

Sermon Title: This Is War! (Part 1)
Scripture Text: Eph. 6:10-11 (Ephesians #45)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 7-31-22

Now it's time to turn to Ephesians Chapter 6, where today we begin the final section of Ephesians. This section even begins with the word "finally," and it makes a very pungent point: We who belong to Jesus Christ are an *army* under attack (1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 12:17), engaged in warfare on enemy territory (1 Jn. 5:19; cf. 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2).

Because we *are* on enemy territory, we have to live this life surrounded by circumstances that are frequently not friendly to our beliefs and our values, and there is enemy propaganda *everywhere* around us (Phil. 2:15; cf. Ps. 12:8; Lk. 16:15; Rom. 1:28-32). There are subtle and not-so-subtle assaults on our priorities and our whole purpose in life to glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31).

Our society pushes everyone toward selfishness (Ps. 12:4), rather than sacrificial servanthood (Prov. 21:10; Is. 22:13; Phil. 3:19; 2 Tim. 3:4). Personal comfort and indulgence are *constantly* lifted up as the *highest* goals in life: "Be happy! Have everything! You *need* this new widget of whatever it is!" (cf. 1 Jn. 2:16)

And the enemy, in whose territory we operate, is *really* crafty, *really* subtle (2 Cor. 2:11). He is okay with just seeing "complacency" about eternal things (Prov. 1:32b). He has taught people that it is okay for people to be Christians—it's just *one* interest that people might have. You know, some people play tennis, some people do gardening, some like hiking, and some like going to church—doing that "Christian" thing; and it's fine, as long as it is viewed as *one* option that a person might choose, because after all, the whole point is personal comfort, right? And if that makes you comfortable, well, that's okay—but don't you dare go *outside* the walls of the place where you worship *and speak truth*, which contradicts error around you (Jn. 7:7b; cf. Gal. 4:16).

I want to give you a broader perspective before we dive into our text. We are just going to dip our toe in this morning—we'll get a verse and a half of our text for today, and we will finish it next time. But I want you to have a broader picture of what this is all about, because *this* is all through the New Testament.

Jesus, on a fateful day—I guess they were all fateful days in Jesus's life—but on an extremely significant day when the Pharisees and the Scribes had gone public with their open, loud, total denunciation and rejection of Jesus, they said, "Everything He does, He does by the power of Satan himself!" (e.g., Matt. 12:24). That was a big day.

A lot of the events of that day are recorded; and among them, Jesus then spoke seven parables. That was the day that He *stopped* teaching plainly in a straightforward way—like in the Sermon on the Mount—and when He was in a public setting where there were believers and unbelievers, He would speak in parables—to reveal new truth to those who believed, and to veil it from those who were rejecting Him (Matt. 13:11).

Seven of those parables are recorded in Matthew 13, and they all describe the age in which we now live. Jesus came as the King, they rejected the King, Israel rejected the possibility of having a kingdom there with their King on the throne in Jerusalem; and so Jesus began to reveal that there was going to be this era in the kingdom program of God in which the King would be physically absent, and then He was going to come again.

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And He illustrated those things in these seven parables. You can skim through Matthew Chapter 13 if you want to, but I'm just going to summarize them for you:

He started out by talking about four kinds of soil that represent four kinds of human hearts and four kinds of response to the Word of God's Kingdom, the Gospel. One is clear rejection; the other one is full acceptance; and in between those, the other two represent pseudo-acceptance that *looks* good, *sounds* good for a while, but then the people don't stick. And Jesus was teaching there that during this era, there would be confusion about commitment, along with a lot of examples of *false* commitment that would muddy the water (1 Jn. 2:19). That's all part of the war that we are in.

The next parable is the Wheat and Tares. The wheat and tares represent true disciples and pseudo-believers planted next to one another; and they are indistinguishable most of the time. That, too, is part of the war: Our enemy *loves* to counterfeit, and he is *very* good at it (cf. Jn. 6:70-71; Acts 20:30; 2 Cor. 11:13-15); and he plants counterfeits among the true ones (Jude 4, 12). Only angels dispatched by God are ultimately going to be able to sort out the difference and expose the counterfeits—and that will be when the King returns (Matt. 13:41).

