

**The Book of Ephesians**  
**Learning to Use God's Armor**  
**Ephesians 6:10-17**

**August 1, 2010**

*Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher*  
*Countryside Bible Church*

Recently, as you know, I was diagnosed and successfully treated for melanoma. I was reminded in the days that followed that what a terrible scourge cancer really is. Every year cancer causes about 13% of all human deaths. That means in 2007 for example, 7.6 million people died worldwide of cancer.

But what exactly is cancer? Of course it takes many different forms and attacks many different parts of the body, but cancer at its heart is one particular aberration. Wikipedia defines cancer in this way: “It is a class of diseases in which a group of cells display uncontrolled growth [that is, division beyond normal limits], invasion [that is, intrusion and destruction of adjacent tissues], and sometimes metastasis.” In other words, it spreads to other parts of the body via the lymph system or the blood.

How does that happen? How do a group of cells go on a such a rampage? Well, Wikipedia goes on to describe the process like this:

Cancer promoting oncogenes are typically activated in those cancer cells, giving those cells new properties such as hyperactive growth, protection against the normal programmed death cycle of cells, and a loss of respect for normal tissue boundaries. In addition to that, [the article goes on to say] tumor suppressor genes are inactivated in those cancer cells resulting in the loss of the normal function of the cell.

You see, that’s what makes cancer so deadly: the very genes that are intended to prevent tumors from growing are switched off, so that the protective cells in our immune system often fail to recognize the cancer as an enemy until it’s too late. As a result, even though there is an all out war being waged against the healthy cells in our body, our immune system is completely

unaware. And we too are consciously unaware, until either we feel the tumor, or we begin to experience the symptoms.

Fortunately, with the information that's available today, we are more aware than past generations were about the danger of cancer. And because of that awareness, we take more steps to guard and protect our bodies. We're aware that there's this silent, invisible war that may very well be raging within our bodies, and so we take steps to guard against that. We slather on sunscreen, and we wear hats. We perform self-examinations of various kinds. We get routine checkups and cancer screenings. And all of that's very important for the protection of the body.

But as Christians, we need to understand that there is a silent, invisible war being waged all around us, and even inside our very minds, a war that is much more serious in its consequences than any cancer could be. And tragically most Christians are completely oblivious to the reality of this war. Today we come in our study of the book of Ephesians to one of the most famous, one of the most often quoted passages in all of the New Testament, a passage that's often referred to as the believer's armor. What Paul wants us to see in this passage above all else, is that all around us and even within our minds, there is a silent, invisible war being waged. It's a war between God and Satan. It's waged by supernatural beings. And it's not your body at stake, it's your soul. And if you're a Christian, ultimately it's not your soul that's at stake; instead, it is your spiritual health and growth and effectiveness in this life. That's the message of Ephesians 6: beginning in verse 10. Let me read this paragraph for you. Ephesians 6:10:

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*. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; 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. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

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, and *pray* on my

behalf, that utterance may be given to me and the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Now as we begin this last major paragraph of Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus, I think it's important for us to remember where we are. I don't want you to get lost inside of the forest for the trees. Let me remind you that the theme of this great letter of Paul's is God's eternal plan. In the first three chapters, he explains that plan, and in the last three chapters, he applies that plan. The first three chapters are about what you and I need to know; chapters four through six about what we need to do in response to what we have learned. Chapters 1 through 3 state our position; chapters 4 through 6, what our practice should be. In the first three chapters, there's only one command. It comes in chapter 2, verse 11, and it's "remember."

But beginning in chapter 4, and running through the end of the book, Paul repeatedly gives us command after command, and reminds us of the implications of our incredible position in Christ. Notice chapter 4 verse 1. Just to remind you, he begins the second half of the letter with this hinge verse: "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you [I plead with you.] to walk in manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called." Walk worthy of your calling, worthy of that new position that I've just explained to you in the first three chapters. But how do we do that? Well, as chapters 4 through 6 unfold, Paul has explained to us how to walk worthy.

Again, just to remind you of the journey we've been on through this book, let me remind you of how we walk worthy. In 4: 2 -16, we walk worthy by walking in unity. In 4:17-24, we walk worthy by walking in new life, the new life we've been given in Christ. In 4:25- through 5: 2, we walk in love. In 5: 3-14, we're to walk in sexual purity. And then the last section that we've just finished, we are to walk in biblical wisdom. That's the longest section of the entire letter. It begins in 5 15, and runs all the way through 6: 9. Walk in biblical wisdom if you're going to walk worthy.

