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Sermon Notes

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## **A Call to Christian Warfare**

### **Ephesians 6:10-13**

This morning, I want to **ALARM** you... to stir you to vigorous, passionate action to **DEFEND YOURSELVES** against an enemy that seeks your very lives

I want to act as a spiritual **PAUL REVERE**, riding through the night crying out “The British are coming! The British are coming!” rousing the sleeping militia to arm themselves and be ready for the battle that will soon be upon them!

Too many American Christians are lying comfortably in a bed of ease when a powerful enemy is invading their homeland and seeking to slaughter them and take from them everything they value on earth

The problem is that the **ENEMY IS INVISIBLE**, and therefore **UNDERESTIMATED!** Too many American Christians act like pagan materialists, scientific skeptics when it comes to the spiritual world of angels and demons;

they don't ever think when they are sick that it might very well be a Satanic assault on them; they don't consider how many of their dark thoughts are actually flaming arrows of the Evil One; they don't understand how their moods of depression, and periods of doubt, and attraction to lusts and evil things that they hate are caused by invisible spiritual attack; they underestimate the **WARFARE** for which they must prepare

There is a story in the Old Testament about the mighty prophet Elisha, who asked God to open the eyes of his servant to see the **ANGELIC ARMY** that was protecting him.

But this morning, I want to ask the Lord to open your eyes to see the vast Satanic army that is daily assaulting the church of Jesus Christ! I want the Lord to **OPEN THE EYES OF YOUR HEART** to the daily assaults of Satan

and his demons on your soul... and to urge you to FIGHT as the Apostle Paul commands here in this amazing chapter

I want you to see the vast power of the King of the Kingdom of the Air

***Ephesians 2:2 ... prince of the power of the air***

I do believe all of us underestimate the POWER OF THE AIR... because it is invisible...

Orville and Wilbur Wright could never have dreamed that airplanes as big as the military now sends into the air could have taken off... the C-5M Super Galaxy military transport aircraft, can take off with a maximum weight of 381 tons!!! How does such a massively heavy airplane LIFT OFF FROM THE EARTH? The cumulative power of the AIR... air molecules battering the underside of the wing, giving it sufficient lift to counteract gravity

Satan rules a “kingdom of the air”... angels are called winds and flames of fire... Satan is constantly assaulting the souls of every Christian that walks the face of the earth

And you MUST FIGHT!!!

***Ephesians 6:10-13 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.***

***<sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. <sup>13</sup> Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.***

I. Our Spiritual Warfare is Real

A. “Our Struggle”

***Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.***

1. If you are a Christian, you are AT WAR!
2. You may not realize it, but you are in constant danger
3. The word: WRESTLE...

*<sup>KJV</sup> Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

- a. Picture a vicious HAND TO HAND COMBAT!
  - b. Two men locked in a death grip, each struggling to kill each other; truce is impossible... one or both of them will be dead when it is over
  - c. It is WAR, and the enemy intends your destruction
4. The Word of God alone can teach us of our INVISIBLE SPIRITUAL WARFARE!!

*1 Timothy 6:12 Fight the good fight of the faith.*

#### B. The “Spiritual” Nature of this Warfare

1. This warfare is not like physical warfare... it is fought in the SPIRITUAL REALM with SPIRITUAL WEAPONS
2. Paul’s clear assertion

*Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

3. “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood”
  - a. That is to say... HUMAN BEINGS
  - b. Paul is not denying that human beings WILL oppose the Kingdom of Christ
  - c. Paul knew better than anyone how vigorously the “rulers of this age” will oppose the spread of the gospel

