

We Build; We Fight

Books of Ezra and Nehemiah

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I invite you to turn with me in your Bibles to Nehemiah 4. Nehemiah 4. We're going to begin here and then we're going to turn to Ephesians 6 before long and spend most of our time in Ephesians 6 but we want to start in Nehemiah 4. The title of the Message this morning is "We Build; We Fight." We build; we fight, because I think that summarizes well what's going on in Nehemiah and what we're called to do as well.

You know, we see around us so much going on, so much turmoil, and I think it's one of these times where we need to be careful how much news we watch, how much social media we partake of because one of the real challenges is when you spend a lot of time doing that, you're meditating on what you're reading about and you're meditating on all that's wrong with the world or all that may be wrong with the world, and the different opinions about what's wrong rather than meditating upon who God is, meditating upon who Christ is and what he's called us to. And so it's just something to be thinking about, how much time am I spending in the word, how much time am I spending in the things of God, singing, listening to good music to set my heart, stabilize my soul. You know, we've become spiritually ineffective when we allow the clamor out there, in times when it's not quite as chaotic as now. It doesn't matter, the world's always operating in ways that are disruptive to God's kingdom because the world system is opposed to God.

So we need to be mindful and prayerful and wise about that and so we become spiritually ineffective, spiritually inactive when we're fretting and worrying and anxious, and we need to labor to get on God's agenda and to stay on his agenda, and to realize that there are great great things that we can be doing that are of eternal lasting value. Nehemiah 4 is so relevant to us because the people of God in Nehemiah's day were in times of great tumult, uncertainty. They were experiencing active persecution. They were under political tyranny. They had around them social unrest. They lived under the threat of imminent violence and death and what were they called to do? They were called to build God's kingdom and fight God's enemies.

We build; we fight. They were building the walls of Jerusalem. I appreciate Ted's defense of this point, that, thank you for that. We've had some good sermons already today so I hope I can keep up with what's gone on so far with the things that we've heard because it's been very refreshing and edifying. But we build; we fight. So they were building the

kingdom of God and what they were called to do is build a physical wall of Jerusalem to protect the worship of God, the temple of God at that point in redemptive history, the place where God met with man was Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, the temple, the Holy of Holies. And so they're building the walls because that's what God has called them to do to exalt his name, to glorify him, and because they were doing God's work, they were hated and they were opposed and they lived under the threat of imminent attack.

So we fight; we build. I chose that title because I remembered this week thinking about just something made me remember the Seabees. If you're aware of the Seabees, that's S-e-a-b-e-e-s but it comes from actually the two letters C and B because it is the United States Navy Construction Battalion. The construction battalion, CB, and they have been integral to all US military success in our history but particularly in World War II. They played a dominant role in advancing the cause of the liberation of particularly the Pacific, and certainly on both fronts they were pivotal, but they actually built, these are the guys that would go in and build air strips. They were on bulldozers. It was engineers, architects, construction workers, guys on bulldozers and working cranes and hammers and jackhammers, and they would, you know, lay down air strips, build military bases, plow, you know, roads so that tanks could advance. And so the Seabees, the motto of the Seabees is "We build, We fight." We build. We fight. So I borrowed their motto for our message because I think it fits perfectly with Nehemiah 4 and what we're called to do. Because we build, we must fight.

It's what we see in Nehemiah, because they're building, they must fight, and as we read this chapter, listen for all of the references to building and all the references to fighting and understand that the people of God in Nehemiah's day because they were going to do what God called them to do and build the city of Jerusalem, they had to fight. They had to have in one hand a trowel and in one hand a sword. The trowel to build with. The sword to fight with. And in the very same way, the people of God today in the 21st century are not much different than the people of God in the 5th century BC. We are called to build and as you build you will have to fight. You will have to be prepared to fight. You will have, if you take up your trowel, then you must also take up your sword.

We see this in this chapter. Nehemiah 4,

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.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, how grateful we are to You for Your word and how much we know as we turn to it that we need Your grace, we need the ministry of Your Holy Spirit to help us to understand, to hear and to obey, to repent and to believe. So help us, Lord. Grant us Your grace and help us to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. We pray this in His name. Amen.