Then there's the Parable of the Mustard Seed—a very small seed, usually a small plant. And that one teaches that the Church was going to grow beyond what anyone would ever expect (Matt. 16:18; Rev. 5:9; 7:9), especially to come from a movement that depended on twelve frightened, scattered, common men for its foundations (Acts 1:8; Eph. 2:20). And despite the unprecedented growth, where this thing that is normally a little bush becomes a huge tree, that plant—which represents the Church in the world—it is *infiltrated* by the presence of evil influences from outside. That is all part of the war.

Then there's the Parable of the Leaven—not one less than twelve; l-e-a-v-e-n, yeast. The Parable of the Leaven teaches that the Kingdom of God on Earth during this age is subject to corrupting influences from within; like a *little* tiny bit of "leaven leavens the whole lump of dough" (1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9), corruption can spread from within. The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven underscore that our enemy operates both externally *and* internally in the church. That's all part of the war.

Then there are two parables that seem to say the same thing, and reinforce them: the Buried Treasure and the Precious Pearl parables teach us that even though *purchased* by Christ, the full expression of the Kingdom of God—the Church on Earth during this era—it's not immediately claimed by Him; He is going to let it grow, and He is going to come back and claim it, and take charge of it (Jn. 14:3). And we live in a time between that transaction being made and the fulfilment of it coming to reality. It is all part of the war.

Now, I need to insert there that you probably ought to pray a little extra for me, because I just gave you an interpretation of three parables which *differs* from what you will read in your MacArthur Study Bible! Pray for me. That could be serious—because even my good friend and mentor, John, can't *always* be right! Nothing in your MacArthur Study Bible on those parables is *wrong*; I just disagree that it is what that text is teaching, and both of them [the interpretations] are actually biblical.

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The final parable in that chapter tells of a Dragnet—not Joe Friday, but a net dragged behind the boat that brings in a great harvest of fish. There are good fish, and then there are other things that get caught up in the net that are extraneous; and as there is the need for the fisherman to separate the fish he *wants* from what is useless to him, there will be a time of judgment to separate the good from the useless within the group of people who are, if you will, harvested by the Gospel—gathered together by the Gospel (Matt. 22:11-13; Lk. 12:46). In other words: The *true* disciples will be separated from those who *merely profess* to be Christians (Matt. 7:21-23). It's all part of the war! And it is not all going to be sorted out until the King comes back (1 Cor. 4:5).

One theme is constant through all of those parables: There will be a *struggle* between good and evil (2 Tim. 3:13; cf. Ps. 12:8; Prov. 28:4; Is. 5:20-23), and the evil will be *deceptive* (2 Thess. 2:10)—hard to detect and difficult to counteract.

Now, as we go back to Ephesians—Chapter 6, Verses 10 through 20, is another perspective on that same truth of this battle. And in this case, we are given insight about how we must "resist" the forces of evil during this age in which we live (1 Pet. 5:8-9). This is *all* part of a *war*, and you have been *drafted* into it if you belong to Christ.

This is a good time to remember the big picture of the Book of Ephesians: Chapters 1, 2, and 3 tell us about our resources in Christ; and we were "dead in" our "trespasses and sins" (2:1); God "made us alive" (2:5) by what Christ has done: "By grace you have been saved through faith" (2:8), and so now you are "in Christ" (2:10). That phrase and its equivalent occurs 27 times in Ephesians (e.g., 1:1, 3, 12, 20; 2:6-7, 10, 13; 3:6; 4:32). And so, our passage is *presuming* you are "in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17).

When you get to the second half of the book, starting at Chapter 4, Verse 1, Ephesians 4:1 through Chapter 6, Verse 9, is the blueprint for *using* those resources "in Christ" to *live* a practical, godly life. The theme of the second half of the book is announced right at the beginning of it: Chapter 4, Verse 1—"Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called" (NASB-1995; and throughout, unless otherwise noted). Then from there all the way up through Chapter 6, Verse 9, it is telling you how to do that: the command to "be filled with the Holy Spirit" (5:18; cf. Gal. 5:16), how to fulfill all of those roles in human relationships.