- d. Paul struggled mightily against Jewish leaders in the synagogues who hated Christ and persecuted him from town to town
  - e. Paul struggled vigorously against pagan idol-makers in Ephesus who started a riot because his preaching was hurting the sales of their silver shrines to Artemis
  - f. Paul was eventually executed by Caesar in Rome...
  - g. So... Paul had a TON of human enemies who hated him and wanted him dead
  - h. BUT behind those human enemies, Paul saw Satan's dark kingdom... the demons were inciting these human beings to HATE Christ and FIGHT Paul
  - i. And Paul knew very well from his own conversion, the BITTEREST HUMAN ENEMY of Christ can in an instant be converted and transformed to the greatest friend in Christ you ever had...
  - j. That is the very thing Paul saw happen in his own life
  - k. Paul is really saying "OUR STRUGGLE IS NOT **ONLY** or **ULTIMATELY** AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD
4. So... as we see gay rights activists and pro-abortion zealots, and racists, and ISIS terrorists, and mocking atheistic scientists, and indifferent materialistic American neighbors... we have to see behind their opposition to the gospel... it is the **SPIRITUAL FORCES OF EVIL IN THE HEAVENLY REALMS** that are our true opponents
5. What is "spiritual warfare"?
- a. Paul speaks of **FLAMING ARROWS** shot by the Evil One
  - b. He says the "shield of faith" can extinguish every one of those "flaming arrows"
  - c. But "faith" operates in the invisible world, dealing with unseen things

- d. So the weapons of our warfare are spiritual, invisible, having to do with TRUTHS

***2 Corinthians 10:3-5 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. <sup>4</sup> The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. <sup>5</sup> We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.***

- e. The “Spiritual” warfare we fight has to do with ideas, thoughts, doctrines, feelings, intentions, lusts, temptations, doubts, fears
- f. In some mysterious way, Satan the his demons can insinuate thoughts and desires into our minds
- g. But all of it is only SPIRITUALLY DISCERNED... only if we are aware of it can we prepare ourselves and fight properly

Illus. Like “air pressure” itself... at every moment of our existence, approximately 14.7 pounds per square inch of air pressure is pushing on our skin... on our eardrums, on our eyes and fingers and legs... we are so used to it that we barely notice... but if we go up in an airplane and the cabin pressure hasn’t stabilized, our ears will begin to pop. So it is with the invisible, spiritual realm around us all the time... SO USED TO IT

If for one day the demons were entirely removed from our experience, it would feel like the greatest day we’ve ever had in our lives as Christians!! We would hardly be able to express how good we felt.

This is the SPIRITUAL NATURE of the warfare... it is invisible and fought with spiritual weapons

II. Our Spiritual Enemy is Relentless

***Ephesians 6:11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.***

## A. Your Enemy, the Devil

1. Just as you have a personal Savior, so you have a personal enemy...

***1 Peter 5:8-9 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, standing firm in the faith***

- a. A terrifying thought!! A personal enemy, that is plotting and scheming and working to bring you utter misery, pain, torture and death
- b. Jesus Christ fought the devil throughout his life
  - i) Revelation 12 implies that the devil was waiting for his birth so he could devour him the moment he was born... King Herod sought to kill the BOY BABIES IN BETHLEHEM
  - ii) When Jesus began his public ministry, he was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert to be tempted for forty days by the devil...
  - iii) Jesus fought Satan every step of his miraculous ministry... driving out demons was a destruction of Satan's Kingdom
  - iv) Satan tempted Jesus through Peter to not go to the cross...
  - v) Then Satan entered Judas to lead him to betray Jesus to the authorities
  - vi) At the Cross, Jesus Christ destroyed the devil and his kingdom...

***Hebrews 2:14-15 by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-- that is, the devil-- <sup>15</sup> and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.***

vii) Satan is a defeated foe... BUT still very powerful!!