So the title of the messages, "We Build; We Fight." For us today as for the people in Nehemiah's day, if you build, if you build the battle will come to you. That's why you have to fight. If you choose to build, the battle will come to you. The reason that people are going to come and murder them was because they were building. If they had not been building, they would not have been attacked but the fact that they were building the wall of Jerusalem meant that they would experience attack, and in the same way if you and I are building as God has called us to build, if we are building the spiritual house, not a physical building, if we're building the spiritual temple, the people of God, if we're pursuing holiness. Remember, they're building a wall of separation and this is a key emphasis in Ezra and Nehemiah both, those two books that are really one, Ezra-Nehemiah, separation from the nations, being different from them, not practicing their evil practices but being holy unto the Lord. That's a key focus of Ezra and Nehemiah's ministry and the wall is really a reminder of that, a powerful visible word picture of that, that we are to be pursuing separation. Remember we talked about it's not separation from as much as it is separation to. We're in the world, we must be in the world. We have to be around unbelievers. We're not to be monastic and to go off and live our Christian life separated from unbelievers. No, not at all. We live in the world but we are to be spiritually separated from the world. Spiritually not geographically or physically. Spiritually separated unto God and not just separated from the world but separated unto him, that is for his purposes, to love him, to treasure him, to seek him, to abide in him, to become like Christ. And this really is the calling and if you and I are doing that, if you and I are building the city of God, the people of God, if you are tomorrow you're reading your Bible, you're meditating on Scripture to put off sin in your life, if you are doing that, you will be building Jerusalem. If you are talking to another brother or sister, you're talking to a believer about the things of God and you're trying to help them, maybe you're addressing a perceived area of weakness or need, an area of sin in their life that you think might be an issue that you're seeing and you're moving into relationship with them and you're trying to help them and you're bringing the truth of God into their life, you are building Jerusalem. You're building the spiritual kingdom. You're doing something of eternal value and, listen, the reality is you're doing something of incredible spiritual power. It's counter-intuitive.

So much of the focus today even for many in the church is on the structures and the big picture. Okay, like we've got to change the big picture and that's really not the Christian's primary focus. The Christian's focus is individual souls. How do I know that? Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, I would be trying to overthrow the injustices of Rome." That's what the Jews wanted him to do but Jesus came to change the world by changing hearts. That's the only way you change the world is you change hearts and the power of the Gospel comes and it does something, it's like nuclear power coming into the world. Seismic, earth-shaking things happen when people get saved and when people grow in holiness and put off sin. And this is the way we're to change the world.

Let me give you just for just a moment let me remind you of another passage. This is something that I don't have in the notes but I want to share this. Matthew 5:13-16. How is the church to impact the world? Jesus said after he said the Beatitudes in his first, the

beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:1-12, the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are the meek," etc., right? And he basically says, "This is the character that I am producing in true people who belong to My kingdom. I'm producing this character and this character when this character is produced it's gonna bring persecution." He ends up saying, "How happy are when they persecute you." But then he says after he talks about that, he says this, "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has lost its savor, how can it be made salty again? You are the light of the world but you don't light a light and put it under a peck measure, you light a lamp and put it on a lampstand so that it gives light to everywhere." So basically he goes on to say, "Men will see your good works and glorify. So let your light so shine that men see your good works and glorify your Father who's in heaven." This is the picture. The world is decaying. The world is a decaying place that needs salt. The world is a dark place. What's it need? It needs light. This is the greatest need in the world is salt and light. This is the powerful transformative thing, the only thing that can help: salt and light.

Salt, in context, is godly character. If you're not salty, then you're not preventing decay. So if you are producing godly character in your own life, in the lives of other people, you know what you are doing? You are powerfully stopping the onslaught of the kingdom of darkness. So you're not heavenly minded, no earthly good. No, when you're doing, when you're building God's kingdom, you are doing something that is truly earth-shaking in its impact. But you see why it happens on the individual basis through the communication of the truth because the truth going forth is what, where all the power is because the truth is Jesus Christ and he saves individual sinners and he transforms those now saved sinners more and more into his likeness, and as they do that produces this preserving effect on society. It hinders the darkness and the decay of the world. It hinders the decay of people around you when you are holy. And when you are doing good works, you are the light of the world. When you are meeting pressing needs, when you are walking like Jesus walked by his power, by his grace, you are shining into darkness.