Then when you get to Chapter 6, Verse 10, it begins the closing section of the message of the book, and it tells you how to cope with this spiritual battle into which you have been drawn by virtue of your faith in Jesus Christ (Rev. 12:17).

Today, we are going to address just the beginning of the section, but look at the first three verses of this section. We will take two visits to get through these three verses. Paul writes: "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 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." How else can you say it? Someone has declared war on you! You need to be aware of that is going on.

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Now, I want to take a couple of moments and explain to you that this section of God's Word has been *seriously* abused and twisted in our generation. I remember being gripped by this passage when I was a young believer in Christ, and God used this passage to kind of wake me up: Christianity is not a hobby, it's a *war* (1 Tim. 6:12), and you have to be aware of what is going on around you (1 Thess. 5:8; 1 Pet. 1:13).

Then I preached through this passage in the late 1970s when I was beginning fulltime ministry, and then I preached through it again when I was helping a struggling church in the 1980s. In the 1990s, I preached it again to a church that I was part of a team helping to plant. And so, I did what every preacher does when you get to preach something you preached before—I call it "cashing the check again." You don't have to start from scratch; you can go and review what you have learned. So I went back—and this was the 1990s now—and I looked at the notes from the times I had been through this passage, and I noticed a *total lack* of reference to a *whole movement* that sprang up in our country, and not *just* our country, in the 1990s. It gathered momentum like a giant theological snowball in the '90s.

I'm referring to the theological minefield that is usually called "Spiritual Warfare." As "winds of doctrine" go—remember Ephesians Chapter 4: We have to resist the "winds of doctrine" (vs. 14)—as "winds of doctrine" go, that one was a hurricane! It was *huge*! It is mostly gone now; at least, it is downgraded from "Category 5 Hurricane" stage. But, like any bad theological movement, it leaves a stain; it leaves damage behind.

And there was this *huge* pendulum swing of attitude toward the content of our passage. In those days, it was driven by the shallowness and emotionalism of the Charismatic movement. Years ago among American Christians—and I would say this was pretty much true, even up to the time when I became a new believer back in the late 1960s—there was widespread ignorance, of most people in most pews, on the subject of angels and demons. Preaching seldom dealt with demons or angels, and the warfare in which they and we are involved.

And then the pendulum swung *massively* in the *other* direction, and the many gusts of "winds of doctrine" blowing in those days made people *preoccupied* with "Spiritual Warfare," and there was *excessive* talk about angels and demons, and far too much attention and energy devoted to speculation about things that happen in the unseen world of spirits—things the Bible does not describe to us. And many things that were once confined to Charismatic circles broke out into all of Evangelicalism.

Here's your little modern Church History expert. Two things happened at once: There was the "Spiritual Warfare Movement" that brought *horrible* theology out of the closet and spread it all over Evangelicalism; and it was buttressed by, not something that was part of the Spiritual Warfare Movement, but there was a book called "Experiencing God" by Henry Blackaby—and a whole bunch of spinoffs from that—that taught people that God actually speaks to you *outside* of your Bible, and *in addition* to your Bible, through your inner impressions and all of these things. That was a *hundred percent contrary* to all of theology for nineteen centuries, and then suddenly it came forward (cf. Prov. 30:6; Jer. 14:14; Col. 2:18).

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So remember, when you are talking theology: If it is new, it's not true; and if it's true, it's not new (cf. Jer. 6:16). There are always new, fresh ways to *apply* the truth. But those things happened at once, and it made a mess.

Now, we are indeed involved in warfare; our text is crystal clear. But we need to understand this warfare *from the Scriptures* (Ps. 19:11), and we need to understand: God has told us *everything* we need to know about this warfare *in His Word*, and it *is* sufficient (2 Tim. 3:16-17; cf. 2 Pet. 1:3).

Now, we have to be calm and wise and careful, sift out extra-biblical things that we might be told—and there is plenty of it.

