

The Nature of the Battle

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Well, our text for this morning's message comes from Ephesians 6:12 and I invite you to turn there with me, Ephesians 6:12 as we have started a series on Sundays and Tuesdays for the next few weeks examining the nature of the battle that we live and that we face as believers in Jesus Christ. I'm going to read from verse 10 but our focus for this morning is exclusively really on verse 12 where the Apostle Paul says,

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.

This text is a wonderful reminder of the spiritual nature of the Christian life. We proclaim not primarily a system of morality, although there are morals attached to the Christian life of course, but those are rooted in doctrinal realities, they are rooted in true salvation and we see this in the fact that in the first three chapters of Ephesians Paul is speaking about the reality of salvation. In Ephesians 2:8 and 9, you can look at it with me there, and actually we'll go back even further. Let me just remind you and set a fuller context for what we are talking about here today. He describes Christians in verse 1 as those who formerly were dead in trespasses and sins. That is the true nature of every man, woman and child that is born into the world. We are born into trespasses. We are born into sin. As it were, we are born physically alive but born into spiritual death and that is true of everyone. Sometimes it's good to remember and to say a most basic fact that no one is born a Christian. No one is born as a believer in Jesus Christ. No one is born righteous. The truth is the exact opposite. And so the fact that a boy or a girl is born into a Christian family does not mean that they are a Christian at all. Every man, woman and child if they are to enter the kingdom of God, Jesus said they must be born again. You must have a spiritual birth from above, and part of the reason for that is because you were born into a realm of spiritual hostility.

Look at chapter 2, verse 2 there where the Apostle Paul speaking to Christians says, "in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." Scripture says that the devil blinds the minds of the unbelieving to the light of the Gospel.

You cannot see the Gospel unless the Spirit of God opens your eyes. You cannot hear the truth unless the Spirit opens your deaf ears. But it's not simply an external spiritual hostility, there is inner hostility toward God in every man, woman and child in their natural condition as well.

Look at verse 3 where he says, "Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." And so, my friends, we were all born into spiritual hostility. Not only are we unable to rescue ourselves from that miserable condition, we don't even have the desire to do so, and so it is necessary, it is essential for God to do a work inside the human heart to plant new life, to give a new heart if anyone is ever to believe in Christ.

You see that as you read on in verse 4 where Paul says, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Paul is saying here that a Christian is someone that God has made alive in Christ. A Christian is not someone who did good works and therefore earned his salvation, he is not someone who turned over a new leaf, he was on the receiving end of new life given to him by the power of God. It was when you were dead that God saved you. You did not do preliminary works of righteousness, you didn't prepare yourself and once you had gotten yourself into a particularly good spiritual condition, that then God saved you. No, my friends, it was while you were dead in your trespasses and sins, it was while you were under the domination of the devil, it was while you were hateful and hostile toward God that this work took place. It is supernatural. It is something that only God can do and that is why we praise the name of Jesus Christ in our songs and in our Scripture readings and in our prayers, it's because Christ has done something for us that we could not do on our own. And for those of you that are not Christians, you must understand that you cannot save yourself and you are a fool if you think that you should just postpone consideration of receiving Christ and the demands of the Gospel until some later time either when you think you're more worthy. Listen, you won't be more worthy tomorrow, you'll be less worthy because you'll have another day of sin on your account, and multiply that by days and weeks and months and years. And don't foolishly think, my friend, that you'll desire it more later on than you do now because today, Scripture says, is the day of salvation and the longer that you reject and resist the Gospel, your heart only calcifies is all the more; it gets harder not softer as you go along. So it is urgent for you to come to Christ today.

Now looking on, you say, "How do I receive Christ? How do I enter into this?" It's not by anything that you do, it's by faith in what Christ has done. Look at verse 8, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." Christ offers himself to you. Christ presents himself to you and he calls you and he says, "Come to Me for eternal life." He says, "Come to Me for the forgiveness of your sins." There is no one else that can give you what Christ can give to and so you come to him and you receive him by faith. You rest in

him and you honor him and you rest in him as the one alone who can mediate the gulf between you and God.