That is how God. Now the kingdom of heaven Jesus said is like a mustard seed. It seems insignificant. "What are you talking about? This is not how you change the world." He says, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed." Remember the mustard seed, the tiniest seed of all. The least impressive of all the garden plants seed-wise. But the mustard seed is the largest garden plant. It grew up to be like a tree almost, that it was big enough that birds would come and be in its branches. You know, the watermelon seed, it's a pretty big seed. The mustard seed's a pretty small seed. The watermelon is pretty impressive but the mustard seed much smaller is a whole lot more impressive when you look at the tree. I mean, watermelons grow on a little vine that look like you hardly can tell it's a garden plant. It could be weeds. Have you ever had that mistake and you pull something? I'm weeding and I'm pulling and I just realize I just pulled up something that I wasn't supposed to pull up? And I did it in such a way that there's no, this is done for this plant and I'm just thinking, "Wow." We have an herb garden and I have done that a time or two, you guys need to know. I didn't confess that to you right away. But uh-oh, you get in a groove of weeding and weeding and weeding and suddenly, "Uh-oh, this is something I shoulda kept."

But anyway that happens, but the mustard seed looks unimpressive. The kingdom of heaven is like that. The way the kingdom of heaven advances looks to the natural mind as unimpressive and yet it is the power of God. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation." The power of God is unleashed to change but it changes individual hearts through the proclamation of the good news, the message of Jesus Christ. This is the way God does things and so this is why it's so important for us to be about his business, to be about building because when you're building you are proclaiming the Gospel to yourself and to others. You're abiding in the reality of the truth and you're being transformed and you're becoming saltier and you're becoming brighter in your, the light that is coming out from you.

This is the way we're to live and we're not to despise the day of small things. It looks like a small thing. No, it's a huge thing and we are people who understand that, and the greatest thing that can happen is we go through the world and we run into people who are wrapped in so much bondage, so many lies. So many lies. So many people under such incredible darkness and spiritual agony in their lostness without God, without hope in the world, in misery because of so many lies they've been, they've accepted and believed. And if you by your good works, your meek character, can engage them in conversation and love them until they listen to you and you stay there taking, because if you're doing this, you're building when you're doing evangelism. You're building and if you're gonna build, you're gonna have to fight. Now you're not fighting that person, you're fighting Satan, you're fighting the spiritual powers of wickedness. You're not fighting them. They're not the enemy. They're someone you're trying to deliver from the enemy.

So you preach the Gospel to them and God awakens their dead heart and they come to life and they see Jesus and they accept Jesus, and there's a transformation that happens and wherever the Spirit of the Lord comes in and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. There is freedom. That is incredible power on display and that will be an amazing impactful event in the world. The circle of people that know them. And you keep loving them and walking with them and helping them, this is how we are to carry on; to keep our heads down and carry on and keep building. But understand this passage is telling us, if you build, you're gonna have to fight. You're not fighting the people. It's never the people. It's the spiritual forces of wickedness that have enslaved these people, that enslaved us before. We like them, were exactly where they were at one point before Jesus set us free.

So the idea is we build, we fight. Now I want to turn that's where we're gonna turn to Ephesians 6 because I pointed this out last time that essentially Nehemiah 4 and Ephesians 6 really are parallels. It's amazing to me how parallel Nehemiah, the argument of Nehemiah is within the argument of Ephesians 6. And I shared this last time, I'll just kind of summarize it quickly that Ephesians basically Paul is laying out an argument, he's presenting, you know, the message of the Gospel to the Ephesians where he had ministered for several years, he's reminding them of the Gospel he preached, and the first three chapters lay out the glory of all that God has done for us in Christ. Then chapter 4, he turns a corner and he talks about us building, building each other, and he uses a different metaphor than a building, although he had used the metaphor of a building in