Now when that section ends in verse 9 of chapter 6, we are beginning to conclude the letter. Paul begins this final section, you'll notice in verse 10, with the word "finally." "Finally, be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might." Paul has come to the final issue in the list of matters that he wants to address. What follows the word "finally" in this case, is not merely another item in a series of lists or in a list of subjects, but instead, what follows that word is a practical exhortation in light of all he has taught us. It is the practical application that equips us to do everything he's commanded us to do in this letter.

You know, I think for most Christians, when they get to this part of the book of Ephesians, they're just tempted to skip it. They're tempted to skip it, because frankly, it just seems too militaristic, too disengaged from their life, frankly, just not that practical at all. And so what do they do? They go back and read the real practical commands about the kind of marriage you ought to have, the kind of parenting you ought to do, and then they set out to fulfill those commands. And they ignore the very practical means Paul gives us for carrying out those commands about unity and about new life and about love and about sexual purity and about biblical wisdom in all the relationships of life.

Let's just be honest. A lot of Christians treat this paragraph as if it were some kind of legalese at the end of a commercial. It has to be said, but you don't have to listen. I don't know what it means, but that's okay. It's just one of those things that need to be said. Paul has to say it. It's not very helpful, but there it is. Let's move on.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. The truth is, when it comes to living out the commands Paul has given us in the second half of this letter, what he explains in these verses is the only way to do it successfully. You want to be a better husband, a better wife? You want to be a better child, a better parent? You want to be a better employer and employee? You want to overcome those habits that are a part of your life? You will never do it unless you understand this section of the Ephesians.

Now today, we aren't going to begin our verse by verse study of this paragraph. Lord willing we'll do that next week. But today what I want to do is make some general observations that will help us together see why this section is so important. You see, contained within these verses are several concepts that are absolutely crucial to understand if you're going to live a life of faith and a life of obedience to Christ.

Because Paul had lived with these people for close to three years and had served as their pastor, they already knew those foundational truths. And so he just jumps into the metaphor. But to help bring us up to speed before we begin to work our way through this passage, I want you to see, I want to sort of "uncover" the foundational concepts or ideas that underlie this entire passage. So let's look at them together, those foundational concepts that you need to understand if you're going to understand this passage. And you must understand this passage and apply it to live out the commands that we've studied in the rest of the book.

The first concept on which Paul builds this passage is this: Number one, the Christian life is war. The Christian life is war. Every moment of our Christian lives, we are locked in a life and death struggle with unseen spiritual forces.

Now, that hasn't always been true. It wasn't true before we were Christians. In fact, before we became Christians, before we repented and believed in Christ alone as our Lord and our Savior, we were in perfect lockstep with those forces. Look back in chapter 2. You remember how Paul described us before we came to Christ? Ephesians 2:1, "You were dead" to God. You were spiritually "dead in your trespasses," in your acts of rebellion and in your individual "sins, in which you formally walked." And as you walked through this "world," your lifestyle was "according to;" that is, in lockstep with the mindset of the age in which we lived.

In lockstep (Notice the second half of verse 2) with "the prince of the power of the air, [the prince] of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." He's talking about Satan. We studied that together. He says before you were a Christian, before I was a Christian, we were in lockstep with our prince, our king, and he was none other than Satan himself. But not only was he our prince and our king, our ruler, he was also our father.

So many passages in the New Testament makes this clear, but 1 John 3 comes to mind. Verse 8: "The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning."

He goes on to say in verse 10, "By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious." Everybody here this morning falls into one of those categories. You're either a child of God or you're a child of the devil. There's no neutrality. And he says, "Anyone who does not practice righteousness [as a habit of life] is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother." So there are those—and we were certainly described this way, we were children of the devil.

So, he was our prince, our ruler, our king, and our father, but now things have changed. As Paul says in Colossians 1:13, "For He [that is, God] rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son." So we changed kingdoms.

At the moment you came to Christ, you changed kingdoms, you changed kings, and you changed fathers. As Ephesians 1 makes it clear, every believer has been adopted by God. There was a radical change that took place. So our entire relationship to our previous ruler and king and father has changed. Whereas before we were in lockstep with him, now we are at war with him.

