

**The Book of Ephesians**  
**Learning to Use God's Armor, Part 7**  
**Ephesians 6:10-17**  
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I was thinking this week, as I was preparing to take us back into Ephesians 6, of how abrupt the transition is between what we were studying just a few weeks ago and what we are studying now. Think about it, just a few weeks ago we were studying marriage and family. But then, in his letter to the church in Ephesus, Paul makes an abrupt transition, really, a sort of shocking and disturbing transition, from peaceful homes and loving relationships to the battlefield and to war. Because that's the reality in which we live, the blending of the joys of marriage and family and the joys of life, and yet at the same time, we are in a battle for our souls.

John Stott writes these words, "We all wish we could spend our lives in undisturbed tranquility among our loved ones at home and in the fellowship of God's people. But the way of the escapist has been effectively blocked. Christians have to face the prospect of conflict with God's enemy and theirs. The peace which God has made through Christ's cross is to be experienced only in the midst of a relentless struggle against evil." That's just the reality. We are at war. We are on the battlefield every day, and we're studying a passage that calls us to prepare for that war.

Now in verse 11 of Ephesians 6 Paul identifies the enemy who has declared war against our souls. He simply says it is the devil. It's clear in the gospels that our Lord Jesus Christ affirmed the reality and personality of a true and real person called the devil. The Bible everywhere asserts that there is a galactic center of evil in the universe, and that center is in a real person called "Satan."

And "Satan" simply means "adversary," he is the adversary of our souls. He is our avowed enemy, and he is a formidable enemy. He has no morals. He has no code of conduct. He has no sense of what is right and honorable. He is utterly unscrupulous. He is sadistically ruthless. In the war for our souls, Satan and his forces practice no Geneva Convention rules of war. He loves nothing that is good, and he absolutely attracts to everything that is evil and dirty and wicked. In fact, honestly for us, even unbelievers who still bear the imprint of the image of God, who still

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bear some of the residual effects of that image, it's hard for us even to imagine a person of such evil.

But if you could somehow imagine a person who is an unholy mixture of the most evil people who have ever lived, if you could somehow combine the negative qualities and the evil of rulers like Attila the Hun and Machiavelli and Adolph Hitler, if you could put in the evil mind of criminals like Jeffrey Dahmer who killed and cannibalized his victims., if you could put in men like the German doctor in Auschwitz, Joseph Mengele, who killed and tortured the innocent for pure pleasure, terrorists like those who flew their planes into the World Trade Towers delighting in killing innocent people. And then if you could roll all of those evil traits into one person and somehow remove the last vestiges of the image of God, even the smallest hint of good, the smallest hint of justice, the smallest hint of mercy and grace so that there is nothing left but the absolute darkest of evil, then you would begin to have a picture of the adversary of our souls.

He was originally the greatest of God's creation. He was the prime minister of heaven. In fact, he's called the covering cherub. He was the being responsible for guarding the very holiness of God. But the Bible tells us that he rebelled against God his Creator, and now he has so radically changed, that he is the absolute antithesis of everything he once was. In Scripture, this real person is called Satan, the devil, Beelzebub, Belial, the dragon, the great dragon, the serpent, the enemy, the prince of the power of the air, the ruler of the demons, the ruler of this world, the tempter, our adversary, the enemy, the god of this age, the wicked one.

He is described as being proud and powerful and wicked and cynical and a slanderer, an accuser, he's crafty and subtle and devious and deceitful. He is fierce and cruel. He is a liar, and he is a murderer. He is compared, to try to help us glimpse something of who he is. He is compared to carrion birds, to a wolf, to a roaring lion, to a dragon, and to a snake. It's as if the writers of Scripture are scraping the barrels of our imagination to try to come up with the most loathsome things we can imagine to picture this person who is our enemy. And this real person the Bible called Satan, our adversary, constantly, relentlessly wars against us. That is what our Lord Jesus Christ taught. And if we're going to spiritually survive, we must be equipped and prepared for the battle. In Ephesians 6 Paul prepares each of us for this battle.