Ephesians 2:19-22 where he said that we all, Christians, are a part of the spiritual temple of God, just like, it's parallel to the passage that Ted read from 1 Peter 2. Jesus is the cornerstone and we are being built into a spiritual house for God and his glory, okay? So that's Ephesians 2:19-22. Then Ephesians 4 he basically says, "Listen, in light of all that God has done, now be building." But he changes metaphors to the body, 4:1-16. Build one another up. Speak the truth in love and then you're gonna see this growth, growing of the body into a corporate, the church somehow corporately begins to resemble more and more the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at the word pictures. Spend some time in it, meditating on it this week, Ephesians 4:1-16. And then what he does after he says this is what we're called to do is to build, then he tells us how to build and that's essentially 4:17-6:9, 4:17-32 he talks about putting off and putting on, pursuing personal holiness; 5:1-14, same kind of thing again mostly focused on personal holiness. How do you build? You pursue personal holiness. You put off sin. You put sin to death, you become brighter, you become saltier. How else do you build? Well, Ephesians 5:15-6:9, he turns the corner talks about being filled with the Spirit and how this looks in relationship, and he talks about our relationships and how we're to minister to one another, to serve one another, to benefit one another, to build one another up. Marriage relationship. Parent/child relationship. The employer/employee relationship. And he lays that out in that passage and then in Ephesians 6:10 he says, "Be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might," and he turns to spiritual warfare. What he's basically saying is, "If you build," exactly what Nehemiah said chapter 4 is teaching us, "If you build, you must also be ready to fight."

So Ephesians 6:10, let's read this passage together, 6:10-18.

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. 14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

If you build, you're gonna have to understand that the very act of building is going to bring opposition. It's going to bring just like Nehemiah and his people, the people of Israel experienced intense, intense fierce opposition. This opposition will come through people but they're not really the ones that are opposing us so much. They are but it's, their

opposition is really it's much secondary to the real opposition is the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

And just to remind you of a couple of points we talked about last week, you know, we're to fight, where it's really kind of a continuation of that thought. We took up the sword last week and so today we're continuing to talk about how to fight. I shared there were several points to understand why are we to fight which we've already covered again today this morning. Whom are we to fight? Ephesians 6:12, we are to fight the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places, the powers, the world forces of this darkness. This is the spiritual kingdom of Satan. That's who we fight. Where do we fight? We talked about this last time, it's in the mind. The arena is really in the arena of thoughts. This is where Satan fights that way. This is how he kills, he destroys. He lies. You look at John 8:38-44, Jesus telling them, "You're wanting to kill Me because I'm telling you the truth. You're just like your father, the devil. Your father was a murderer from the beginning." He's talking to the Jews. He's talking to the Pharisees. He says, "You're not of your father Abraham. You think Abraham's your father. No, Satan is your father and I can tell that because I see you resemble him with incredible likeness. You want to do just what he did. He's a murderer. He has been a murderer from the beginning. He murdered in Eden and he's been murdering every day since." How does he murder? Jesus says in John 8:44, "When he speaks he lies because it's his nature." There is no truth in him. He is a liar and the father of lies. He kills by lying. He lies about God. He lies about man. He lies about you, what your purpose is. He tells you deceitful things and he makes them appealing, like he did to Eve, "You will be like God. You'll know good and evil." But in reality it was death. It was destruction.

So Satan is a liar, so he fights that way. He lies and so what's gonna happen is as we move forward, we're gonna experience a barrage of lies coming at us. So the spiritual battle is really a battle between lies and the truth. You could say in a sense, what do we fight with? We fight with the truth. What are we fighting? We're fighting lies. That is spiritual warfare, that is spiritual warfare's essence. Satan's involved, yes. And even like in a demonically possessed person, you don't see this too much in America, you do, you used to see it a lot more, well, you do see in on the mission field a lot of places where people, the Gospel is going into new areas, there's just deeper satanic bondage. People have given themselves over more. But it's going to be happening a lot more, I think, in America and already is because of the increased interest in the occult and what's happening in that? People are buying lies at a greater depth of their soul. They're believing they're empowered. That's basically what magic is and this kind of demonic possession, it comes from people thinking they can be in power. He says, "You can have power if you do this," and what he does is he takes that soul and he brings it into complete bondage and subjection to his evil desires.

That's what Satan does and so the truth is the way you combat the lies. We have everything we need in the truth, the word of God, the proclamation of Jesus Christ. And so we bring that to the table. Now how are we to fight? That's the question we want to answer today. We know we're fighting in the mind with the person that we're talking to. Even if we think they're demon possessed, the message that we're to bring is the Gospel

of Jesus Christ and their need to respond to Christ. You don't run into that very often. I'm just saying that's always, that's always the method, the truth.