You see this change take place in Ephesians. Here in verse 2 of chapter 2, we were in lockstep with Satan. We were dead in sin. But go over to verse 27 of chapter 4, and now that we're in Christ, the devil is looking for an opportunity in our anger to trip us up, to make us fall, to attack us even through our anger. Go over to Ephesians 6: 11, and there you see the devil is scheming—we'll talk more about that next week—the devil is scheming against us. And in fact, down in verse 16, he's launching various flaming arrows at us in order to destroy our souls.

Things have changed. You are now in a war. Before, you were at war with God. Romans 5 makes that clear. And now we're at peace with God, and now we're at war with God's enemy, who was once our prince and our ruler and our father. Don't ever forget. If you're a Christian, right now, right now, you are at war with an invisible army of spiritual forces. And whether you think you are or not, the Bible says they're at war with you. So get used to that idea.

There's a second concept that weaves its way through this passage, that's foundational to our understanding this in exegeting this passage: Number two, we are in this war together. We are in this war together. In the original language, the verbs and pronouns throughout this paragraph are plural, addressed to all the Christians in the Ephesian church. Now obviously, the commands have to be obeyed individually. Every Christian has to obey this command. You have to put on your own armor. (Whatever that means, and we'll talk about what that means in the coming weeks.) No one else can put it on for you.

But here's where Christians often go astray. Because I have to put on my own armor, and because I have my own temptations and my own individual struggles to fight, it's easy, if I'm not careful, to start to think that the war is really between me and Satan. But that's to miss the whole point of the metaphor that Paul is using here of a soldier. Folks, there is no such thing as a war, in the real sense of that word, between two people! To have a war, you have to have nations and kingdoms and kings. So the picture here is not of an individual soldier fighting a lone battle against spiritual forces. Rather, the picture here is of each of us being a soldier, and together our being in the same army. We are a band of brothers.

That reference, of course, is to Stephen Ambrose's book, his true account of the soldiers in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne. He called them a "band of brothers." That those men survived the horrors of World War II, but also achieved victory there, is a tribute to their training. It's a tribute to their toughness, but most of all it's a tribute to their devotion to one another. They were a band of brothers. Ambrose borrows that title, that line, from a Shakespearean play, *Henry V*. You're probably familiar, if you've studied any Shakespeare at all, with that famous speech. It was on

Saint Crispin's Day. Henry Plantagenet makes this battlefield speech to his outnumbered, beleaguered men, sure to lose. This is what he said:

He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,  
Will stand a tip-toe when the day is nam'd,  
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.  
He that shall live this day, and see old age,  
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbors,  
And say "To-morrow is Saint Crispian."  
Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars,  
And say "These wounds I had on Crispin's day."

This story shall the good man teach his son;  
And Crispin Crispian shall never go by,  
From this day to the ending of the world,  
But we in it shall be remembered-  
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;  
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother.

That's the spirit behind this passage. God wants us to understand that we are partners in war. We are fellow soldiers. We battle a common enemy together. Lose that mindset, and you are sure to lose the war, to lose the battle, because Satan loves nothing better than to get a Christian alone. Because alone, we're more vulnerable, and we are open to attack and defeat. The point of this metaphor is we need each other. We're in the fight together.

There's a third foundational concept in this passage that you really have to grasp to get this passage: Thirdly, the war is between God and Satan. The war is between God and Satan. Understand this, Christian: the war in which we are engaged is bigger than our personal sins and struggles. It's the war of God versus the devil. It's not popular today. Only a small percentage of people in America believe in a personal devil, but if our Lord was not ashamed to own that reality, neither should we be. It's what the Bible teaches. It's true. There is a powerful, malevolent being who is out to be God's enemy and to destroy our souls.

The Bible makes it very clear how it all happened. Before God created the universe, He made the angels. The Old Testament tells us that the angels sang when God laid the foundation of the

world. At the end of the 6th day of creation in Genesis 1:31 Moses tells us that God saw everything He had made, including the angels, and He said it was all what? Very good. It's all very good.

But at some point between the end of the 6th day of creation and Genesis 3—and we don't know how long that time period was—but at some point in there, there was a rebellion in heaven. It was a rebellion that started in the heart of the most magnificent angel God created.

Look back in Ezekiel 28. The story is told here very specifically. Ezekiel 28. As Ezekiel is addressing the king of Tyre, he suddenly begins to talk about someone way beyond the king of Tyre. Notice in verse 13, he refers to him as being in Eden, the garden of God, with every precious stone as his covering. Verse 14, "You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. [And] you were on the holy mountain of God; [and] you walked in the midst of the stones of fire." Here is this being, who occupied the highest position in heaven. He was before the throne of God, guarding God's holiness. It's likely that Satan was the chief guardian of the majesty and holiness of God. Verse 15 says that he was a being of absolute, moral perfection: "You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created."