Let me read for you just a portion of Ephesians 6 beginning in verse 10. The paragraph we're studying begins in verse 10 and runs down through verse 20. Let me just read you the first section.

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.

The theme of this entire paragraph, the verses I read, and running all the way down through verse 20, is this, we are in a war. The Christian life is war. And we can only stand firm in the strength of Christ and with the armor of God. As Paul develops that theme in these 11 verses, he really divides the theme into three parts. In verses 10 through 13 there's kind of a general explanation of our duty. In verses 14 - 17, he gives us a detailed explanation of the armor that we're to put on, piece-by-piece. And then in the third section verses 18 20, there he describes a proper mindset or a proper attitude toward this battle that we're in.

So, we're looking at just the first part of these 11 verses, the verses 10 - 13 where we learn that if we're going to stand firm in the war that is the Christian life, we must understand our orders. We must understand generally what our duty is. Verse 10 gives us the overarching command. "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." How? Verse 11. "Put on the full armor of God." Why? Verse 11 continues, here's the objective, "so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil."

Paul is talking as we've learned primarily about Satan's military tactics, his strategies. And we've examined those strategies against believers carefully. We've learned that while his attacks are varied, we can reduce them to three primary strategies Satan has with believers. Number one, he attacks the Word of God. He attacks its truthfulness, he attacks its sufficiency, he attacks our obedience to it, he attacks the Word of God with error and disobedience and whatever way he can.

Number two, he intimidates with fear and persecution. And number three, he seduces with personal temptations. He does that through a world system that he's created that just sort of runs and throws out its temptations against us. He does that through personally tailored circumstances designed to appeal to our own lusts as we saw last week. He also does it by trying to turn our trials into temptations to sin. We are to stand firm, to hold our ground against those strategies and tactics of Satan. So, we've studied the overarching command, be strengthened

with Christ's own power by putting on God's armor, the objective to stand firm against Satan's tactics. Today we come to verse 12, and here we have, as he continues to explain our orders, the nature of the warfare in which we are engaged, the nature of the warfare. You see the approach to warfare; the approaches and methodologies of war change over time. Many wars have been lost because the super power at that time is still holding on to the old methods, the old strategies.

Perhaps the most graphic illustration of that in my own mind, we've all seen the pictures, we've all read the accounts of in the Revolutionary War of the British soldiers all dressed prim and proper in their red coats marching in a line as the colonists lay behind stone walls and shoot at them. They were still practicing the old style of war, and it got them defeated, and it got many of them killed. We see that even in our wars over in Afghanistan and Iraq the commanders have repeatedly told us, this is a different kind of war. We have to fight differently with new strategies.

So, if we're going to be successful in our spiritual war, we had better know the nature of the war in which we are engaged. And he tells us that in verse 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."

Now, first of all, notice the connection between this verse and what comes before. It's tied together by that little but important word "for," because. Paul is about to give us another reason we must have Jesus' strength and God's armor to win this war. It's because of the nature of the war in which we are engaged. And then he proceeds in verse 12 to define what the nature of this war is.

First of all, notice that the nature of the war in which we are fighting is universal. It's universal. That is, it includes everyone. Notice in verses 10 and 11 the verbs and nouns and the understood commands are in the second person plural. You, meaning all of you Christians listening to this letter read in the church in Ephesus. He's talking to all of us. Then in verse 12 he changes, at the beginning of the verse to the first-person plural; the first-person plural "our," no longer "you," but "our struggle."

Now, I don't know if you remember or not, but Paul does this one other time as we've worked our way through Ephesians. He did it back in chapter 2. You remember he started out by saying "you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you formerly walked." But then he gets down to developing that, and he wants to include himself, and so he says, "we all formally live

like this.” That’s what he’s doing here. Why? Because Paul wants to make a point that all Christians are included. It wasn’t just the Christians in Ephesus listening to this letter read. It isn’t just the lay people of the church in all eras in time. Paul includes himself, we, all of us, our struggle. Paul is saying all of us; every Christian, without exception, is in this battle.