Now Paul in writing these things in Ephesians has spoken to Christians and says, "This is what has happened to you." As he goes on in chapters 4, 5 and 6, he lays out the consequences of salvation and how it is that we are to live in response to the saving work of God. It's a walk of wisdom, a walk of love as we will see, a walk of light, a walk of unity. But as he's writing these things and as he's summarizes them up, he makes this call that we find in Ephesians 6 that says, "Put on the full armor of God so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil." Now watch this in what we are about to see. Look at that possessive pronoun in verse 12 "our, for our struggle is not against flesh and blood." Here's what you need to understand, beloved, the antecedent of "our," the people that he is addressing as those who have the struggle, are those who have been born again by the power of God, those who have been saved by grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. He's writing to true Christians and he is telling them that there is a struggle that takes place as you seek to live out your duty in light of the doctrine of the salvation that saved you.

So what this means for you and me, and speaking now to the body of Christ. I've appealed to those of you who are not in him, now I pivot my attention to the true believers that are here with us today. What you need to understand and why we are talking about these things is this, is that you live for Christ in the midst of supernatural hostility. It is not simply that humans make life difficult for you, although there is truth to that, it's not simply that you struggle within your own heart, those things are true but they do not tell the whole story. Our struggle is against a supernatural realm that is arrayed against the life that we are seeking to live that seeks to undermine the purpose of God in your salvation. The purpose of your salvation is that you might be an instrument of bringing glory to the name of the one who saved you. The purpose of our salvation is to live to please him but we find that it is a struggle, that it is difficult, and what we find here in this passage is a blessed window of understanding of why it is like that.

Now this battle, this supernatural hostility which we face, this is not the battle that is sometimes found in the old books of Christian fiction, of the "Left Behind" series or the Frank Perretti novels, those kinds of things that create a whole bad picture of the nature of the battle. We should not think about these things in terms of the fiction Christian books that have been written in the past. Furthermore, this battle is not something that you can fight with magic words against Satan. You cannot bind Satan. You do not have the power to bind Satan and to stop him from harassing you. If you did, this passage would make absolutely no sense. All Paul would have to say is there is a struggle but all you have to do is say the words, "Satan, I bind you in the name of Jesus," and the battle will be over and the victory will be yours. If that was the nature of the battle, my friends, that is what Paul would have told us to do. That's not what he says at all. In fact, what he pictures is there is an ongoing struggle, an ongoing battle that takes place and you cannot make it go away by binding Satan with magic words that you heard at a charismatic meeting. Why do I emphasize that? My friends, understand this, that those false distractions, those superficial descriptions and solutions are not the answer to the

supernatural battle that we face. They only distract us from the reality. They keep us from that which truly enables us to conquer and to find victory. We have to understand the nature of the battle if we are going to respond to it rightly and that's the title of today's message, "The Nature of the Battle," found here in Ephesians 6:12 and we're going to see three aspects of the nature of the battle to help you take it seriously, to help you live the Christian life with a measure of understanding of what you are up against. The provision for victory has been given to us but, my friends, you will only appropriate that provision if you take seriously the nature of the battle.

Scripture says that Satan is a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. You are the object of the hostility of Satan and the demonic hosts. They want to destroy you. They want to destroy your life. They want to dismantle the platform of your life and of your testimony by which you would give glory to God, and in the day in which we live, the battle is raging and it is wide open. For some it is the nature of struggles within the family that tempt you to despair, discouragement and turning away. For some it is the sin that you have gradually given yourself over to until that sin is practicing dominion over you instead of you living a life of quiet, humble godliness and holiness instead. But it's not simply internal. The whole atmosphere of the Christian church is turning against the things of which we speak. As the Christian church becomes more beholding to the world, more beholding to political struggles and social gospel things, many are being tempted away from the truth of Scripture into that false doctrine that makes the Gospel as though it were a means of social progress rather than individuals being saved by the power of God from their own sin and living a life that brings glory to him. There is so much against it and so we need to understand the battle that is engaged with us.

Point 1 here today, here's what you need to understand is that you fight a spiritual battle. You fight a spiritual battle. It is not primarily external. It is a spiritual realm that actively opposes you as a Christian. Look at verses 11 and 12 with me here. Paul says, "Put on the full armor of God." See, there's appropriation that is to be done here that he's going to explain throughout Ephesians 6. "So that," for this purpose, "so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil." And he says, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood," it is not preeminently a human battle in which we are engaged, it is not that which we can see, it is not that which we can touch, rather he says, it is against "the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places." Look at it there, my friends. Those of us that believe the word of God, we believe that there is a supernatural invisible realm in which we live. Paul writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit says that what you need to stand firm against are the schemes of the devil, that supernatural head of the demonic force.