I love the description, and I've read it often, from Donald Barnhouse of this being: (quote)

He awoke in the first moment of his existence in the full orb'd beauty and power of his exalted position, surrounded by all the magnificence which God gave him. He saw himself as above all the hosts, in power, in wisdom, and in beauty. Only at the throne of God itself did he see more than he himself possessed. And it's possible that even that was in some sense was not fully visible to the eyes of the creature. Before his fall, he may be said to have occupied the role of prime minister for God, ruling possibly over the universe, but certainly over this world.

So what happened? Well, verse 15 of Ezekiel 28 is the only verse in the Bible that states exactly the origin of sin: "You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you." It was in the heart of Satan. Sin began with spontaneous generation in the heart of this magnificent creature God had made, the one to whom God had given so much power and so much authority and so much privilege.

Verses 16 and 17 go on to identify the nature of this sin that was in Satan's heart. Look at verse 16, "By the abundance of your trade you were internally filled with violence, and you sinned;



therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.”

What is this talking about, “the abundance of [his] trade”? The reference probably means that he used his position for his own personal ambition. As one writer describes it, “He trafficked in self-promotion.”

Verse 17 describes why: “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor.” His heart was lifted up with pride because of the beauty in which God had created him. There is the origin of sin; there is the essence of the battle. You see when this happened, Satan launched a rebellion.

If we had time, I’d take you to Revelation 12. In Revelation 12, it describes the fact that a third of the angels that God had created were influenced by this magnificent creature and followed him in his rebellion, and God cast them all out of heaven. Now, that third of those powerful creatures have become Satan’s angels, doing his will. We call them demons. Together, these powerful beings wage war against God their creator. You say why? I think John Milton had the answer right in his great poem, *Paradise Lost*, when he had Satan say this: “Better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven.”

Satan continues to wage war against God until this very day. It started back in the garden. Read Genesis 3. He comes, and what’s the first thing he says? Has God said? You will not surely die! And his assault continued in the ministry of Christ. You remember in the temptation in Matthew 4, he comes to Christ and launches his attacks at Christ. It continues today. Look at Ephesians 6:11. You’ve got the armor of God standing against the devil. The war continues. Christian, understand this: the struggle in which you are involved is so much bigger than you and your sins and your sin habits and your weaknesses. The struggle in which we are involved is between the two most powerful beings in the universe, and you and I are merely foot soldiers on one side or the other.

There’s a fourth concept we need to understand: the nature of the war is spiritual. The nature of the war is spiritual. Look at verse 12 of Ephesians 6. “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood.” It has nothing to do with the physical world. It’s not against people with flesh and blood; instead, it’s against these spiritual forces, rulers, powers, world forces of this darkness, spiritual beings of wickedness in the heavenly places. People are ultimately not the enemy we’re fighting. Now it’s true that people can be used as tools by Satan. So a particular temptation

might come to us through us a person, but that person is not the real enemy. That person is a victim, a slave of Satan.

And by the way, can I just say as an aside, this is the problem with so much Christian political activism, is it redefines who the enemy is. Listen, our enemies are not homosexuals. Our enemies are not abortion doctors. Our enemies are not Democrats or Republicans. They're all Satan's pawns, his victims, his slaves, just like we used to be, Titus 3 says. Remember who you used to be. No, the true enemy Jesus identifies in Matthew 13 when he says, the enemy is the devil.

Here's the important point we have to understand. If the battle is spiritual, then it happens where, in reference to us? It happens in the mind and heart. Let me show you this in several texts. Turn to Luke 22. Luke 22:31. This is near the death of our Lord, and He says to Peter in verse 31, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat." He wants to destroy you. Verse 32: "But I have prayed for you." Notice where the battle was going to be: "that your faith may not fail." It's what's going on in your mind and heart. That's where the battle is, Peter. Satan **isn't** going to attack you at your faith, in your mind and heart, and I prayed that it wouldn't fail and that when you've turned again you would strengthen your brothers.

Look over at Acts 5. This was true in the early church with Ananias and Sapphira. You remember that couple who sold a piece of property and lied about how much it was, wanted to look good? They wanted to act like they were giving everything, when in fact they kept some for themselves? There was no problem with keeping some for themselves, it was the lying about it. And in verse 3, Peter says to Ananias, "[But] Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart [*Satan* has filled your heart] to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back *some* of the price of the land?" You see where the battle was? It was a spiritual battle in Ananias' heart, in his mind.