Now this is really important for us to understand because do you feel like you’re in a battle? Many people don’t. Many genuine Christians really don’t think they’re in a war. They think they’re just living life, and all of their problems come from their own sinful fallen hearts and everything’s good, and we’re just having a good time. Listen, Paul wants you to know that regardless of how old you are or young you are, regardless of how long or short a time you’ve been a Christian, how immature or mature you are, how much Bible you know or how little Bible you know, if you’re a Christian, you are in this war. You’re included, whether you like it or not, whether you feel like it or not, whether you think you’re in a war or not. It’s universal, “our struggle.”

Secondly, the nature of the war is not only universal, it is personal, it’s personal. Look again at verse 12. “Our struggle.” Now that is a very interesting Greek word that’s translated struggle. It was the normal Greek word for wrestling. In fact, those of you who grew up using the King James Version, it actually translates it that way, “for we wrestle not against flesh and blood.” That’s what the word means. It was used for Greco Roman wrestling. And Paul uses this word because that kind of wrestling was one of the most popular games in the games that were held in Asia Minor where the church in Ephesus was located, that region.

Now, I don’t know a lot about wrestling. I did a little bit in high school. I did some intramural wrestling. I actually enjoyed, the competitive side of me enjoyed wrestling. But I found out pretty soon that I wasn’t physically cut out for wrestling. Because, well I have a nose that sticks out a little ways. God made me that way. I’m happy with it, content with it. But it got in the way in wrestling because it stuck out a little too far. And every wrestling match, whether I won or lost, it seemed like I got a bloody nose, and so I finally gave up. But during my brief wrestling career, there was one thing I discovered about wrestling, it is by far the most intensely personal sport I have ever participated in. It is.

And that’s why Paul uses this word here. In fact, when this word “wrestling” is used in a military context in ancient Greek, it’s used of hand-to-hand combat. Now war has changed over time. We live in an era when a soldier can sit in a ship hundreds of miles away from the target and guide a bomb to its destination. He can be safe behind his own lines and remotely control an

unmanned drone to direct the missile to its target, to direct ammunition to its target. Don't misunderstand me, I know that even in today's war there's much hand-to-hand fighting. I'm saying the nature of war, as a whole, has shifted because the soldier today even when it's mano y mano, often it is a soldier using a rifle that can strike an enemy up to a mile and a half away.

Rome wasn't like that. They did have a few weapons that could devastate and kill at a distance, but for the most part those weapons were for intimidation. They weren't very accurate. So, to achieve victory in the Roman army, it meant eventually there had to be hand-to-hand combat. So, a great deal of the training of a Roman soldier was for intense personal hand-to-hand combat – wrestling with the enemy. That's why Paul uses this word here.

Paul chooses a word that pictures hand-to-hand combat because he wants us to know that Satan and his demons are not at a distance shooting long range missiles at us. The spiritual battle in which you and I are engaged every day, the battle with error and the battle with temptation, is intensely personal, and it can best be described as hand-to-hand combat, intensely personal.

You say, how? I don't really sense Satan's presence. I don't sense his demons' presence in my life. Remember what we learned when we first started this series? That the war between God and Satan is fought where? Right here in the mind of men. Every thought that ever comes to your mind is either truth and has its origin in God, or it is error and has its origin in Satan. Every single thought that ever passes through your mind. There are no neutral thoughts. That battle is being waged constantly, and it is intensely personal because it happens inside your own mind, and it's like hand-to-hand combat, it's like wrestling with the thoughts. That's why Paul uses this metaphor of hand-to-hand combat. Our struggle is intensely personal, so much so that it takes place in our own minds.

Thirdly, the nature of our warfare is not only universal, not only personal, it is spiritual. Look at verse 12 again, "our struggle is not against flesh and blood." It's not against beings made with flesh and blood. In other words, we're not fighting humans. Now, this is so important to understand. Because most of the attacks Satan brings against us come from people. But when people attack the truth, when people try to intimidate us with fear and persecution, when people are a source of temptation in our lives, when people champion Satan's agenda, ultimately, they are not the ones we're fighting. You have to keep that in mind. They are not the enemy. It's so important to understand this.