But here is the point of all this: The moment you put your faith in Jesus Christ, war is declared against you (1 Pet. 5:8; cf. 1 Thess. 3:5; Rev. 12:17). We are not the *aggressors* in this war; we are the ones under attack. Now, I have a way to say that now that nobody until the last few months could have ever said: In this war, we are not Russia, we are Ukraine. There is someone who is *trying* to exterminate who we are.

Now, you might be fascinated with stuff about "Spiritual Warfare"—it can be very *captivating*, it can be intellectually seductive; you might be bombarded by it or tempted by it. So I want to just give you a couple things to watch out for.

As I said, it has downgraded from hurricane status, but the stuff is still out there. So here are some things to watch out for concerning so-called "Spiritual Warfare." There are certain terms and certain ideas that, when you see or hear or read these things, they are telltale signs that you are now in territory fraught with *terrible* doctrine.

Alright, there is a few of them. I am not going to elaborate on any of them, because I want to talk about the truth way more than the error:

One is the idea that a Christian can need to have demons expelled from his or her body. There is another book written by, I'm sad to say, a man that I studied under a little bit in seminary that did *incredible damage* on this front. "Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 Jn. 4:4)—a Christian *cannot* be possessed or indwelt by a demon (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Thess. 3:3; 1 Jn. 5:18b).

If anyone tells you that you ought to be praying to "bind Satan" or demons, *run the other way!* That is a false teaching! Never, ever, is that commanded! (cf. 2 Pet. 2:10; Jude 8)

There are also people who will tell you that you need to pray to expel demons from inanimate objects. I know people who will say, "There is an evangelistic crusade coming to town, so we have to go around and we have to take our little bottle of oil, and we have to anoint and pray over every seat in the stadium so that the demons that are lurking under those seats cannot infest the people who come there, and prevent the Gospel from spreading." I'm not kidding! I mean, I would think that would make good parody—but it's *not!* Run away from that.

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Then there is the teaching that prayer is a weapon. I'm going to explain that in detail in the next passage in Ephesians when we get there, but *prayer is not a weapon!* Prayer is a communication technique by which you can talk to the One who *has* the power (Phil. 4:6). We will circle back to that one in the next couple of Lord's Days.

There's another one: Watch out for anyone who claims to be a "Spiritual Warfare Expert," or even people who *refer* to such people as a "Spiritual Warfare Expert"—*made up*, dead wrong.

Or, there are people who will teach you to *command* demons or angels in certain prayers, or anytime anyone speaks to Satan or demons or angels when they pray—just, at a *minimum*, ignore it; and if you can, refute it and protect people from it (Eph. 5:11).

And then there is the suggestion that certain sins are primarily the result of demonic activities. This one found *great* fertile ground in American thinking because now, we have turned everything into a "disease" and it's not your problem—you have a "disease" now; you know, you're not a "drunkard" (1 Cor. 5:11; 6:10)—you have a "disease" called "alcoholism." Well, Jesus didn't die for that; He "died for *sins*" (1 Pet. 3:18; cf. 1 Cor. 6:11). There's a whole big problem with that, as well.

So, if you run into those things, if you are confused about them, we are here—feel free to bring your questions; I have dealt with it *a lot* in times past. I don't want to take a great big side-trip to explain all of those things; just to say: There is *flagrantly* unbiblical and dangerous stuff there on the subject of "Spiritual Warfare"—don't be seduced by it (Col. 2:8; 1 Tim. 6:20).

Now, let's look at the *right* stuff; let's look at the *truth*. I'm told the best way to train people not to be tricked by counterfeit money is to have them handle a whole bunch of the real thing. Let's go to the "real thing" now; there's a *lot* of counterfeit out there—let's go to the real thing (cf. Is. 8:20): Ephesians Chapter 6, Verses 10 through 12. And this will be Part 1 of 2; we are going to do about a verse and a half—maybe 1.35 verses today, and then we will move on next time.