And he goes on in verse 12, he speaks about the rulers, the powers, the world forces of darkness, spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Now look, beloved, without going into lots of details about these things, Satan is like a Mafia boss, he has a hierarchy of subordinate spirits that extend his evil influence, and this multitude of demonic forces is hostile to Christians like you and me. Here we are in flesh and blood, in one sense speaking, you know, this is in our physical existence living in flesh and

blood, but we're fighting a battle that is not against flesh and blood but is against a spiritual realm that we cannot see, that we have no power or control over in our own. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, our struggle as Christians is not against that which we see but what we cannot see but the fact that we cannot see it does not mean that it is any less real. You do not see gravity but it sure affects your existence, doesn't it? You cannot see the laws of logic but they govern the way that you think. So there are unseen forces, there are unseen principalities that are at work against us and so as we fight a spiritual battle, we must realize that the attacks and the difficulties are coming from places that we don't have direct access to.

Now secondly, not only is it a spiritual realm, your foes are supernatural. Look at verse 12 where he talks about rulers and powers and world forces that are at work. These are words that are expressing the strength and might of your foes. You cannot resist them with human power. Look, you cannot, those of you that came from legalistic backgrounds or independent Baptist churches, it will help you to understand this and maybe give you a new perspective on the past that you've come out of. You cannot fight against demonic forces with external rules about your dress or your conduct. You know, whether you wear pants or dresses as a woman isn't going to help you a bit against the devil. Whether you're at church five times a week or somehow you miss and you're only there three or four are not going to do, it's not going to do anything to help you in this battle and to give you access and protection against the foes. It doesn't work in that external realm. It's supernatural. It is spiritual and it is powerful what is arrayed against us.

And not only that, my friends, these foes that you face are wicked. They are evil. You could say that they are sinister. You fight a spiritual battle against a spiritual foe, a supernatural foe, and a sinister foe. This is the nature of the battle that we face, that Christ has saved us out of the world, he has saved us from under the blindness of Satan but that world from which we came, that we have now been declared enemies against them and they declare their hostility against us. These foes are dark, they are wicked and Paul has been addressing them throughout the letter. He's been speaking about them, is what I mean by that.

Look at chapter 1, verse 21. Actually, we'll start in verse 20 here in reviewing this. Paul is speaking about the power that is at work in true believers, the power of Christ, the resurrection power that raised Christ from the dead, that's what's at work in us. That's the realm of armor that we draw upon. In chapter 1, verse 20 he says that God "brought [this] about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places." Now watch this, Christ is therefore "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion." Yes, there is this wicked realm but Christ is exalted far above it. Christ rules over it as shown by his resurrection, ascension, and his session at the right hand of God. Christ has manifested his power and he holds that power over them but there is still this wicked force in opposition to us.

Look at Ephesians 2:2, we looked at it earlier. What we're doing here is we're simply showing how throughout the book of Ephesians Paul has been recognizing the existence of this invisible realm which holds men hostage. Chapter 2, verse 2, that realm "in which

you formerly walked," it was, "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." And in chapter 4, verse 27, in the practical section about Christian duty, Paul in warning us against our carnal anger says that there is someone right beside you in your sinful anger ready to stir it up and to make things even worse. He says in verse 26, "be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity." Those of you that struggle with angry tempers and outbursts of anger, you must understand that Satan is crouching right at your door to provoke that into even greater sin, sin that would bring so much harm and destruction to your life and distraction to your testimony. It's not acceptable to say, "Well, look, I've got a bad temper." Well, you may have a bad temper but then you need to repent of that and not just accept it and say, "Well, that's the way I am." It's not the way that you are to be, and the threat of Satan being there to take advantage of your carnal anger is real.

Going back to Ephesians 6:12, we see that your foes are hidden. You could say that they are secret. They are spiritual, they are supernatural, they are sinister and they are secret because they are hidden in the heavenly places. Look at verse 12 with me again. He says "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."

Now what with that said, let's just step back and just summarize what we've said and why we have said it. You are the object, my Christian brother and sister, every one of you, you are the object of active resistance from spiritual, supernatural, sinister, secret foes. This is deadly serious. This is sobering to realize the nature of the battle in which we live. Now we have a blessing, a window of blessing in the midst of the turbulent times in which we live because in times like this it is easier to see the manifestation of it all and to say, "Oh, I can see why this is true. There is doctrinal error encroaching upon the church. There is anger and chaos in society. There are difficulties in my life and in the world around me and in the people that I know and love within the body of Christ." And we see the manifestation of this and the resistance that is taking place sometimes with government sanction against the Christian church, against Christian people. Well, do you see, beloved, what this passage means for the way that we respond and the way that we understand it, and the way that we perceive it? For us, to be preeminently concerned about what the government is doing or what other men are doing is to miss the point. It is to be strayed away from where the battle actually lies for us because it is something different for us as we walk through this life. We fight a spiritual battle in a realm that we cannot see.