And I think for most Christians, they go astray particularly in the areas of moral and political issues of our time, like abortion and homosexuality. Most Christians have a hard time keeping this passage in mind when it comes to those, sort of inflammatory, and rightfully so, issues. They have a hard time keeping the focus on the sin and the sinful issue. And pretty soon the people who practice the sin, or the people who champion it, become the enemy. Folks, when that happens, Satan has won because the very people whom we're supposed to be rescuing from Satan now become the targets of our ammunition. Those who are supposed to be our mission field become our enemies.

Listen, our warfare is not against flesh and blood, it's not against people. Satan may use, in fact he does use people, but always they are human shields to Satan. They are his line of defense. They are his pawns to accomplish his purposes. Our battle is not against flesh and blood ever. It is against Satan and his forces. It is spiritual.

Fourthly, the nature of our warfare is supernatural, supernatural. He says "for our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but" [and he uses a strong adversative in the Greek language. But, on the other hand, on the contrary side,] "it is against rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness." In other words it is against powerful intelligent spirit beings. Now, we've already learned that our chief enemy is the devil.

Look back in verse 11. He mentions the devil. In Matthew 13 when Jesus is talking about the parable of the tares and remember the enemy sows the seed in the field, and the tares and the wheat grow up together. That's basically sowing unbelievers into a bunch of believers so that it confuses everyone, and it makes the world say if believers look like that, I don't want to be a Christian and so forth.

What does Christ say? He says the enemy who did this is the devil. That's the enemy. But, and this is so important to understand, the devil is not omnipresent. The devil is not God. You know, I think when a lot of Christians think about the devil and God, they almost have a dualistic view, that they're not exactly equal. I mean God is, after all, just a little more powerful, but it's almost dualism in which God and Satan are at odds.

Listen to me, God created all things. We read this morning, Jesus Christ created all things. He has Satan under control. Satan has to show up in God's presence according to Job 1 and ask His permission to do anything. He is, as Luther called him, God's devil. It's as if God has Satan on a leash, like a dog. So, don't for a moment think that it's the sort of dualistic battle for the

universe. Yes, Satan is God's enemy. But he is a created being, and if God, and when God chooses, his resistance will be over in a moment.

But, Satan exists to battle God. But he's not like God. He's not omnipresent. He can't be everywhere at one time. In fact, in Job 1:7, you remember when he shows up there in the beginning of the book of Job, God says to him, "from where do you come?" You've been in one place, and now you're here in My presence. Where did you come from? "And Satan answered the Lord and said, 'from roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.'" Satan can only be in one place at one time.

So how is it then that Satan carries out his tactics across the globe in the life of every Christian. He does it through literally an army of spirit beings that help imitate God's omnipresence. In other words, they become his hands and feet to be everywhere even though he cannot be.

In Scripture Satan often does personally confront great men like Job and David and Paul and Peter. But most of us may never have to deal personally with the devil. We're just not that important. Instead, we have to deal with his subordinates. And that's what Paul is saying here. That's the group verse 12 describes. The Bible identifies these intelligent powerful beings as demons. They were once angels, once holy angels. But they are now fallen and evil. And there are many of them.

Hebrews 12 tells us that there are myriads of holy angels, and according to Revelation 12:4, when Satan rebelled, he led a rebellion of a third of the angels. In fact, in Revelation 12 they're called his angels, Satan's angels. And now these spiritual beings follow him and seek to advance his agenda in the world. So, our fight folks, is not against people. It's against these supernatural beings called Satan's angels or demons. They are merely holy angels who chose to follow Satan's rebellion and now answer to him and who try to advance his agenda in the world.

So, our warfare then is universal, it's personal, it's spiritual, and it's supernatural. It's also hierarchical. My wife laughed at that word. That's a good word. I use that word all the time. It's hierarchical. That is, there's a hierarchy, it's carefully organized and structured. Notice verse 12 again. "... 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*."