Now how are we to fight? This is what Paul is really giving us here in Ephesians 6, how to fight and it's really instructive. So much to say about this passage and I want to introduce it by pointing out that there are five imperatives in the passage, five commands. It's a good thing to observe as you're looking at a passage, what are the express commands that this passage gives. And you see the first one is in verse 10, "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." Be strong in the Lord. That's a command. The next is in verse 13, "Take up, therefore take up the full armor of God." Take up the armor. I'm sorry, verse 11, I skipped over one. "Put on the full armor of God," in verse 11. That's the second one. Verse 13 is the third one, "Take up the full armor." Verse 14, "Stand firm." And I'm missing the fifth one. Oh yeah, "Take." Okay, so let's just go over this again. Sorry about this, guys. I didn't have it in my notes. I thought I could remember and obviously I didn't. Verse 10, be strong. That's the first. The second imperative is in verse 11, put on the full armor. The third imperative is in verse 13, take up the full armor, same thing he said before but now just slightly different verb. Take up the armor. Verse 14, when it says, I mean, I'm sorry, verse 16, taking up the shield of faith is actually an imperative. It doesn't sound like it in the text but it is in the Greek. Take up. And then stand firm in verse 14. So there's five imperatives, three of them are about taking up the armor, one is about being strong in the Lord so that you can stand firm, and the way that you are strong in the Lord and stand firm is you take up the armor. Three of those imperatives are about taking up the armor. Verse 11, put on the full armor of God. Verse 13, take up the full armor of God. And then take the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation and the shield of faith.

So now let's talk about, then, with that structure what I want to do is then look at each piece of the weaponry. Essentially what he's doing is he's saying the first thing that we must do is to be strong in the Lord, and so let's actually talk about this, first of all, is how do you fight? First of all, you need to know where your strength comes from. You need to know where your strength comes from. The second thing we're gonna see is the means to lay hold of that strength. That's the armor. But know where your strength comes from, that's the first imperative. "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." This is an amazing encouragement here. "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." Listen, you have an enemy that's coming against you but you need to be strong in the Lord. It sounds a lot like Nehemiah as well. Remember Nehemiah said, "Fight for your families," and then he said, "Fight." He said, "Your God will fight, our God will fight for us." This is essentially what Paul is saying, "Be strong but not in your own strength, be strong in the Lord. Our God will fight for us."

In fact, each of the pieces of armor, I mentioned this last week, you can find in the Old Testament. Five of them in Isaiah, all referring to Christ. These are pieces of armor Christ wore in his battle with Satan himself. And so in a sense he's saying, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ." In fact, an interesting parallel is Romans 13:12-14. In Romans 13:12 Paul says, "The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light." Put on the armor. Lay aside sin and put on

armor. Be ready to fight, the armor of light. Verse 13, "Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts." Put on the armor, same verb, put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you see that? To put on the armor is to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and that's how you're strong in the Lord. Be strong in the Lord. If you know Christ, if you have repented and placed your faith in Jesus, you've been born again, you are now in Christ. He's in you and you are in him and your strength is in him, in your position in Christ, in all that he has given you.

So when you look around you, now let's think about what this looks like. So how do you experience this spiritual warfare? You want to talk to a brother or sister about a problem. You know, you see it looks like there's some issue in their life and I want to go to them and humbly serve them by dealing with the issue and you move toward them. And as you move toward them and you start to talk about the issue, what happens is spiritual warfare. Now they're not the enemy. If they're your brother or sister, they're your brother or sister, they're family. But spiritual warfare is going to happen because we have Satan basically manifests his power in the world, the flesh, and of course the devil. The devil also uses the world and the flesh, their sin nature and also the lies that they've been taught. So what's gonna happen as you move toward them is you're going to experience an attack in your mind, in your thinking.