Now secondly, not only is it a spiritual battle but you fight a close battle. A close battle and this is, you know, as we dive even more deeply into the text, this is very helpful and it will explain some things for you in the struggles that you've had in your life. Let's think about it this way for a moment. How many times have you perhaps you've had a good time of reading your Scripture, you've been earnest in prayer, and you come out of that feeling really refreshed, and you feel like your day is set for what lies ahead and you have aligned yourself with the purposes of God in your life, and yet a few minutes later,

literally just a few minutes later some kind of provocation comes to you and you react badly to it. You lash out in anger or your feelings are hurt and you renew old grudges in your heart and mind, and everything about that frame and disposition of mind that you had cultivated just moments ago suddenly seemed to have washed away with the incoming tide. Why is that? Well, friends, understand that it's a reflection, it's a manifestation of this invisible battle that we face but particularly that it is a close battle that we mean, and here's what I mean by close, the battle is personal and it is intimate and it is immediate. It is right there with you. Particularly as you are earnest in your devotion, particularly as you are earnest in your evangelism, particularly as you are earnest in obedience, the stumbling blocks come and there is a reason for that, it is because the spiritual battle that we face isn't simply out there somewhere in the stars, it is right here close with us and you can see that in the words that Paul uses to describe it.

Look at verse 12 with me again where he says "our struggle is not against flesh and blood." Interesting word. It's a word that's used for wrestling, for the athletic context of the athletic contest of wrestling. And what is wrestling? I'd be interested to know, you don't need to raise your hands, I'd be interested to know how many people have wrestled in your past. I've got friends that wrestled. My brother wrestled. And what is wrestling except for this, it is hand-to-hand combat, breath-on-breath contact. It is personal force resisting personal force. And for evenly matched combatants, speaking about the athletic context of wrestling, it is severe. You cannot relax for a moment or you will be pinned. Your opponent will gain mastery over you and the heat and the exertion and the sweat and the smell of the battle is what wrestling is like. Why people want to do that I can't humanly explain that but I have some friends in California who are quite skilled at it. Not me. But that's what wrestling is like, it is a struggle.

Now take the physical illustration, apply it to the spiritual realm in which we live and you get a picture of what Paul is describing for you. When you are living the Christian life, you meet with resistance that opposes you in some of the deepest aspects of life. The things of your closest highest affections are frustrated against you. The course of life that your loved ones are taking, the difficulties that you face in your marriage, the nature of things and the opposition and hostility that you face at work or on the college campus, understand that there is a whole host of opposition to you living a godly life and as a result of that, you must be aware of the nature of the conflict. You cannot go innocently, blithely, weakly into those secular environments and expect to successfully live the Christian life if you are not putting on the armor of God. If you are not resisting in environments like that, you are losing the battle because that whole realm is arrayed against the true Christian, it is arrayed against Christ, and the one who can walk through without any sense of a battle in an environment like that really needs to step back and ask themselves whether they're actually in Christ or not because it is a battle for the true Christian. We feel the resistance. It is close and difficult. It's a struggle. Your Christian life is not meant to be easy. It's a struggle. It's a wrestling match that is taking place. So if you're proclaiming Christ, if you profess Christ and you have those affections for Christ and you find it difficult, brother, or sister in Christ, take heart, that's the way it is. That's the way it is. The battle, the fact that there's a battle should not discourage you, it is consistent with what Scripture says the nature of Christian life is. It's the absence of a

struggle ironically that should cause people concern if you've never known that in your Christian life.