Number 1: Verse 10—Heed The Call To Battle

Number 2: Verse 11—Put On The Uniform

Number 3: Verse 12—Know The Intelligence Report On The Enemy

Alright: Heed The Call To Battle. It's pretty straightforward in Ephesians Chapter 6, Verse 10—"Finally..." Okay, remember: "I am *presuming* you have read, understood, believed, and are living by Ephesians 1:1 through 6:9," okay? This is for those who are "in the Lord's Army," if you want to use a kid's song. "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." "Knowing all you know from the rest of this letter, here is my concluding message to you," says Paul.

The first command here is: "Be strong." The purpose of the rest of this letter is to help you "be strong." What you need in order to stand strong in the Lord *is here* for you to understand and put to work.

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"Be strong *in the Lord*." There is something *very significant* about the wording of that command. It is something you *have* to understand if you are going to be effective in "resisting" the enemy (Jas. 4:7).

We saw a parallel thought in the last chapter. Remember, there's the command: "Be filled with the Spirit" (5:18)? Remember, that is worded in the passive voice? *You cannot fill yourself with the Spirit!* It is your *responsibility* to "be filled," but the *Spirit* is the One who does the filling! It is a hundred percent your commitment to "be filled," but it relies a hundred percent on the Holy Spirit to fill you.

Here is the same thing: "Be strong"—and it's not your strength—"Be strong *in the Lord*." *God* is the One who provides the strength (1 Sam. 30:6; Ps. 10:17; 29:11; 119:32).

Now, this could be taken as "be continually strengthened by the Lord," or, "be continually strengthening *yourself* by applying what He has told you in His Word"—either one of them, it works out the same. They both bring together *your* part and *God's* part in living the Christian life. It *is* a joint effort (cf. Ps. 37:3, 23-24, 34; Prov. 3:5-6; Is. 41:10).

What is *your* part? Your part is one hundred percent *your* choices and *your* commitment (e.g., Mk. 12:30; 2 Cor. 7:1; Phil. 2:12; 1 Tim. 4:7). *God's* part is one hundred percent His Spirit, His Word, and what He supplies (e.g., Ezek. 36:27; Phil. 2:13; Heb. 13:20-21). It is *not* fifty-fifty—it's *all of both*.

Another way to put that is over in the familiar verse: Galatians 5:16—"But I say, walk..." *That's you*—you have to "walk": figure out where you are going; plan your route; spend the energy; pick up one foot, put it in front of the other; repeat and keep going toward your goal until you get there (Prov. 4:25-27; Phil. 3:12-14; Rev. 14:12). *You* "walk *by the Spirit*." "Walk *by the Spirit*"—that's *God's* strength to enable you to keep taking those steps (Ps. 28:7; 37:39; 105:4; 2 Tim. 4:17). "I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh."

So, there are two wrong ways to understand this. One is to think, "Oh, here's another *burden* I have to carry. *I have to knuckle down*, I have to *be strong*, and it *all depends on me!*" No, it doesn't—but yes, it does. Are you committed, or are you not?

The other wrong way is that silly slogan that somebody made up: "Let go and let God." If I say *I* am going to do it, that's just fleshly effort at being spiritual. But "Let go and let God" is a denial of *your part* in actively choosing to obey God and to follow the leading of the Spirit (cf. Lk. 13:24; 1 Tim. 4:10), and to let *Him* strengthen you (Is. 40:31; 2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 3:16; Col. 1:11). *Total effort* on your part, total trust in God for all that He supplies—that's how we fight this war.

And there is a theme common throughout the New Testament. I gave you a synopsis of those parables; think also of John 15:1-5—"I am the vine, you are the branches," and the branches can produce "nothing" unless they are attached to the life-giving "vine" (vs. 5). Well, *you* must "bear fruit" (vs. 2). How can you do that? Only if you are connected to "the vine"! One hundred percent you, one hundred percent Him.

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There's Philippians 4:13, which people *love* to take out of context—even have it *printed* on them before the football game: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." Well, "I *can* do all things *through Him who strengthens me.*" And by the way: He doesn't only strengthen football players.