2. Who is the devil?

- a. Created by God as the foremost of his angels... magnificent in beauty and splendor, awesome in power and intellect; quite possibly the most powerful single creation God ever made
- b. Became enamored with his own glory and attempted to overthrow God... to ascend to the heights of heavenly glory and take God's throne
- c. He coopted 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the angels in heaven in his attempt to topple Almighty God; the Archangel Michael and his army of good angels defeated Satan and hurled him and his angels (called demons) to the earth
- d. Satan hijacked a serpent and made it speak the alluring words of temptation to Eve and to Adam at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil... in that way, Satan lured the human race into his anti-God rebellion and into Satan's future punishment... the ETERNAL FIRE OF HELL
- e. Throughout human history Satan has opposed the people of God; hating them, he tempts them to do evil and then accuses them of the very evil he lured them to do
- f. The word "Satan" itself in the Hebrew means "accuser"... as in a court trial
- g. He is also pictured as a Dragon... a powerful, flying, fire-breathing monster... but this is just to show his rage and power
- h. For he usually masquerades as an ANGEL OF LIGHT... very appealing and attractive... CULTS, FALSE TEACHERS
- i. He crafted the world system with its various snares and traps and lures... he invented every FALSE RELIGION and ATHEISTIC PHILOSOPHY in the world... he is exceptionally intelligent and devious

3. Satan's power is vastly, immeasurably greater than ours

B. The Devil's Kingdom: Rulers, Authorities, Powers, Forces

***Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this***

***dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.***

1. The devil reigns over a vast, dark kingdom that is well organized
2. This text speaks of various orders of demons, just as there are various orders of angels
  - a. “Rulers” “authorities” ...some demons more powerful than others
  - b. **“powers of this present darkness”** uses a strong Greek word implying a world-dominating force of evil intelligence

Satan is called the “god of this age” in 2 Corinthians 4:4; the “ruler of the kingdom of the air” in Ephesians 2:2

3. Demons are everywhere, wreaking havoc for Satan’s dark purposes

C. The Devil’s Powers:

***Ephesians 6:11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.***

1. “Schemes”
  - a. a devious, darkly intelligent plot... craftiness and deception

***2 Corinthians 2:11 in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.***

- b. Satan crafts attractively alluring religions and philosophies

***2 Corinthians 11:14-15 Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.***

***<sup>15</sup> It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness.***

- c. Think of the brilliance of Satan’s mind, who has concocted every world religion other than Judaism and Christianity... the same mind crafted Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam...the same mind came up with naturalistic evolution and atheism; the same mind pushes some people toward homosexuality, and pushes the Nazis to murder homosexuals ruthlessly

- d. Satan's dark genius is seen in every worldly philosophy and scientific system that denies God
- e. Satan sows division among local churches
- f. Satan plants false teachers and hatches false doctrines
- g. Some geographical regions are so powerfully influenced by Satan's false religious schemes it's as though Satan has a throne there:

**[to the church at Pergamum] *Revelation 2:13 I know where you live-- where Satan has his throne.***

## 2. Attacks

- a. Satan has the power to steal our possessions through all manner of disasters; Job lost all his possessions through a series of attacks from the devil... he lost his camels, donkeys, livestock... even his CHILDREN
- b. Satan has the power to hurt us physically... even to kill us

***John 8:44 He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him.***

- c. Paul called his physical trial a thorn in the flesh and a MESSENGER FROM SATAN

## 3. Temptations

- a. Thomas Brooks, Puritan Pastor in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, wrote a book "Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices"
- b. Satan is behind every alluring temptation we face
- c. Satan and his demons lay traps for us, luring us into sin; the "world" that John speaks of in 1 John 2 (LUST OF THE EYES, LUST OF THE FLESH, the BOASTFUL PRIDE OF LIFE) is his dark invention... with all new twists to pull the believer away from Christ and into sin

- i) Brooks listed out many of Satan's evil tricks and luring schemes that lure men into patterns of sin
  - (i) Satan presents the BAIT and hides the HOOK
  - (ii) Satan paints sin with virtue's colors... making sin look virtuous
  - (iii) Satan minimizes sin, making it appear minor and insignificant
  - (iv) Satan twists our view of God, making us forget that God is a consuming fire before we sin, and making us forget that God is the compassionate father of the prodigal son after we sin
  - (v) Satan persuades us that repentance will be easy; that there will always be time and opportunity to repent
  - (vi) Satan makes the soul bold to venture into tempting situations
  - (vii) Satan makes much of the happy appearance of sinners who haven't repented
  - (viii) Satan persuades sinners that there are a lot of other sinners far worse than they are
- ii) Satan also works to discourage us from holy duties
  - (i) Satan presents to the soul a twisted view of the difficulties, crosses, afflictions and sorrows of the life of holiness
  - (ii) Satan makes us bored and weary of duties of godliness
  - (iii) Satan persuades us that holy duties will not make us better; that they are ineffective
  - (iv) Satan makes us distracted and mentally weak in prayer

