
With a focus on Ephesians 6:10-12, we prepare individuals to know the one and only enemy.

INTRODUCTION

My thanks to our pastor for the invitation to teach the Word for these three weeks. It is a privilege for me to do so here at The Creek. Some months ago, when Dan asked me to preach a three-week series, I began praying and thinking 1) what the Lord would want me to teach, and 2) what do we need to hear. In a clear and distinct way, the Holy Spirit impressed on me the urgency to preach of the reality that *we are at war*.

We live in a world at war; constant conflict between nations is common. Throughout recorded history, wars have raged, untold millions of people have been killed, while entire cities have been destroyed. Yet, another war has been raging much longer and with far greater losses. That war is between the forces of God and the forces of evil. For three weeks, we are going to focus on the single longest, most detailed passage in the entire Bible on spiritual warfare, Ephesians 6:10-18. As we go deep into these verses, I want to challenge all of us to memorize these nine vital verses of scripture.

As we begin, let's consider the context before getting into the content. The Apostle Paul wrote this book while he was under house arrest in the city of Rome. He wrote this letter to a church in the city of Ephesus, a church that he started while he was on his second missionary journey. While he was on his third missionary journey, Paul went back to Ephesus, and he stayed there for three years—his single longest location in serving a specific church. Paul knew these people well, and he loved and cared for them. That's why his letter ends with a passionate appeal for every Christian to be aware of war.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 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. 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. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. (Ephesians 6:10-18)

During these three weeks, let's break down these nine vital verses into three simple sections. To help us remember them, we will use the familiar phrase, "Ready. Aim. Fire." This week, we will focus on verses 10-12 with a call to be READY. Let's break this down into two parts.

A Ready Reality

- ➔ We are at war.
- ➔ The enemy has a rank and file.
- ➔ The enemy has a battle plan.

The United States military spends tens of billions of dollars studying, researching, knowing all that is possible about our enemies. As Christians, we must study and know something about our enemy. Notice again verse 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." We must have a ready reality that **we are at war**. Every single book of the New Testament makes mention of Satan, the devil, demons, and the demonic. The Bible speaks more about spiritual warfare than it does of marriage, and if it's repeated, it is important! John Lemmon, a pastor and author living in Australia, wrote in *Christianity Today*:

There is a battle going on in the spiritual realm for supremacy over humanity. The forces of good and evil are arrayed against one another for the salvation or destruction of humankind. On the one side we have God Almighty, Jesus Christ and the forces for good who want us to find freedom and to live with them into eternity. On the other side are the devil and his demonic forces looking for every opportunity to bring us into slavery and imprison our minds.

Just as physical **battle lines** exist between Russia and Ukraine, there are actual **battle lines** between the forces of God and the forces of evil. **We are at war**. This war is not merely between Satan and super-Christians, pastors, and missionaries. This war rages against every human being, and it is even more intense against people who walk closely with Jesus.

In his classic book *The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis wrote, "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them." Lewis speaks of two extremes. One is to deny the existence of spiritual powers of evil, believing that spiritual beings do not exist. In the Old Testament, there was a time when the Arameans were attacking Israel, and the prophet Elisha prayed an incredible prayer.

When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?" the servant asked. "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, "Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see." Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (2 Kings 6:15-17)

God enabled Elisha's servant to see into the spiritual realm, seeing an army of righteous beings doing battle on their behalf.

The opposite extreme is to have a fixation on Satan so much so that we look for demons behind every tree. Don't think too little of him, nor too much of him; and for certain, don't be naïve when it comes to him. **We are at war.**

Notice Paul's statement that our "struggle is not against flesh and blood." Our conflicts and our spiritual warfare are not with family or friends, but rather "against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." The word "struggle" is a term that means to wrestle, engaged in hand-to-hand combat. The struggle is up close and personal, and the opponent does not fight fair.

This war has been raging since Genesis 3:15, when Satan tempted Adam and Eve to sin against God. God told him that though Satan would strike the heel of the coming Messiah, the Messiah will "crush your head." From that very moment, the war began and will continue to rage until the second coming of Jesus. We must have a **ready reality that we are at war.**

Also, we must have a **ready reality that the enemy has a rank and file.** Be sure to notice in verse 12 that our struggle is "*against* the rulers, *against* the authorities, *against* the powers of this dark world and *against* the forces of evil in the heavenly realms." The repeated use of the word "against" was Paul's way of stressing the **rank and file** of the enemy to achieve their greatest destruction on people. Remember, Satan and demons are spiritual beings, angels, who were created by God and who later rebelled against God.

Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone—while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy? (Job 38:4-7)

While God created the universe, all the angels cheered Him on, applauding Him! By the end of creation, we read in Genesis 1:31, "God saw all that He had made and it was very good." So sometime between Genesis 1:31 and Genesis 3:1 when Satan appears in the Garden of Eden to tempt Adam and Eve, he rebelled against God. The last book of the Bible contains a passage that helps us understand this.

Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. (Revelation 12:7-9)

Notice that the dragon (Satan) and his angels (plural) fought back. He (Satan) was hurled to the earth and his angels (plural) with him. (See Revelation 12:3-4 in reference to a "third of the stars" were swept by the tail of the dragon, which has been used to infer that a third of the angels rebelled against God.) **The enemy has a rank and file.** These created beings, angels that rebelled against God, do not procreate. They have a fixed number. They are ancient beings from the beginning of creation and are constantly standing at the **battle line**. When two enemies stand at their battle lines ready to open fire, they don't take breaks or sleep. They're looking at one

another. Similarly, the “rulers, the authorities, the powers of this dark world, the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” never sleep. They don’t take breaks. They are always looking at us. When we look into the abyss of evil, someone is always looking back.

Be ready. **The enemy has a battle plan.** In speaking of Satan, Jesus said, “The thief has come to kill, steal and destroy” (John 10:10). Satan’s singular purpose is to keep every human being from God, and God has made a way for every human being to come to Him through His Son, Jesus Christ. Let’s go back to Revelation 12.

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God, day and night, has been hurled down. They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.” (Revelation 12:10-12)

When did salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Messiah become established? When was the blood of the Lamb shed? At the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ! Satan could not keep Jesus from the cross or in the grave, and now he is moving over the earth and he is filled with fury, with rage, because he knows that his time is short, his days are numbered!

Think of it this way. On June 6, 1944, D-Day was an epic battle that determined who would win World War II. Over 7,000 ships and nearly 8,000 planes moved just shy of 200,000 soldiers and air-troopers to the battlefield. When the smoke cleared, tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians were killed. But the war was not over. For eleven more months, the war raged and tens of thousands more people were killed until the war was over on May 8, 1945. Between D-Day and the end of the war, casualties mounted ever higher. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is our D-Day! His resurrection decided who would win the war between good and evil, but Satan—our enemy—is filled with fury and the casualties are mounting of the spiritually war dead. He and his army of demons will stop at nothing to keep people from God, from coming to a saving relationship Jesus Christ. But there will come a day when the trumpet call of God will be heard, and the clouds will split as every person witnesses the second coming of Jesus Christ! That is our VE Day (Victory on Earth Day)!

So then, until that day, “Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes” (Ephesians 6:11). The word translated “schemes” is the Greek word *methodeia* (transliteration). That looks much like our word “methods.” **The enemy has a battle plan**—a three-fold strategy—for waging his war: deception, distractions, and division.

Jesus called Satan “the father of lies” (John 8:44), meaning that Satan is the source of everything false. He does not speak a single word of truth. His every word is a lie. He and his army bend the truth and distort the facts. In Genesis 3:1, Satan deceived Eve with, “Did God really say you could not eat from any tree in the garden?” He deceived Adam and Eve from the opening

moments of time, and he continues to do so yet today—and he will until the second coming of Jesus. **Deception** is a weapon of choice for Satan to keep people from God.

Satan uses **distractions** to keep people from God, and two in particular: pain and pleasure. When we go through suffering, trials, or difficulty in life, Satan deceives us so that we blame God. The pain distracts us from God. The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 12:7, “To keep me from becoming conceited, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.” Pain (i.e., a messenger of Satan) could have distracted Paul, causing him to reject Jesus, but Paul became all the stronger in his walk with God. If it isn’t pain, Satan uses pleasures of this world, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16), to distract us, luring people away from God.

His third weapon of choice is **division**. Why did Paul write Ephesians 4:3-6, “Make every effort to maintain unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father who is over all and through all and in all”? Not once, but seven times, Paul deliberately used the word “one”! Paul intentionally commanded them to make every effort to maintain unity of the Holy Spirit. Could it be that there was conflict among the people in the church at Ephesus? Could it be that Satan was working to divide them, not only in the church, but in homes? In Ephesians 6:21 and following, Paul called husbands to love their wives to the same degree as Jesus loved the Church and gave His life for her, while also calling the wives to submit to their husbands just as they submit their lives to Christ.

Satan works overtime to divide us. “Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes” (2 Corinthians 2:10-11). An unforgiving spirit is a scheme of Satan to divide us. Satan doesn’t need to destroy us. All he needs to do is divide us. We will destroy ourselves. Jesus said that a house divided against itself cannot stand (Mark 3:25). So don’t run FROM division, run TO the division and be a peacemaker, for Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9). Fighting FOR unity in a marriage, a family, among friends, is a weapon to use against the enemy.

Ready. Aim. Fire. We have a ready reality in that we have an enemy with rank and file and he follows a battle plan. But here’s the good news!

A Ready Superiority

When enemies square off at the **battle line**, they size up one another, claiming superiority over the other. This forward edge of battle is where the fighting will take place. Listen carefully: as followers of Jesus, we have superiority over Satan and his army of demons. Paul describes our three-fold superiority in Ephesians 6:10-11: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.”