Listen, Satan is not an original thinker. Satan is an imitator. In the holy angels, the Bible tells us that there is a hierarchy, there is an ordered structure, a chain of command. For example, we're told about Michael the Archangel. There are angels over other angels. There are angels with more power and responsibility and authority. In the same way, Satan's army has a carefully ordered structure. And verse 12 gives us just a glimpse into the hierarchy of Satan's hoard of fallen angels.

Now, it is impossible, and frankly unnecessary, to uncover the identity and the job description of each of these categories. In fact, this isn't even a complete list. In other places different names are used of this chain of command. So, this isn't a comprehensive structure of the demonic chain of command. What it does reflect for us, however, is the reality that in Satan's kingdom there are various ranks and duties. These titles represent different levels of authority among those who carry out Satan's wishes.

Now the first two of them, notice in verse 12, "rulers, and powers." Those two words occur together some ten times in the New Testament and always in that same order. Sometimes they're used of human authorities, sometimes they're used of holy angels and their authority, and other times as here they're used of demonic authorities, Satan's demons. Now, notice first of all there are "rulers." This word always speaks of primacy, of first place in rank. These are the demonic rulers at the very top of Satan's food chain. These are his generals. These are his board of directors. These are those who carry out his wishes, his immediate reporting relationships; "rulers."

The second word is "powers." This same word occurs back in chapter 1 verse 21 where it's translated authority. It describes somebody who has authority. Somebody who has authority to make decisions who has freedom to act. These are demonic beings who are underneath those who have first place, the "rulers," but they're in a position of authority with a right to act and the right to make decisions. The third order that's given here is "world forces of this darkness." Literally the Greek word is "cosmocrats," cosmocrats. Cosmos or cosmos – "world," crat as in autocrat or democracy that is the "rule." So, it is a "world ruler." A "cosmocrat." They are "world rulers." That is the extent of their influence.

I think F. F. Bruce might be right when he says these may be the kinds of beings, that in the book of Daniel, you remember that there is a report there of two evil princes, spiritual princes, the prince of Persia and the prince of Greece, who prohibited one of God's holy angels from his mission. It may be that that's what is meant here by "world rulers." In other words, these are

part of Satan's leadership who oversee regions or empires or countries. We can't be sure. But notice, they rule over a world system of darkness; the darkness of sin, the darkness of error, the darkness of evil of every kind.

Now the last group that's listed in verse 12 is not really a separate category, sort of another category down the chain of command, instead it is a comprehensive expression of all of Satan's forces. That last expression, notice, "the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*." You see the word forces is in italics. The idea here is the spiritual beings of wickedness in the heavenly places. It's all-encompassing. Forces in the sense of "armies" is the idea. There are armies of spirit beings whose essential character is wickedness and who inhabit the atmosphere surrounding our planet and who influence the people on it. We are in war Paul says, locked in hand-to-hand combat with a vast demonic army with a carefully defined and disciplined chain of command. That's the nature of the war in which we are engaged.

Now, the last thing Paul does before he gets to the armor itself is sort of summarize our orders. He's given us our orders in somewhat detail, and now he goes back in verse 13 and looks at all that he said again and sort catches it all up together in a summary. Look at verse 13, "therefore," [in light of Satan's objective to destroy us, in light of Satan's schemes, in light of this vast army of forces arrayed against us, in light of the fact that our struggle is not against people but against powerful spiritual beings controlled by Satan and using his tactics,] "Therefore take up." Now, "take up," [this Greek word is often used of picking up weapons. It's what he's saying.] "Take up," [It's equivalent to the command back in verse 11 to put on. And he says] "take up the full armor of God."

Now, I'm going to get into this a little more next week. But let me just mention here that the stress when "the full armor of God," is not on the word "full," as if the really important thing is to make sure you get all of the pieces. That's not the point. The stress is on the fact that it is the "armor of God" you need to take up. As opposed to thinking your own defenses are enough, as opposed to thinking that you can handle this on your own, "Take up the full armor of God so that you may be able to resist...."