#### 4. Accusations

- a. Not only does Satan lure us to sin, he also turns and then accuses us of the very sins he lured us to do
- b. In this way, Satan is the greatest HYPOCRITE in the universe
- c. Many texts speak of the devil's power to accuse the saints of their sins

***Revelation 12:10 the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night***

- d. He causes sinning Christians to DESPAIR of God's mercy and grace, telling them God will never forgive them for what they've done

5. Persecutions

- a. Satan is behind every government attack on Christianity... in communist or Islamic or atheistic or nationalistic countries... Iran, Saudi Arabia, Russia, China, India
- b. Satan hunts down the messengers of the gospel and assaults them
- c. Satan is a vicious murderer... he lies and steals and kills

D. The Devil's Limitations

- 1. Satan though vastly more powerful than us is still limited... he is not equal and opposite to God
- 2. God is as infinitely above Satan as God is above us... we are both creatures, but God is the creator
- 3. God limits Satan's activities... he has Satan on a leash, and he can destroy Satan any time he chooses
- 4. In Job 1-2, Satan had to ask God permission to assault Job, said that God had put a HEDGE around Job
- 5. So God also filters our temptations

***1 Corinthians 10:13 God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.***

6. AND God can so defend us that the devil will FLEE from us

***James 4:7 Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.***

E. The Devil's Defeat: Past, Present, Future

1. Satan was defeated in the past by Michael and his angels... that's why he was thrown to the earth (Revelation 12)
2. Satan was defeated by Christ at the cross and empty tomb

***1 John 3:8 The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.***

***Hebrews 2:14-15 by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-- that is, the devil-- <sup>15</sup> and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.***

3. Satan has been defeated by every genuine conversion the Holy Spirit's works to rescue people from Satan's dark Kingdom... he can't stop the spread of the gospel

***Matthew 16:18 I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.***

***Colossians 1:13-14 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.***

4. Satan is being defeated right now by the advance of the gospel and the growth of God's people in holiness
5. Satan will be defeated by the church from now until the end of the world

***Romans 16:20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.***

6. Satan will be defeated in the future by the Second Coming of Christ and by Judgment Day

***Revelation 12:12 He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short."***

***Revelation 20:10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.***

### III. Our Spiritual Determination is Required

***Ephesians 6:10-11 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.  
<sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand  
 against the devil's schemes.***

#### A. Be Strong in the Lord

1. Paul calls on us to BE STRONG... to strengthen ourselves in Christ
2. This strength is a fierce resolve to not sin, to fight the devil's temptations... to not give in or yield to sin or depression or anger or impatience...
3. This STRENGTH is not ours, but it is the LORD'S

Martin Luther, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God":

"Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing."

- a. Jesus made it clear that we have no INDEPENDENT POWER:

***John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.***

- b. Be strong in your position in Christ... elect from before the foundation of the world, justified by faith in Christ, forgiven of all your sins, perfectly righteous in the sight of God
- c. BE STRONG IN WHO YOU ARE IN CHRIST
- d. More than that... be strong in the mighty power Christ SUPPLIES

- i) There is a weariness that comes from the battle... Satan never gives up!!!