I mean, think about this. Just think about the last time you tried to have a conversation as being a difficult conversation, all the ways you were assaulted in your thoughts. Have you not found yourself moving toward someone trying to help, trying to bring up something that needs to be talked about and you have a thought like, "Who am I to say anything in light of the sin in my life?" You know, "What have I, how could I possibly speak to this person?" That's an attack. That's a thought, a lie. Yeah, because the answer is in reality you should just agree. "Yes, I'm nobody to talk to them but I am in Christ and therefore I am gonna go and talk to them." You see, it's putting on, it's fighting the battle in your mind so that then you can be ready to serve them. You have to fight to build. If you're gonna try to build, you're gonna have to fight and sometimes those attacks even come through their own words. They in their sin nature, you know, they may say directly to you, "Who do you think you are coming to talk to me?" Right? Isn't it hard especially to do this in your family sometimes? Talk to your spouse, talk to your child and you're just thinking about all of your failures? Hey, it doesn't mean you don't acknowledge them and humbly acknowledge them but it means you stand, you don't retreat.

The image here is you're strong in the Lord in the strength of his might, you take up the armor so you can stand, you can stay there ministering to them, building. You don't retreat from the building. It's so emphatic in the passage. Four times the word "stand" is there in the Greek in the passage. You have it three times in the New American Standard that I'm reading from says stand firm three times. Verse 11, "Put on the full armor of God so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil." Verse 13, it actually occurs twice though once it's not translated stand. Verse 13, "Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist' that literally in the Greek says,

"stand against," same word "stand" with a preposition on the front of it, basically anti-stani, anti which against, stand, stand against, and then the other words are stani. So in verse 13, "you will be able to stand against in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore," verse 14. Do you see that? Four times in those four verses or three verses, stand firm. We're trying to stand just like Nehemiah. He had them standing stationed around the wall in the places and they were supposed to if they were attacked, to hold their post, defend their post, not to retreat, not to fall back. So that's what we're called to do, we're called to stand.

So when you move toward someone, when you're fighting against sin in your own life you're going to have these same kinds of attacks. These lies are going to be coming at you and like I said, sometimes they come through the person themselves and you don't have to be surprised at that, but even then, they're not your enemy. I think one of the most powerful examples of this is when Jesus, remember when Peter tries to rebuke Jesus? That's such a, I'm actually encouraged, I'm grateful for Peter and his example of how you could be so right one moment and so wrong the next because when you read Matthew 16, you remember when Jesus says to him, "Get thee behind me, Satan," he's looking at Peter and he says, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Can you imagine having the Lord say that to you? It was exactly right, though. But think about the context. This comes right after Peter had hit a grand slam home run. Remember Jesus says, "Who do men say that I am? Some say You're the Christ. Some say You're Elijah. Who do you say that I am?" And Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you. Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, Simon son of Jonah, blessed are you for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but My Father who is in heaven. I'm telling you, this proclamation, I'm gonna build My church upon it." Man, Peter, he just hit, like I said, the grand slam to win the seventh game of the World Series in the bottom of the ninth with two outs. You couldn't do anything greater than what he just did. In the next few verses Jesus begins to teach them that he's going to have to suffer at the hands of sinners and he's going to die. Peter takes him aside with his newfound confidence that God is giving me so much revelation, takes him aside and he rebukes him and says, "This shall not happen to you, Lord." He rebukes the Lord. Those words should never be used in the same sentence, to rebuke the Lord. And Jesus looks at him and says, "Get thee behind me, Satan. Your mind is not set on the things of God but on the things of man."

What had happened? Lies in Peter's life that he had believed are now voiced by him and Jesus calls it out. What's happening here is spiritual warfare. You're giving me a lie that says that God can't do things this way; that there isn't, that he would never save through a death like this. This is foolishness. The cross is foolishness to those who are perishing and Jesus calls it out and says, "Get thee behind me, Satan." So now you're gonna have, we're gonna have moments where we voice things and we're actually being used by the enemy. We're saying things, we're tearing people down. He's the accuser of the brethren. He is the devil, the one who hurls blasphemous insults and tears down all that is good.

