they were familiar, because there were Roman soldiers, and we'll talk about this, and they saw Roman soldiers, but he also chose them because five of those six weapons that are mentioned when you think about the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the Gospel, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, five of those six are spoken of as belonging to Jesus, the servant of the Lord, in Isaiah. Each one of the five, all but the shield of faith and the shield of faith, I think, comes from Genesis 15:1. They're all also rooted in the Old Testament and essentially the meaning is Jesus took up all of these weapons as he defeated Satan and what it means essentially and it's shorthand for you to put on the whole armor of God is for you to put on all of Christ; for you to know who you are in Jesus; for you to know that your righteousness is secure in him. That's your breastplate. For you to know the feet of the preparation of the Gospel of peace, I think it's from Isaiah 52:7 where it says, "How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news," brings the Gospel. Feet and Gospel. "Who announces to Zion, who declares your God reigns." The essence of the Gospel is your God reigns and so your footing, stand, the world is coming at you and you feel the assaults and you have conversations with people and they come out with so much stuff and you think there's no way we can get there from here. I can't get to the Gospel from where you are. And you feel like you're moving backward against the assault. You remember who you are and you put on the Lord Jesus Christ. "Jesus, You are with me. I am in You and You are in me and greater is He that's in me than he that's in the world. And I can stand up because You've allowed this conversation to happen. You've allowed me to feel inadequate right now. You've allowed me to feel like I don't know what I'm talking about." Don't you have conversations like that? I do. As a pastor I feel like, "Man, if you would just give me about 45 minutes, you'd sit there quietly and I'll go through four or

five points. Just let me do that, okay?" People don't cooperate with that. I actually never tried to do that but I wish that you could, don't you wish, "Please, just stop talking and listen." But they don't want to do that. But how do we do it when we feel like we can't? But we can't in ourselves but Jesus is able. And so who you are in Christ, you remember who you are in Christ, you remember he's sovereign. "You've allowed me to be in this conversation where I'm not knowing what I should say next and part of the reason is so that I would remember that You're sovereign and You're wanting me to be dependent upon You and I'm resting in Your sovereignty. You have me here," and just the very ease that that brings, the peace that flows into the heart when you know, "I'm where God wants me to be even though I don't know what to say next."

There's something powerful about that realization in your heart. I'm telling you, there's something powerful about that. When you are secure in who you are in Christ as someone is coming against you, railing against even the truth, there's something that they can't explain. Gospel light is shining out of you in that moment because you're standing in truth and they have nowhere to stand. They're looking, in some sense, even though they're unbelievers and they're not really seeking God, yet every human being longs for security and peace and love. They just try to find them without God. But when they see in you true peace, they see in you confidence in your righteousness in who you are in Christ even though you're weak and inadequate in yourself, they see something. This is how God often prepares the heart of an unbeliever to finally listen. This is what Peter's talking about in 1 Peter 3:15 when he says, he's speaking about the insults that we get and he says, "When people see they will ask a reason for the hope that is within you." They'll see hope and they don't have hope. They're without God and without hope in the world and they see hope in you and the Lord will use that many times to bring interest and openness, and then when you speak about Jesus, salvation. The Lord wants us to be people who are mighty in him but as he said in Ephesians 6:10, be strong not in yourself, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Not in yourself. Isn't that good news? You don't have to be strong. You can't be. You rest in Jesus and he is strong. In your weakness, he is strong. In my weakness, he is strong.

And so the Lord calls us to that. Why must we fight? Because to be a follower of Jesus Christ is to be at odds with the world system and with the ruler of this world, and he's not willing to peacefully coexist. He's a murderer and a liar and he seeks to steal, kill and destroy. He's a thief. Whom are we to fight? We're to fight him. We're to see people as the mission field, not the enemy. Now sometimes they act like enemies and sometimes and we're too at some point there's a place where we surrender unto God and his justice and his judgment and we rest in that. But, "Vengeance is Mine. I will repay," says the Lord. And so we pray for their souls as long as there's hope of them hearing the Gospel. And where do we fight? We fight in the arena of the mind and the heart. Lord willing next time we'll talk about how we fight and taking up that armor piece by piece.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, how grateful we are for the stability that Your word brings to us, the stability that the Gospel provides. It is an anchor of the soul. When all around us there is*

*turmoil, tribulation, yet and in the church then it happens as You said in Ephesians 4 that we can be thrown about by every wind and wave of doctrine, we see it happening around us, Lord. In the church of Christ today, we feel that pressure in our own lives that we can be tossed about, but You said the answer is to speak the truth in love and that the truth in love has the power to stop that turmoil and to produce real spiritual growth. It produces, it brings our lives in such a way that provides real strengthening and growth and more and more likeness to Christ. It's how we build and it's how we fight.*

*Father, help us be people who are willing to stand where You stationed us. You've allowed that we be born in the day that we were born, and You've allowed that we live in the place that we live, and You've allowed that we were raised in the family we were raised in, and You've allowed that we were brought to You at the time we were brought to You, and so You have a purpose. You're reigning and You're ruling so increase our faith. Give us more and more reliance upon Christ and in doing that, Lord, make us mighty in Him. And Lord, as we see Your kingdom advancing, we will joyfully tell those who see that ask the reason for the hope that's within us and we will say it's not us and we'll say to You, Lord, not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but to You be the glory. You alone are worthy and You are more than able. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*