God's Person

Paul tells us to be “strong in the Lord,” not in ourselves or in others. It is not the amount of our strength that’s important, but it is the source of strength that matters. God is omnipresent. He is everywhere at the same time. Satan is not everywhere at the same time. God is omniscient. He is all-knowing, seeing everything from before the beginning of creation to long past the end of measured time—and all in a single glance. Satan is not all-knowing. God is omnipotent. He is all-powerful, creating the entire universe out of nothing (i.e., *ex nihilo*). Satan is not all powerful. Do not focus on Satan. Do not give him more attention than he deserves. “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy before Him, endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). We are commanded (an imperative) to “be strong in the Lord.” He is the source of our strength.

- “But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings as eagles, they will run and not be weary, they will walk and not be faint” (Isaiah 40:31).
- “For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth looking to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him” (2 Chronicles 16:9).
- “You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, for greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

In verses 1-3 of 1 John 4, John wrote of the spirit of the anti-Christ being in the world, then in verse 4, John declared that we, who are from God, have overcome the spirits that oppose God (i.e., are anti-Christ). How are we victorious? Greater is He—the Holy Spirit—who is in us than Satan who is in this world. God is in us—and He is for us! That is a **ready superiority!**

God's Power

We have superior fighting power for it is God’s power at work within us. The Greek word for “strong” is a form of the word *dunamis*, from which we get our English word dynamite. The power of God is explosive, beyond our human understanding. God, the Holy Spirit, is in us.

Notice one event that took place in the power of the Holy Spirit: “And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you” (Romans 8:11). The Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead—and that is power! That same power is in us and with God’s supernatural, superior power we can defeat every attempt of the evil one to wreak havoc and chaos in our lives. Greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world.

Notice also that we are commanded (imperative) to “put on the full armor of God.” The command is that we are to “clothe ourselves, to sink into” the full armor of God and not ever take it off. The command carries the idea of permanence, of putting on God’s armor once and for all. It’s just not KNOWING about something, it’s DOING what we KNOW. Next week, we will explore every piece of God’s armor listed in the text. God’s supernatural protection is indescribable **superiority** over the enemy.

God's Plan

Be sure to notice that Paul commanded us to “Put on the full armor of God so that you can *take your stand* against the devil’s schemes.” It is God’s plan that we are victorious. Satan and his army of fallen angels are already defeated. They are frauds who have lost the war between good and evil because Jesus triumphed over them at the cross (Colossians 3:15).

(Jesus) humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God gave to Him a name that is above every name. That at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven, on earth and under the earth; and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:8-11)

Satan is doomed! We win the war in the end, and it is **God’s plan** that we win every battle in the present—in His strength when we take our stand.

We need to remember that Paul is not writing with an individual focus, but with a plural focus. “So that YOU...” is plural. This entire letter is written to a church, a community of believers, who were to be an invincible army of God-followers against the kingdom of darkness. This passage is not a description of a gladiator, but that of an army. Roman soldiers were to stand their ground together, giving no thought to retreat, never giving a foot to the enemy. As long as they stood together and did not break ranks, they were invincible. When we—the church—take a stand together, standing our ground by being “strong in the Lord and His mighty power,” we are invincible! The Scriptures declare, “Resist the devil (i.e., stand firm) and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). Think of the amplified power when both the husband and wife resist the enemy, and not just one spouse. Think of how invincible an entire family is when that family together stands firm, resisting the devil and the enemy flees. In the strength of the Holy Spirit, can an individual believer resist the devil and cause the enemy to flee? Absolutely. Then again, what happens when an army of believers stands firm in the Lord? We become an even greater threat to the kingdom of darkness for the glory of God! And that is **God’s plan**!

There is one more dimension of **God’s plan** that we must never forget.

- “How great is the love that God has lavished on us that we should be called His children and that is what we are!” (1 John 3:1).
- “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, not height nor depth, nor anything else in all of creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).
- “Perfect love casts out all fear” (1 John 4:18).

Friends, we have a proven **ready superiority** because of whose side we’re on, and God Himself provides us with all the power we need to follow His plan—one battle at a time.

In September 1987, Captain Henry Dempsey was flying a Beechcraft 99 from Lewiston, Maine, to Boston for what was then Eastern Airlines. He and his co-pilot, Paul Boucher, were the only individuals on the plane. There were no passengers. Shortly into the flight, the two pilots heard a

noise behind them in the passenger compartment. Dempsey took off his seat belt and said that he would check out the noise, and as he did so, the plane suddenly hit some turbulence. Dempsey fell against the door of the plane, the door flew open, and Dempsey flew out—between 4,000-5,000 feet above the Atlantic Ocean! An alarm went off in the cockpit, and the co-pilot radioed a may-day call assuming that Dempsey was in the ocean below. With permission for an emergency landing, Boucher brought the plane down at the Portland, Maine, airport. When he brought the plane to its gate, he undid his seatbelt and went to exit the plane, only to discover Henry hanging upside down outside of the door! When the plane landed at over 100 miles per hour, Dempsey's head was inches from the concrete! That model of plane had a set of stairs and handrails built into the door. When the plane's door flew open and Dempsey flew out, he was faced with an instant decision: let go and die or hold on and live.

Day after day, we stand at the battle lines and face off with the enemy. In those moments, we must hold on to Jesus—and live!