Turn over to 2 Corinthians: 11. You see this again. Paul writes the Corinthians in verse 3 of 2 Corinthians 11: "I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve [There again, where's the battle? In the mind of Eve.] by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity *of devotion* to Christ."

Turn over to 2 Timothy:2, and you see this same theme. Second Timothy 2:24, speaking to leaders, he says, "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged." Now watch verse 25. Here's part of my role and the elder's roles as spiritual leaders, "with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may

grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, [that]... they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will."

Notice, the battle is in the mind. Satan has captured their minds, and the spiritual leader's role is to give them a knowledge of the truth to free them from that grasp. So the war we're fighting folks, is a spiritual war that happens in the mind.

Now that naturally comes to a fifth concept that you need to understand to follow Paul's teaching in Ephesians 6: Number five, the war between God and Satan is a battle of ideas and thoughts. The battle between God and Satan is a battle of ideas and thoughts. In other words, if, as we just learned, the war between God and Satan takes place in the minds of men, then the war has to primarily be a battle of thoughts and ideas.

You see that even here in Ephesians. Look at Ephesians 1. You remember we studied these passages. As we begin to sweep our way through, Paul's great concern is their thoughts, what's going on in their minds. So he prays for them in chapter 1, and he says in verse 17:

[I'm praying] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you [may] ... know what is the hope of His calling, ... the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and ... the surpassing greatness of His power.

The problem is in your *thoughts*. That's why the first half of this letter is all about what we *know*. You see this again over in chapter 4. He reminds us in verse 17 that when we were unbelievers, we walked in the futility of our minds, darkened in our understanding. Ignorance characterized us because of a hard heart. But instead, now we (verse 20) "learn Christ;" we've "been taught in Him." And verse 23, now we are going to be "renewed in the spirit of ... [our] mind[]" in the attitude, the grid through which we see the world. Our minds are going to be renewed.

Why is that important? Because the battle between God and Satan is one of ideas and thoughts. That's why, when you come to chapter 6, verse 17, we're to put on the "helmet of salvation." It protects our minds, our thinking, our thoughts. And what's the greatest weapon that we use in this battle? Verse 17 of chapter 6, "The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." It's God's thoughts and ideas against Satan's thoughts and ideas: one being true, and the other being false.

In fact, turn over to 2 Corinthians 10, and Paul makes this exact point. Second Corinthians 10: 3. He says:

"... we walk in the flesh, [That is, we're physical, we're human.] [but] we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh [They're not physical.], but [they're] divinely powerful, [Why? ] [because we're destroying]} ... fortresses. [What kind of fortresses? ] ... speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."

That's where the battle is. It's those fortresses of ideas and thoughts and speculations versus the truth of God. That's where the war happens.

Number 6, (And this builds on the previous one.) Every idea in the universe and every thought that goes through our minds, every idea and every thought can be traced either to God or to Satan. Every idea and every thought can be traced either to God or to Satan. Understand this: every idea that exists, every thought that passes through your mind, is either the truth, and can be traced ultimately back to God himself, or it is a lie and can be traced back to Satan.

Turn over to John 8. Our Lord makes this point. John 8. He gives us this contrast. He's talking with the Jews who don't believe in Him, and He says to them in John 8:40, "But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God...." [So here is the truth,] "You are doing the deeds of your father." They said to him, [wait a minute, we're] "... not born of fornication;" (There's an implied slam on Jesus being born of a virgin there.)

"We have one Father: [and that's] God." Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent me. Why do you not understand what I am saying? *It is* because you cannot hear My word. [Why is that?] You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and [he doesn't]... stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ... I speak the truth."

Now, do you see what's going on here? Jesus says, there are two streams, if you will. There is

the stream of truth, and there is the stream of lies. And if you follow those streams back, those streams end at two fountainheads. The stream of truth ends in God, and the stream of lies ends in Satan as its fountainhead. And that's it. Those are the only two streams. Those are the only two fountainheads.

Folks, it is absolutely crucial that you understand this. Every idea, every thought to which your mind is exposed, is a part of the war that is going on between God and Satan. There are no neutral ideas or thoughts. Let me say that again. There are no neutral ideas or thoughts. Every idea or thought ultimately goes back to its source, either to God or to Satan. It is either part of the truth, or it is part of the lie. So you have to be on your guard.