Even Paul's preposition that he uses here in this verse reinforces the nature of the closeness of the battle. This is very interesting to me. Look at verse 12 again. He says "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness." You can count them like I can, four times in one verse he uses this preposition "against." Well, that Greek preposition is "pros," transliterates p-r-o-s. The root meaning of this preposition is "near or facing." It's the same preposition that's used in a positive context in John 1:1 when it says, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." "With" is the preposition "pros" indicating the close communion that the Father and the Son had together before time began. They were "pros," they were close, they were in close communion. Here that same preposition is used in a negative way to describe how close the battle is that we face against these demonic forces. It is close proximity. It is right in your face. Indeed, that word "pros" in the Greek language is part of the larger word for the Greek word "face, prosopon." It's near. It's a close battle. It is intimate. It is right before you and that preposition is the perfect word for the wrestling metaphor, for the struggle. If it was far removed from you, if it was a distant battle taking place among people and among forces that were irrelevant to you, you wouldn't feel the weight of it, you wouldn't feel the affliction of it. The reason that you feel it is because it's the nature of the battle. It is spiritual and it is close and it is immediate.

Now that close battle is reinforced by the context of the entire book of Philippians. It said that you fight a spiritual battle, you fight a close battle, well, thirdly, you could put it this way, you fight a life battle. You fight a life battle and here's where it becomes all very practical and we see the realm in which we live this out. Throughout the book of Ephesians, the Apostle Paul calls the Christian life a walk, a step-by-step journey, a methodical process through the different realms of our existence.

Look at Ephesians 2:10. No fewer than five times does he use this idea of the Christian life being a walk, the manner of conduct in which we live, and this is so helpful to understand the nature of the battle, the nature of the struggle. So in Ephesians 2:10 he says, "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." In other words, God saved you in accordance with his eternal plan. In time he created you in Christ Jesus, and as part of making you a new creation in Christ, God had already established the fact that there would be a course of life for you to live, there would be things for you to do, people to love, accomplishments to achieve, service in the church to make, and God prepared all of that in advance, the idea being that as your life unfolded in time, as chronology worked itself out and opened its ever-opening doors before you, as you walk through them, you would find realms giving you opportunities, challenges, things that would make up the course of your life, joys and sorrows, trials and successes, you get the idea. You're walking in those things that God assigned for you ahead of time. That is what God did, that is the nature of the Christian life. God prepared things for you unique to you,

specifically assigned to you by the wisdom and providence of God. That's what you are walking in. That's what God has given to you.

Now stay with me here as we develop the thought. Chapter 4, verse 1. We're just seeing how Paul talks about Christian living as a walk. He uses that metaphor. He says, "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called." He says, "I want you to live out the life that God has given you, live it out to his glory. Live it in a way that is worthy of the magnificence of the salvation that he has granted to you in Jesus Christ. And listen, listen, live it out in a manner that is worthy of the person of Christ, this One who dwelt in pre-incarnate glory, this One who stepped down to earth in order to secure your salvation with His life and His shed blood, this One who is God in human flesh, this great person and this great work that He has done, realize the majesty of Christ and walk in a manner that is worthy of the fact that belong to Him, that you have been called by Him. Live for His glory."

Chapter 5, verse 2, Paul had said in verse 1, "Be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love." Verse 8 he says, "you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light." And finally in chapter 5, verse 15, "be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise." Now I know I've laid those verses on you in rather rapid sequence. That's okay, just stay with me here. What is Paul talking about as he uses this metaphor of walking to describe the Christian life? What's the application of it? Well, you know, we've seen this in the past. In chapter 4, verse 1, he's talking about the importance of walking in unity within the body of Christ. He speaks about the realm of the church. He speaks about your personal conduct. He speaks about your words. He speaks about your spirit of forgiveness as opposed to bitterness, a spirit of peace as opposed to a spirit of anger that you would live out your life. He speaks in chapter 5, as you know, against drunkenness but being filled instead with the Holy Spirit. He speaks about your marriage. He speaks about your family, your children, your parents. He speaks about your workplace. Beloved, do you see that it's not simply saying walk means the course of your life, everything that he is addressing in this letter is talking about right where you live, your closest associations of relationship. The activities that take up the bulk of your life that seem to be so mundane at times, all of these things in the realm of daily living being that which constitutes the walk. Paul has corrected them. Stay with me here. We won't look at all these passages, you can read Ephesians for yourself if you think I'm adding something that's not in the text, he has corrected them on church unity. He has corrected them on temptation and on pride. He has enforced upon them the importance of spiritual growth and growing in the knowledge of Christ and in true doctrine that you might not be tossed back and forth amongst the waves. He has taught on ignorance and deceit, greed and silly talk that comes out of our mouths, rebellion and lust. All of these things including let me just reemphasize the importance of spiritual maturity. I want to emphasize that, chapter 4, verse 14 because this is part of why we do what we do here at Truth Community Church. Chapter 4, verse 14, "we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up." Doctrine being at the core of growing up.