So that's gonna happen sometimes. So you move toward people and things are gonna happen. You're gonna have stuff happening, so the message is be strong in the Lord, and the idea is before you go, put your armor on. This is our problem, too often we move into

situations like that and we kind of forget that we're at war. You know, everybody should just want me to help them. I'm just pointing out something because I love you and I'm a nice guy and here I am telling you, you know, I just want to help you out. No, you're in war and I think that way and that's just stupid. It's foolish. It's unwise. It's unsound. No, it doesn't mean that, you know, you really put on physical armor and you go, "Hey, I've got something to talk to you about." But spiritually you put on your armor. I realize to have a conversation with this person that I love and that loves me, family member, friend, I know that it's going to probably, it's going to involve some spiritual warfare because I think if there's sin really there, there's lies there, it's gonna be warfare and I need to go in the strength of the Lord.

You know, this is so encouraging especially when you know that conversation, haven't you had, had to have those conversations and you felt like as you went into it, it was completely hopeless? Have you not had the feeling as you're talking to someone, even as you're realizing you're now suddenly you're in a conversation, you didn't go looking for it, it's come to you and you're having a conversation and you have no idea what to do and you can't, I can't get there from here with this person. I have no idea how to deal with what's happening. You see, they're so wrapped up in lies, I have no way to get there. Remember what he says, "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." It's not you or me and our understanding we ultimately trust in and we're supposed to be studying the Scriptures, growing in our knowledge, absolutely, but we still always trust in Christ and his power.

And the language here, Paul is intentionally really encouraging us. The language, "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." Three key words. The word translated "be strong," then the word "strength," and the word "might." Those three words are found one other place in one verse in Ephesians. The same three words also in one verse. Turn back to Ephesians 1:19. Look at verse 18 first to get the context. Paul says to the Ephesian Christians in his introductory chapter, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might." The greatness of his power, the word "power" there is the same word as "be strong" in Ephesians 6:10. The surpassing greatness of his power, dynamis, related to the verb dynamoo in chapter 6, verse 10. But you're to understand, I'm praying that you'll have the ability by the Spirit to see this incredible power that God has given to us in Christ. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of his might, same two words as in Ephesians 6:10. Power. Strength. Might. Be strengthened, be empowered in the Lord and the strength of his might. As you have a conversation, a Gospel conversation, an edifying conversation, go into that in the strength of the Lord.

Now what is that strength like? I said it feels like you can't get there from here. There's no way I can convince this person. They're so messed up, there's no hope. Look at the rest of the passage in Ephesians 1. "What is the surpassing greatness of his power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right

hand in the heavenly places." He says, "Listen, the power that you take when you speak the truth as a Christian and you're resting in Christ and you have your armor on," he's going to explain how to do that, but you have this incredible power and you're bringing this power to bear and it's coming by God's grace as you speak the truth, the same power that reached down into death and into the tomb and the lifeless body of the man, Christ Jesus, and lifted him from Satan's clutches and pulled him not just out of the tomb, he did pull him out of the tomb, but all the way to the right hand of Almighty God, the power that reached into hell and pulled, I mean as it were, reached and pulled and took it all the way to the highest heaven, that power is at work when you speak the truth in the power of Christ. Now is that insufficient? Is there any weakness? No. It's all-sufficiency.

So know that it's not in you, it's not in me. Of course not. It's not in our ability to convince someone. It's not in our winsome attitude. I mean, we should try to be winsome. We should try to be wise about convincing someone. We're supposed to persuade men. Yes, all those things. We're supposed to learn and be wise in how we can have conversations, but ultimately we're not trusting in that. Some trust in chariots and some in horses but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. Yeah, we have chariots. Yeah, we have horses, but we don't trust in them. We trust in who Christ is. We trust in who God is.

This power comes to bear and it's able to open blind eyes. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is the power that opened blind eyes; that as we read about earlier, that healed the person in Matthew that we heard from earlier, the man in the temple. It's the power that transforms everything and so be strong in that and move toward people and know that you don't have to retreat, and then putting on the armor, what we're gonna see is you're really just putting on who you are in Christ. And let me just say this to kind of give us a little bit of a frame, we'll have to finish it next week. But it's interesting the armor, and I encourage you to study it this week, meditate on it, but it begins and ends with the word of God. Put on the armor of God. The first thing is the belt of truth and I love it, Paul is giving, I mean, Paul is giving a description of the armor that I think he's seeing every day. He's writing from prison. He's in a Roman prison. He's surrounded by Roman soldiers. Sometimes chained to Roman soldiers. And he is looking at their armor and he's describing it and he's also remembering how this is all in the Old Testament, particularly in Isaiah. Now Christ is that.