When you read a book or a magazine, you are exposed to ideas and thoughts. When you listen to music, you are exposed to ideas and thoughts. When you watch a TV program or you watch a movie, when you talk with your friends, or frankly, when you just sit and think about a situation on your own, every thought that enters your mind is either the truth that can be traced back to God, or it is a lie that can be traced back to Satan. That means we should never let any idea or any thought that comes into our mind go unchallenged or untested. What does God say? What does the Bible say? Folks, you're in a war. That thought, that idea that comes into your mind, may be from the enemy sent to distract you or to destroy you.

There's a seventh foundational concept: Christ forever defeated Satan and his demon army at the cross. Christ forever defeated Satan and his demon army at the cross. You see, the enemy we face is more powerful, more resourceful, more intelligent, than we are. That's the whole point Paul's making in Ephesians 6. We face a powerful, evil, conniving adversary. But here's the good news: Christ already won the war. The victory was promised all the way back in Eden in Genesis 3. He will crush the head of the serpent. The victory was accomplished at the cross.

Look over at Colossians 2. Colossians 2. He mentions, at the end of verse 14, the cross, and then he says about the cross, verse 15, "When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities [There are those demon powers.], He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him." [through His death.] The victory was accomplished at the cross.

First John 3 says, for this purpose the Son of God has come, that is, "to destroy the works of the devil." And He did it at the cross. And that victory that Christ accomplished at the cross will be finalized in the future.

I love the way Paul ends the book of Romans. In chapter 16 he says, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.” In Revelation 20 you can read about that, as God in the person of the second person of the Trinity throws Satan into the lake of fire and brimstone, where they are tormented day and night forever. Jesus won the war.

You say, well, I thought I was still in the war? After the Japanese formally surrendered at the end of World War II, (you've probably read or seen documentaries on the fact that) there were pockets of Japanese soldiers scattered all around the Pacific who didn't get the news that their leaders had surrendered, and so they continued to fight. So the allied forces had to continue to fight for weeks after the war. The enemy had been defeated, but there were mopping up operations that still had to be done.

That's exactly how it is with us as Christians. At the cross, our Lord defeated His enemies. The victory is secure. The outcome is certain. But for us who are on the front lines, we're still locked in a battle. And that battle will continue until Christ returns or until He calls us home. But the good news is, Jesus has defeated our enemy. That means He has the strength and the know how to do it.

And that brings us to the final concept that undergirds this passage: Number eight, our only hope of winning the war is the strength of Christ and the armor of God. Our only hope of winning the war is the strength of Christ and the armor of God. Look at verse 10: “Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.” Only with His strength will you be successful. Verse 11: “Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.” Only by using, not our armor, but God's armor, will we stand firm. It can happen. Christian, do you realize you're in a war?

You know, this week I was watching some of the episodes of Ken Burns' wonderful series on the Civil War. And as I watched that, I was struck with how strange it would be to have a war raging right here in America. Since the Civil War, course all of our wars have been elsewhere. But imagine what it would be like if the war against the Taliban or the Iraqis were being fought right here in North Texas. What if there were a foreign enemy, lurking squads and platoons and battalions everywhere? How would that change you? You'd always be on the alert, looking for every sign of danger. You'd never let your weapon get far away. You'd be constantly looking for the smallest threat. And if you left home, as you traveled you'd always be looking on the horizon for any sign of danger. And when you arrived home, you would carefully survey your house and inspect every door and every room. You'd always be on your guard.

That's exactly how it is spiritually. The enemy we're fighting doesn't come at us with guns and bayonets and tanks and airplanes. The enemy we're fighting is attacking us with ideas and thoughts. So stop acting like it's peace time. Like it or not, "you're in the army now." How can you gain the victory? Well, next week Paul will tell us how.

Let's pray together.

Father, forgive us for living in our comfortable world as if there were no battle raging. Forgive us for acting like we're safe and it's peace time. Father, open our eyes through this passage to see the reality that our souls are locked in a war with a powerful unseen enemy, attacking us with ideas and thoughts, seeking to destroy our souls. Father, teach what we need to learn from this passage. Make us strong in Christ. Help us to put on Your own armor, so that it'll protect us.

We thank You that our Lord has already won the war, and that all we're involved in is the mopping up operations. Father, keep us vigilant. Help us to take this passage to heart.

We pray in Jesus name, Amen.