The word "resist" is a word that's in the same family, the same sense as "stand firm." It means in a military sense to make a stand, to hold your ground, to withstand the enemy, to ward off their attack. He says I want you to take the full armor of God, that is take the armor of God as opposed to your own strength that you may have the power to resist or the power to stand firm in the evil day. What's that?

Well, Paul describes all of the time in which we live as days are evil, he says. So, in one sense every day is evil because we live in a world that's fallen and control that lies in the lap of the wicked one as the Apostle John says. But here he says "in the evil day." He probably is talking about those critical moments in all of our lives when we are especially under Satan's attack, either by error, his attack on the Word of God, or by fear and persecution, or by temptation. He says I want you to stand in the evil day. I want you to "be able to stand firm," to hold your ground. "and having done everything," [that is having made all the preparation that I'm about to describe to you,] "to stand firm," [to hold your ground to resist Satan's attacks, to turn back his schemes.]

Now, all of that takes us back to verse 10. Because we can stand firm only when we are made strong with Christ's own strength, in the outworking, verse 10 says, of His own inherent power. What is the big point Paul is trying to make in verses 10 - 13? I don't want you to miss this, listen carefully. In verses 10 - 13 Paul is saying essentially one thing, and it's this. The enemy that we are fighting every day in close hand-to-hand combat, specifically in our minds and thoughts, is too powerful for us. That's his point.

Unfortunately, that's exactly the opposite of what most Christians think. Sadly, most Christians think that the Christian life is all a matter of my will power, my decisions, and my expending the right amount of human effort. If I'll just work harder at it, then I'll be a better Christian. Listen, if you think you can fight this war on your own, you are sadly mistaken.

John Calvin writing on this section of Scripture says,

"Our difficulties are far greater than if we had to fight against men, for our enemies are such as no human power can withstand."

Did you get that? No human power. I'm not able to stand against this. You're not able to stand against this. That's Paul's point. He's trying to bring us to the point of realizing, my own resources won't cut it. I will lose every time. Error attacks through Satan's strategy. Every time fear and persecution attack. Every time temptation attacks, I will lose. I'm up against an enemy I can't beat on my own.

This past week I got a flier for an event here in the Metroplex for Promise Keepers. I got to thinking about that movement for men, and of course it's well intentioned, and I know some men have been helped by it. But as I was thinking about that, that whole idea of our being promise

keepers, I was thinking about this passage. Listen our problems are so much greater than our own resolve, our own will power, our own promises can overcome. That's what Paul wants us to understand. We are by nature promise breakers, and then add to that, that there is this amazing attack from a formidable relentless enemy trying to get us to sin, trying to destroy our souls, and we are in an impossible situation. So how in the world can we stand? That's where Paul wants you to be after verses 10 - 13.

Here's the good news. Satan's evil invisible army is no match for Jesus Christ. That's the point. Look at Colossians 1, we read it this morning. Did you notice this verse, Colossians 1:16, "For by Him" [That is Jesus Christ] "all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions," [Or here're our words] "whether rulers or authorities--"

Notice he doesn't say whether he's talking about human authorities or whether he's talking about angelic authorities or whether he's talking about demonic authorities. You know why? Because it doesn't matter. They're all included. There's no group left out. He created them all. Jesus Christ created Lucifer the prime minister of heaven. He created him perfectly, but He created him, He spoke him into existence, and he was created by Him and for Him. Ultimately our Lord Jesus Christ will get the glory from Satan's defeat.

Now look over in chapter 2 of Colossians, verse 13, "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh," [When you were pursuing your sin, alien to God, God] "made you alive together with Him," [There's regeneration, there's new life breathed into us] "having forgiven us all our transgressions," [All our acts of rebellion, how could he do that? Verse 14 tells us how.] "having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us;"

What is that? Listen, every moment you lived you had a conscience that was telling you God's law. Romans 2 says the substance of the law is written on every man's heart. You had a conscience that was telling you, "thou shalt, thou shalt not." That was telling you, you must love God with all your heart, you must love your neighbor as yourself.

And yet you and I constantly sinned against that. We owed God obedience, and instead we gave Him none. We had a huge debt that we had built with God. Verse 14 says, in the cross Jesus cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of those decrees against us. He cancelled it out.