But he's looking at this armor and he starts off with the belt of truth and the belt is such a key part of the armor because it provides stability. It's the thing that's like an anchor for the person. It anchors the breastplate. It causes the garment to be gathered up so that you can run. You won't be tripped up as you run. The first thing you've got to do is put on your belt. Gird up your loins for action, 1 Peter 1:13. Gird up your mind, the loins of your mind for action. That is, gird up, put your belt on. They used to wear clothes that, you know, would get in the way if they were trying to run or they could trip, so they've got to put the belt on first. And the belt also not only holds the breastplate, it holds the sword.

So the belt, it's the belt of truth and what he's saying here is the word of God in a general sense, as you move forward to minister to someone, you're confident in the power of God and your essential tool is the truth and it's your absolute confidence in the word of God. I

think it's interesting now the last piece of armor, he says belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shoes of the Gospel, helmet of salvation, shield of faith, sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. The word of God comes back at the end. Now what's interesting there is the phrase "word of God" is not the normal, in the Greek is not the normal way that you see that in the New Testament. Usually it's logos is the word for "word, the word of God." Logos. That's a general word for "the word of God, that which God has spoken." This is the word "rhema." Another word for "word," it's translated "word," same w-o-r-d in English but this speaks of a particular word. It's a specific word. So the general confidence in the word of God is where you start and the specific biblical principle that applies to this person that addresses this particular lie is what you wield with the sword. And when you come confident in the power of God and you come with the word of God, and you begin with that anchored trust in the word of God, and you wield the word of God, and you know who you are in Christ, there's nothing that can stand against you. If God wills that person to be saved, all hell can break out against it and you will prevail by God's power.

That's what we're called to do and this is what's happening, that kind of thing is happening even when we're having conversations in our home. You're having a Gospel conversation in your home with your children, your spouse, you're talking about sin issues, it's warfare. You're building. It's kind of hard, it's counter-intuitive, I've got to put my weapons on, I'm going to talk to my wife. That sounds like we have a bad relationship, doesn't it? I can't go without my gun. I can't go without my sword. No, because there's an enemy there who's going to be coming against both of us. And so in reality when you go, even when you talk to the unbeliever, what you're trying to do is you're trying to come alongside them, you're witnessing to them, they seem to be an adversary but they're not, you're actually coming along trying to hold your arm around them and fight against their enemy. That's what's happening and when we have that mindset, it gives us confidence in the face of all those thoughts that come and that's why the armor's so important because he's gonna as he unfolds it, he's gonna show us there's so many things we need to be aware of and if you are, you're going to be able to move toward people and stand your ground. In standing your ground there's going to be victory because the power of God's unleashed.

Well, let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, how grateful we are for the privilege it is to be Your children, the amazing reality of our redemption, that You bought us back from our bondage to sin and to Satan and to darkness. You sent Your mighty word into our hearts and we came to know the truth and the truth has made us free, and we want more freedom, Lord, we want to keep sowing the truth in our own hearts and there being more freedom and more putting off of the bondage of the old man. Make us more and more salty in the sense of true godly character and make us joyfully willing to exhibit that character in front of other people, not in a prideful way but in a way that keeps pointing to Jesus for whatever we are, we are by the grace of God. So there's nothing to boast about in ourselves. We boast in Christ.

Lord, help us to as we become more and more like Christ to be more and more bold in moving toward others and serving them and standing against the lies and the spiritual warfare that come against us. Give us Your love that's willing to absorb the blows just the same way You did laying down Your life for us. Help us lay down our lives for one another and, Lord, help us realize that this, that building Your kingdom Your way is actually unleashing that incredible power that raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him at the right hand of the Most High. It is bringing that power into the world in apparently outwardly insignificant ways but in reality with life-changing power. Let us not despise or look down on the incredible gifts You've given us in Christ. Help all of Your people all over our country, all who belong to You, to take up the whole armor of God and to stand firm and to see Your glory unveiled and unleashed. Send revival, Lord. Send revival first in our hearts, then in our families, then in our churches, and then in our land. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.