

Sermon File # 738

Scripture Text: Ephesians 6:10-20

Sermon Title: *Success in Spiritual Warfare*

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Success in Spiritual Warfare

Introduction:

Open your Bibles with me to *Ephesians* 6:10-20, as we conclude our series from this letter of Paul. In *Ephesians* we have seen a portrayal of “God’s New Society” (John RW Stott) made possible by his saving, regenerating grace. On the basis of our new heavenly life we can experience the miracle of new relationships in the church, marriage, family, and at work. Filled with the Spirit, we live on a new plane of heavenly relationships and glorious unity. But we need to realize that, though we have eternal life and are heaven bound, we still must contend with the world, the flesh, and the devil. Society apart from Christ, our old nature, and Satan with his demons will attempt to destroy our God-given joy, victory, and unity.

On the cross Jesus Christ defeated Satan forever and broke his stronghold upon the world. We in Christ have a share in his victory and are freed from the dominant influence of sin. Yet Satan is still alive and kicking, the world still opposes us, and the old sin nature still has its downward tug. In our text, Paul encourages the church to engage triumphantly in spiritual warfare.

Read *Ephesians* 6:10-20

Today is Independence Day in my home country, the USA, as we celebrate the declaration of our independence in 1776. Preserving and protection our freedom as a nation has been a challenge throughout our history, and there is perhaps no greater challenge than we face today. Since the Attack on America on the 11th of September 2001, the US has declared war on Al-Qaeda and has been, along with coalition forces, engaged in a long and costly war against the Taliban in Afghanistan. Not only does the US face the enemy on foreign soil, but also we have to protect ourselves from enemies from within who would do the nation harm, such as the recent attempt to bomb Time Square in New York City. As abolitionist Wendell Phillips said in a speech before the Massachusetts Antislavery Society in 1852, "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty" (*The Dictionary of Quotations* edited by Bergen Evans).

And that's the way it is in our spiritual warfare. At the cross the decisive battle was won, and Satan's stranglehold was broken (more decisively than al-Qaeda's), but he is still roaming about in guerilla warfare against God's kingdom. But we can and must, as children of God, live in the victory Jesus has given us and practice vigilance. Here in our text, as a fitting and urgent conclusion to his letter, Paul gives the strategy for victory in spiritual warfare.

Unbelievers and even some professing Christians may deny the existence of a personal devil. Yet the evil we see in the world and the atrocities that have become almost commonplace are not the result of simply human fallen-ness and mischief. New Testament scholar FF Bruce, in commenting on our text, wrote that modern (now post-modern) man may deny the devil, yet he must be conscious of a power within him that he cannot control (*The Epistle to the Ephesians*). And no one can live in neutrality as far as the devil is concerned. Regardless of how skeptical, cynical or sophisticated in disbelieving about the devil, we are either free from his dominion in Christ or we are under his control. The Apostle John writes, "We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one" (1 John 5:19).

Neil Anderson, in his helpful book, *The Bondage Breaker*, says that our text in Ephesians 6 is "the Christian's Magna Charta" of protection against these evil forces Paul lists for us. Yes, it is true that becoming a Christian thrusts you into warfare against the world, the flesh and the devil. The unbeliever is right where Satan, the liar, deceiver and destroyer wants him/her. Satan will lull the unbeliever into spiritual sleep and will use and manipulate his victims all the way to hell. But when a person is redeemed and delivered from Satan's dominion, Satan will do his worst to destroy the new believer's faith and testimony for Christ. Satan will nonstop toss his demons and darts of temptation and trials.

If you're a child of God, there is no way you can avoid being in the fray of spiritual warfare. As Warren Wiersbe says, "You're in the army now, whether you like it or not!" We're all enlisted and are in the King's Army. Wiersbe says that the Christian life is lived on a battleground and not on a playground

(*Be Rich: Ephesians*). The issue is not whether we will face conflict. The issue is whether we will be victorious in battle or defeated by the forces of evil.

Our text tells us clearly, first of all, that our victory in spiritual warfare depends on...

Knowing the Enemy (verses 10-13)

In verses 10 through 13, Paul reveals that he is very well acquainted with the enemy and his schemes. Elsewhere Paul warned a worldly-minded Corinthian church to wake up and become vigilant about the devil, who is able to outwit unaided intelligence. "For we are not unaware," he writes, "of his schemes" (2 Corinthians 2:11).

Military intelligence is crucial for victory in warfare. Security measures are vitally important to protect innocent citizens from terrorists' attacks. None of us like to go through the inconvenience of airport security checks in airports, yet we really their importance for our protection.

The intelligence given us by the Word of God about the Enemy and his forces is much more reliable and certainly longer lasting than any information or intelligence or detection that a national security force could receive from its intelligence and vigilance agencies.

Our text for today tells us that in knowing the real enemy more than intelligence is needed. Also...

God's strength is needed (verse 10)

Paul tells us strength is needed to overcome the foe. Satan is usually assessed as being redoubtable and intimidating or his existence is often denied. Satan is real, as Peter reminds us, and he is prowling around like a lion on the loose, looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). He is more of a threat than any human terrorist.