He wrote paid in full across it. The debt that you and I had accumulated, He paid. And it was hostile to us. And He's taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. I love that. In the ancient world, in the first century, when they crucified a person, when the Romans crucified someone, they nailed to his cross a list of the crimes against him. Jesus didn't have any crimes, there was no crime on the cross except this is the King of the Jews. What God nailed to the cross was a list of your crimes.

But God did something else at the cross in Christ, verse 15. "When Christ had disarmed the rulers and authorities," same group. We're talking about Satan's demons. He disarmed the rulers and authorities at the cross. He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through either Him or through the cross – through Christ or the cross. Here's the point, when a victorious Roman general marched back into Rome after having beaten his enemies, in his train were the defeated.

That's what happened at the cross. What looked like the darkest moment of the life of Jesus Christ was in fact His most victorious? And at the cross, it's as if Satan and all of his powers and all of his demon hoards were in Christ's defeated train, they'd been beaten. Christ has already proven the armor that we're supposed to put on, it works. At the cross He defeated all of His enemies and ours, and if we live in the power of His victory, if we put on His armor, His strength, then we can stand.

I love the way John Gerstner, an American theologian, who's now with the Lord, really the one who trained R. C. Sproul. Gerstner writes this, "That Adam in all his pristine glory, made in the spotless image of God with holiness, righteousness, and knowledge, was able to be brought to ruin by satanic temptation proved that we never of ourselves are able not to sin."

Think about it. Adam had every conceivable advantage. He was perfect. He walked with Jesus Christ in the cool of the garden every day. There was no sin anywhere to be seen. There were no temptations except the one brought against them though Eve, through the serpent and Eve. And yet he fell. Listen, if a perfect man in a perfect place can't defeat Satan, what gives you the thought or me the thought that we can? That's the point Gerstner is making. Now listen to what he says.

"But no matter how weak our faith, how meager our discipleship, how much we shame the name of Christ and have so often to repent and turn home again, no matter how we fail, because we are united to Christ with a love which will never

let us go, Satan with all his craft and power cannot stand against us, and we can conquer him. Even in our best condition we cannot meet Satan. But in our weakened and debilitated state, sinning far more than we live victoriously, we are able to conquer him because Christ has given us the victory.”

That’s the point. You will never defeat Satan on your own. It’s too great a force against our souls. His temptation and his persecution and the fear he brings and the error he brings subtly into our lives, you can never do it. But in Christ and in His strength, you can.

It’s like Martin Luther’s great hymn,

“for still our ancient foe does seek to work us woe, his craft and power are great and armed with cruel hate on earth is not his equal.” [Luther goes on to say,] “did we in our own strength confide? Our striving would be losing were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God’s own choosing. Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He. Lord Sabaoth.” [Lord of armies is that word,] “Lord of armies is His name from age to age the same. And He must win the battle.”

Christ makes us able to stand by giving us His own strength, but listen carefully. His victory, His strength does not automatically become yours simply because you’re a Christian. That’s what Paul says in Ephesians 6. How can we have Christ’s own strength to stand against this onslaught? By putting on the armor of God. Next week, we will really discover what that armor is.

Let’s pray together.

Father, thank You for the reminder that we are not capable of dealing with Satan, that we are not capable of standing in this war against the enemy of our souls.

Father, I pray for many of us that You would wake us up to the reality that we are at war. Because we fight an unseen enemy, Lord, it’s so easy for us to be lulled to sleep, to forget, to think that our only problem is our own sinful hearts and to forget that we have an enemy outside of us. Father, remind us of this passage even this week. Bring our hearts back to the truth that Your word describes.

And then Father, remind us that we are totally insufficient in ourselves. That we don't have the resources to win this battle. And Father, thank You that in the strength of our Lord Jesus Christ who has already proven the very armor we're commanded to wear, we can be victorious.

Father, I pray in the weeks ahead You would teach us how to put on our Lord Jesus Christ in whose name we pray, Amen.