Verse 10—"Finally, be strong in the Lord"—and then, look at these two words side by side—" and in the *strength* of His *might.*" "Strength" and "might" are two different Greek words.

One of them—"strength"—refers to strength that is demonstrated in its exercising. There are a lot of reasons why I don't like to go to the gym, but among them is, how I feel when I'm there: small, fat, old, weak. I mean, I'm over there thinking, "I'm going to bump it up to *twenty* pounds this time," and there's some guy over there lifting a *small semi!* That is "strength" put on display, "strength" in the exercising of it.

That is the *fruit* of the other word: "might," which describes power that is *possessed*, whether it is used or not. He *has* the power; He is willing to put it on display through you. "Be strong in the Lord and *in the strength of His might.*"

We are gradually introducing you to the Legacy Standard Bible that is an improvement on the very best one out there, the New American Standard 1995 edition. I check the Legacy Standard Bible ever passage I study now, and it is interesting: The Legacy Standard Bible—instead of saying "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might," it says: "Be strong in the Lord and in the *might* of His *strength.*" Well, that tells me that the people who know a whole lot more than I do see those two words side-by-side, and they say, "You know what? They belong together!" The way the "strength" can be exercised is because of the "might" that is inherent. And if I am connected to the One who has the "might," I will have the "strength" for the task at hand.

There is one other place that those two words occur; it is also in Ephesians, in Chapter 1 at the end of Verses 18 and 19, about praying for people's "eyes" to be "enlightened" so that they can "know" all of these things that you have to know in order to be filled with the Spirit, etc. And he says: "These are in accordance with the working of the *strength* of His *might.*" The same "strength" that could "make" you "alive" when you are "dead in your trespasses and sins" (2:1, 5) is the "strength" by which you can survive this war—same meaning, both passages.

God has all the power you need; He is willing to exercise it through you, but you have to appropriate it for yourself by cooperating with His plan. His plan is for you to walk closely with Jesus Christ, under the control of His Holy Spirit, so that this enemy that is warring against us will not prevail (Jn. 16:33; 1 Jn. 5:4).

It's a Call To Battle: "Be strong in the Lord."

Number 2: Put On The Uniform—Verse 11. This verse provides a great balance of those two aspects—your part and God's part—in making you victorious against the strategies of the enemy. Look at it:

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"Put on the full armor of God..." There's the second command. First command: "Be strong"—in whose strength? His strength. Second command: "Put on the full armor"—what armor? "The full armor of *God*." "*Put on* the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil." You have available to you the ultimate power, but *you must not forget* the power of your enemy. The responsibility lies with *you* as to whether the power flows through you, or not (Rom. 8:13).

So, "put on" something—the second command. "Put on" translates a word that means "to envelop in" or "to hide in" or "to clothe with something." We saw the word back in Chapter 4, Verse 24, where it says: "*put on* the new man" (LSB)—in other words: *Live* like who you really are "in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17; cf. Eph. 5:8).

And here, there is a little bit different emphasis. This is saying, "Now, get the 'new man' ready for battle." Choose the kind of commitment he is going to have: When there is bad thinking, put that off; be "renewed" in your thinking (vs. 23), "put on the new man." Put off, be renewed, put on—that is the principle of spiritual growth in Ephesians Chapter 4.

Now, he's saying: Assuming you are standing firm in the faith, put *this* on. And "put on" here—this command, in the form here—carries the idea of permanence: a once-for-all thing. The armor is not something you put on just before you think there is going to be a battle. It is not: When you hear the shriek of the incoming missile, you run to your closet and say, "Now, where did I put my breastplate? I'm about to have trouble!" No, he is saying: "*Wear* this armor." The battle is *constant*, and God has provided the armor for you to wear *all the time*. We will work through the words that describe the pieces of the armor next time or the time after that. But these are not things that you turn on and turn off; this is how to "be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might," and each one of these things is an *ongoing* part of your relationship with God.