***Luke 4:13 When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.***

- ii) It's easy to get so weary that we give up fighting and just yield to temptation
- iii) Christ is GOD OMNIPOTENT... he NEVER GETS WEARY...
- iv) So he can supply us with a never-ending spiritual strength to fight the devil and his angels

***Isaiah 40:28-31 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. <sup>29</sup> He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. <sup>30</sup> Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; <sup>31</sup> but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.***

#### 4. Repeated commands to STAND FIRM

***Ephesians 6:10-13 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. <sup>13</sup> Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 STAND FIRM, THEN...***

#### B. Stand Firm Against Satan

1. This means to resolve to fight the temptation until you kill it
2. The sin pattern cannot be killed... but specific temptations CAN BE
3. We are commanded here to FIGHT... to not give in

4. The image is one of wrestling with the devil and his demons
5. The image also is one of not RUNNING... of fighting with absolute determination
  - a. In an fierce battle, the coward that cuts and runs is immediately endangering his entire unit... everyone must be equally determined to stand and fight
    - i) In the **Battle of Gettysburg**, Colonel Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain commanded the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine on Little Round Top, on the extreme left of the Union line; he realized that if the Confederate soldiers were able to swarm past them, they would be in a powerful position to roll up the entire Union line; Chamberlain told his men that, if they lost that battle, they would likely lose the war; he said they **MUST** hold their position; **“Men, we need to be stubborn today.”** They were determined to stand and fight and not run
    - ii) In the **Battle of Verdun** in World War I, the French soldiers had a rallying cry, **“They shall not pass!”** They were willing to stand and die, rather than to allow the Germans to overrun them and sweep past them into Paris
  - b. So the Christian soldier has to have a fierce determination to fight temptation, to resist the devil so that he will flee
  - c. Again and again, Paul speaks to us to STAND... STAND... STAND... STAND
  - d. This is done by continual prayer, especially in the actual time of temptation
  - e. It is done by running from the tempting situation:

***1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.***

- f. MYSTERY: “way of escape” from temptation enables us to STAND UP UNDER IT... or to BEAR IT

- g. Jesus prayed “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One”

### C. Follow the Example of Christ

1. Entering the desert filled with the Spirit
2. Fought the devil’s temptations with the Word of God
3. Left the desert filled with the Spirit

## IV. Applications

### A. Come to Christ

1. If you are a non-Christian, you are in Satan’s Kingdom...he is master over you
2. Christ has come to set captives free...

***Luke 11:21-22 When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. <sup>22</sup> But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils.***

### B. Embrace the Central Concept: We Christians Have a Powerful Enemy, and the Christian Life is Warfare

1. This sermon was meant to wake you up to the activity of Satan in YOUR LIFE
2. You have a struggle, whether you know it or not... you have an enemy whether you know it or not
3. The scripture makes it plain that the more aware we are of this warfare, the better we shall be able to fight and win
4. Do not be a Western materialist Christian, who believes in the Most High God, and also believes in the physical world, and nothing in between
5. Believe what the text says... that our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms

6. In your daily prayer times, ask the Lord to make you much more aware of Satan's vicious activity in your personal life, in your marriage, in your family, in your church, in your community...
7. "WE ARE NOT UNWARE OF HIS SCHEMES!!"
8. If you fall into sin, ask the Lord to show you how Satan was successful in his efforts to tempt you and draw you into sin

#### C. Be Strong in the Lord

1. Gird yourself up for a daily fight...
2. Find inexhaustible strength in the Lord to run this race with endurance... actually to fight this fight with endurance
3. In your prayer time every day, get ready for spiritual warfare
4. Ask the Lord Jesus Christ for strength and endurance to fight
5. Abide in him, like a branch in the vine

#### D. Evaluate your Present Life

1. How do you see Satan attacking you?
2. What temptations have been a recurring theme in your life?
  - a. What lusts are conquering your resolve?
  - b. What covetousness has mastered your heart?
  - c. What hidden anger or unforgiveness or bitterness is polluting your mind?
  - d. What excesses are glutting your lifestyle?

#### E. Evaluate Your Duties That You Are Neglecting

1. How have you been weak and failing in your internal journey?
2. How have you neglected intercessory prayer for others? For missions?

3. How have you failed to be a witness? How has Satan rendered you paralyzed in evangelism and outreach?

F. NEXT WEEK: Putting on the Full Armor of God