Yet we do have authority over him (Matthew 28:18). That authority was won for us on the cross and given to us the moment we believed and became Spirit-born children of God. And we also have a much-superior Holy Spirit in us (1 John 4:4). For victory in spiritual warfare one must first be absolutely certain he/she is "in the Lord," that is, truly converted. Only the genuinely converted person has the presence of the Holy Spirit and the power of faith in Jesus, the power of his resurrection (Romans 8:9).

CS Lewis, in his classic, *The Screwtape Letters*, has demon Uncle Screwtape advising his demon nephew Wormwood to try to entice humans assigned to his influence to either deny the existence of the devil or to be intimidated by him. Certainly we as believers are not to fear the devil and his demons. We are to fear the Lord who alone has the power to destroy us (Luke 12:5). But

we are to be aware of the reality of Satan and his power, and must depend on the Holy Spirit to deliver us from the evil one (Matthew 6:13).

We must be strong in the Lord Jesus and realize...

Satan's schemes must be heeded (verse 11)

We must take heed of Satan's schemes. He works in the arena of this fallen world, which is society apart from Christ. Satan attacks the flesh, the old sin nature, and through the direct assaults of his demons. We as believers still inhabit the old sin nature, and Satan is aware of the chinks in our armor, and the area of our weakness and vulnerability. And Satan attacks directly through the demonic and indirectly in more obscure and subtle ways.

(Our "sophisticated" western society is becoming increasingly vulnerable to the demonic, the farther we move away from our biblical roots. Witchcraft and the occult are on the rise in Western Europe and North America).

Satan also works in less direct, more subtle ways. Paul tells us that he disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). Ancient church father Chrysostom taught that Satan never presents us with a blatant choice of idolatry over Christ. He never mentions idolatry, but instead presents us daily with idolatrous choices (NT volume VIII, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*). Daily and gradually Satan presents us with choices that take us farther from worship of and devotion to Christ and more into materialism or the worship of pleasure, success or self.

In our more sophisticated society, the demonic works in more subtle ways. We see Satan's influence in an educational system increasingly bereft of God and biblical truth and intent on enforcing a secular worldview. We can see Satan's schemes in our Western governments that refuse to protect the lives of our unborn, and are willing to overlook the atrocities of nations that perpetrate religious persecution, particularly if those nations are vital to our economic interests.

Knowing the enemy means we understand also that...

The struggle is cosmic (verse 12)

Satan's schemes are not about Halloween spooks and goblins, but are the real thing. He is out to destroy us, and he is bigger than we are. He's bigger than all our human enemies put together.

As Warren Wiersbe says, "The important point is that our battle is not against human beings. It is against spiritual powers. We are wasting our time fighting people when we ought to be fighting the devil who seeks to control people and make them oppose the work of God." Wiersbe sights the instance recorded in 1 Kings 22:31, when the king of Aram instructed his soldiers to go after the king of Israel and not waste their time fighting the troops, who were

merely his dupes. We need to go after the devil and not waste our time with his lackeys (see Warren Wiersbe, in *Be Rich: Ephesians*).

I agree with Pastor John Piper that these words of Paul are amazing—“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood.” Think of how Paul was brutally attacked, mobbed, stoned and beaten nearly to death! And yet Paul had the spiritual perception to realize who the real enemy was. People are merely the dupes of Satan and desperately need to be freed from his strangle hold (See Piper’s sermon on the Web at www.soundofgrace.com/piper88/pipe.001b.htm).

When you are oppressed by an enemy, you are to pray against Satan’s stronghold in his/her life. That’s the best way to love your enemy, as Jesus taught us (Matthew 5:43-48). It’s humanly impossible for us to forgive and love our enemies, those who have opposed and hurt us deeply. For release from hurt, anger and bitterness, we need the healing that comes from pray to Christ crucified, who suffered and died for our forgiveness, and who can take away our anger and bitterness and replace it with forgiveness and love for our worst enemies.

I think the Book of Job, as we see “behind the scenes in chapters 1 and 2, makes very clear that each one of us is in a cosmic battle against Satan. And, like Job, we must resolve to trust God to deliver us.

And, in knowing the enemy, we must realize that...

Our standing is crucial (verse 13)

We must resolve to stand “when the day of evil comes,” or as the NEB translates, “when things are at their worst.” We are taught by our Lord Jesus to pray for daily deliverance from evil (Matthew 6:13b). But there also comes to each one of us that particularly evil day.

This could mean the evil Last Day of tribulation before the return of Christ, and we may well be entering those last days of birth pangs when evil will be more rampant. But I believe Paul is speaking about our personal evil day, that day of our supreme test or temptation. That is the evil day in our lives when we stand in greatest danger of a spiritual downfall.

You may at this moment be in a great struggle of faith. You may feel absolutely weak in faith, and God may seem far away. You are on the verge to giving in to temptation to be unfaithful. You may be on the brink of even renouncing your faith in God. This perhaps is you evil day.