What is translated "full armor" here is the Greek word *panoplia*, from which our English word "panoply" comes. Great word—never mind that you never use it. A "panoply" is a splendid outfit, or a magnificent suit of clothes. And in this context, it means: "the complete complement of equipment and weapons for a soldier." God has provided us with all that we need, *but* He tells us: "*Put it on!* Choose to live according to the things that I have given to you. Choose to be strong in *My* power."

It's "the *panoply* of God"; the "armor" comes from "God," and He supplies it for our use, "so that you will be able to"—look at the words there—"stand firm..." The idea is, it's a military concept that you are positioned by your Commander-in-Chief in a strategic place. Now, what is your place in which you are positioned in this spiritual battle? Well: your house, your family, your job, your block, your friends. God put you there by His sovereign providence (Prov. 20:24). *You* are the one He wants there, and the idea is: You are standing there, *an army is coming at you*; they are going to assault you, and when the assault is done and they have gone—there you stand, unmoved. That is what he means by: "stand firm." That is why your "armor" is *your lifelong companion*. God provides it; *He* is the One "who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy" (Jude 24).

Sermon Title: This Is War! (Part 1)
Scripture Text: Eph. 6:10-11 (Ephesians #45)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 7-31-22

We are going to go on. After we have seen The Call To Battle and we have Put On The Uniform, we will talk more about The Intelligence Report On The Enemy. But for now, please understand what the Bible teaches about spiritual warfare: It is *not* about going out and trying to discover and expose and expel demons! No, *it is a war*—it's a war that *comes to you*. The instant you become a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ, you also become a member of the Church, the Body of Christ (Col. 1:24); and from that moment, you are part of the entity that Satan has declared war against. He *hates* Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Jn. 3:8b). He *hates* the Gospel (cf. 2 Tim. 2:26). He hates anyone who acts in the manner that Jesus would have them to act (cf. Acts 26:18, 20; Rom. 6:13, 17-18). He hates anyone who proclaims the Gospel (cf. Rom. 1:16; Eph. 1:13). He hates any *group* of people who get together in Christ's name and worship Him and give Him glory (cf. Matt. 4:9; Phil. 3:3; 1 Thess. 1:9). So the war is declared *against you*.

There is another description of this war that I will just mention, in closing: Second Corinthians Chapter 10, Verses 3 through 5—"For though we walk in the flesh"—I mean, we walk as human beings in the world (cf. Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:22, 24)—"we do not *war* according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful"—you might say: "in the strength of His might"—"divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 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." This war is primarily about words and ideas—the words that change lives, the words of the Gospel. We *destroy* "speculations"! Boy, if you could take "speculations" out of the world of theology, the world would be *so much simpler* (Rom. 1:21-22; 1 Tim. 1:4; 2 Tim. 2:23). Watch out when you hear *new* things coming: "There's this *new* movement! There's this *really new book* that has this *new* insight! Have you ever seen this before?" Remember the basic principle of theology is: If it is true, it's not new; and if it is new, it's not true. Always new applications of the old truth, but not new stuff.

This is a war! It is coming after you (Jn. 15:19; 2 Cor. 2:11; 1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 2:10). It is a war for souls (Matt. 13:19; 2 Cor. 4:4). It is a war of ideas (2 Thess. 2:9-10; 2 Jn. 7; Rev. 12:9). We live and we battle in enemy territory (1 Jn. 5:19).

So, let's meet here again—same time next week, here in the war room, at headquarters: the Church, which is the Body of Christ. And He is "the head of the church" (Eph. 5:23), the Body of Christ. He is "the King of kings," He is "the Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 19:16). "He is coming" again (Rev. 1:7). And in the meantime, He says: "Stand firm!" "Stand in My grace" (1 Pet. 5:12). "Stand firm" by the "power" of My "might" (Col. 1:11).

Let's pray:

Father, thank You for these things. It is so easy for us, in this world, to wobble. It is so easy, in this world, to—even in just fleeting moments—act as if You are not in control. Thank You for the "strength" of Your "might" by which we can "stand firm." As we help each other, help us to come alongside, "encourage the fainthearted, help the weak," but above all, that whatever onslaughts the enemy brings against You, may we "stand firm" when all has been said and done. Have Your way with us to that end, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.