Now let's take a breath. It's okay if you want to pull down your mask do that. I'm sorry that it's like that. I really am. But friends, don't you know from sad personal experience what a struggle it can be for these things? Don't you find it at times to be difficult to grasp doctrine? Biblical truth comes more difficult for some than others. Don't you find that your mouth betrays you with some of the silly things or the gossip or the complaining that comes out of it? Don't you find that to be true? Do you not deal with issues of greed in your life or attitudes of rebellion against different authority that God has placed in your life? Isn't marriage sometimes difficult? Aren't children sometimes a source of sorrow for you? Isn't your workplace often a source of great frustration to you? Do you see it, beloved? The realm of the battle is taking place in the course of life, life as you experience it, life as you walk through the circumstances that God has appointed for you. Don't you know as a Christian from sad personal experience the fact that life can be a struggle? It's almost like something is resisting you in the process. Well, precisely. Paul assumes the fact that you are having a struggle when he says in chapter 6, verse 12, "our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against, against, against, against," in this close wrestle. Why is the Christian life sometimes so hard, not always but often? Why do you sometimes stagger under the weight of it, and I say that sympathetically, not to rebuke? Friends, it's a struggle due to the nature of the battle.

The time of unbroken peace awaits our glorification. It's not right now. For now we have a time of living for Christ in the midst of close supernatural hostility, and behind the scenes using all different manner of means to confuse and confound you, to discourage and weaken you, behind the scenes unseen wicked forces are actively seeking to hinder your advance in the Christian life. They bring false doctrine and false teachers to your attention and makes them seem appealing. They tempt you to sin. They tempt you to doubt the goodness of God. They flatter your pride. They exploit your carnal desires. They set you at division with family and other Christians. Do you see it, beloved? In all of these different ways our lives are a complex tapestry of all kinds of different stuff and at different points the tapestry frays and injects disorder or disharmony. Beloved, this happens in the context of the fact that there are forces seeking to use those things to discourage you, to distract you away from Christ, to divert your life from giving glory to God.

Now as we've said in the recent past, I realize that to the entire world system and to most Christians the glory of God is not that important. It's not important to them at all in the world and to most Christians it's incidental to the fact that they want to live a happy unhindered life. The fact that the world is indifferent or hostile and Christians are so casual about it does not mean that it is a matter of casual interest in the heavenly places. The glory of God is the reason for the universe and you and I are meant to be instruments of that with our praise, with our spiritual growth, with our worship, with our obedient lives, and that which hinders us away from that finds its root in the evil opposition that is at stake. That's why it's a struggle.

Now the point of all of this, this morning, and of what Paul has said here in verse 12 is this, we'll pick this up next week or on Tuesday actually in verse 13, he says, "Therefore,

take up the full armor of God." In verse 11 he said, "Put on the full armor of God." In verse 13 he says, "take up the full armor of God. Therefore do this." Because beloved, the battle is like this in our daily walk, because it is supernatural, close, and a matter of daily life, therefore you must take up the full armor of God if you are to achieve victory in the midst of this. Friends, I'm summarizing what's to come in future weeks: we need supernatural resources to overcome this foe. We cannot do it alone. We cannot do it with a spirit of pride and independence and self-sufficiency. We confess our vulnerability, we confess our weakness and we look to God for his revelation in Christ, his righteousness in Christ, the reconciliation we have with God in Christ, and the resurrection power that he has given us in Christ. Only those kinds of supernatural resources can overcome our supernatural foe, but that's what God has given us and as we understand these things and draw upon them, we have everything that we need to overcome the one against whom we wrestle.

So starting on Tuesday evening at 7 o'clock, we're going to gear up for battle as we look at these things but what we see today is this, is that we need help outside and beyond ourselves if we are to live as God has called us to do; if we are to be instruments of his glory, we must do so in the strength that he has provided us in all of these realms, in his Son and in his word. So we're going to seek that out next time.

Let's pray together.

Father, we need a Mediator. We need someone to stand between us and a holy God because of our sin and You've given us that in Christ. We need a King to go before us in battle. We need a Warrior who is able to defeat the foe, and again You have given that to us in Christ. We confess our weakness. We recognize the struggle that it often is and we pray, Father, that You would help us appropriate and put on the full armor of God that we might stand firm against the foe and give glory to our Captain, to our Five-Star General, to our Lord Jesus Christ whom we love and serve with glad devotion. Father, strengthen us for the battle in the days ahead. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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