The devil is prowling around for the attack, as Peter says (1 Peter 5:8). But we can be victorious. We are not to be like the American legendary pioneer Davey Crockett, who as a young boy went bear hunting with a switch, and as the legend goes, “killed himself a bear when he was only three.” We are to meet our adversary, the devil, in God’s strength.

Our victory in spiritual warfare depends also on our...

Wearing the Armor (verses 14-17)

The truth is, we don't have to lose the battle. We can win. Satan has a tether, and God's purpose, just as it was for Job, is for us to be successful in this cosmic battle (As the Reformer John Calvin said, Satan is under God's sovereign control, and always is able to "rein him in." See sermon # 46, page 664, *Calvin's Sermons on Ephesians*). In verses 14-17 we see God has provided armor for us to wear. Perhaps as Paul wrote these words from prison in Rome, being under house arrest, he was chained to a Roman soldier who was wearing armor. Paul then describes the armor God provides for us in spiritual warfare.

Paul says we can be absolutely ready to be successful in the conflict because of what God has provided us. All the pieces of the Christian's armor are indispensable. Each piece represents an aspect and virtue of the believer's character and God's provisions in Christ. In fact, I agree with church father Jerome that Christ himself is our armor, and we are commanded to put on his very person (Romans 13:14, and NT vol. VIII, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*). We cannot afford to ignore the protection God has given us and expect to be victorious in spiritual warfare.

Note the first piece of the armor is...

The belt of truth (verse 14)

The first part of our armor is the belt of truth. This includes the truthfulness, integrity or sincerity of the Christian soldier. Without the wholehearted sincerity before God and full, uncompromising commitment to Jesus as Lord, any other "virtue" is mere hypocrisy and superficiality. As the belt held other pieces of the armor together, so our honesty and integrity before God is foundational.

I believe the belt of truth refers also to the revealed, absolute truth of God in Christ, the Truth as it is in Jesus and that *is* Jesus (4:21; John 14:6), and also the truth of God's written Word, the Bible. Without this truth, we cannot have any spiritual armor, nor engage in any spiritual warfare. Without absolute truth, how can we have any certainty for fighting the spiritual battle, or for understanding the issues of the war, or that there is actually a war in the first place? And, we need...

The breastplate of righteousness (verse 14)

This includes the righteousness of Christ that is imputed to us through faith. His righteousness is our only hope of being acceptable to God and his righteousness covers our sinful hearts.

It is also the personal, experiential righteousness that God imparts to our character through the power of the Holy Spirit. We are covered by godliness that is possible through our relationship with Jesus. It's the new life and the new nature we have in him that enables us to do the right thing and to join him in his cause of righteousness and justice. It's the power of the Spirit who guards our hearts from ungodliness and enables us to grow in the graces of Christ-like holiness. And, we have...

The shoes of the good news (verse 15)

"The sandals of the preparation of the gospel" allow us to stand firm and to resist the onslaught of the devil. These sandals refer to the Roman soldier's hobnailed sandals that took a firm grip and allowed for mobility. As Stott says, this part of the armor could refer to the grip and firm holding on life that the gospel gives us, but also could refer to our being able to, with great mobility and alacrity, take the gospel to others who need peace through Christ.

Perhaps Paul was thinking of Isaiah 52:7, which says, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" As John Piper reminds us, feet are useful in making us mobile, and the people of God are to join in his mission to carry the good news of salvation to our individual spheres of influence. To have your feet shod, or "shoed," with the readiness that comes from the gospel is perhaps to "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15; See Piper, above citation).

It also speaks to our responsibility to maintain the peace of God's church (Ephesians 4:3). The peaceful unity of the church at Ephesus and perhaps elsewhere in Asia Minor was threatened by those who sought to divide the churches. When our feet are fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace we are equipped to deal with factors that disrupt the peace of God's church.

Certainly, a good offense is a good defense. If we are busy telling others about Jesus Christ, we are less likely to fall prey to temptation or be defeated by life's trials. Also, when we as God's people are involved in the work of the gospel, we are less likely to cause disruptions or to be distracted by divisions in God's church.

And, we have...

The shield of faith (verse 16)

Here Paul is thinking about the large Roman army shield made of leather, and soaked in water in order to extinguish the flaming arrows of the enemy.

The shield of faith is a reference to our saving faith and our continuing trust in the Lord and our obedience to his Word. This relationship allows us to ward off the fiery darts of the wicked who seek to find chinks in our armor.

Paul himself lived a shielded life, but not a sheltered life. There is a fundamental difference. God does not shelter us from the darts of the devil, the world and the flesh, but he does shield us from any harm to our faith relationship with him.

For example, Paul was shielded from spiritual defeat, but not sheltered from human failure. He was shielded from conceit, but not sheltered from being greatly esteemed. He was shielded from bitterness and a vengeful spirit, but he was not sheltered from disappointments in people. He was shielded from cowardice and from being intimidated, but he was not sheltered from danger and fearsome circumstances. He was shielded from murmuring, but he was not sheltered from hardship and pain (See John Henry Jowett, Pages 77-81, vol. VIII, *Twenty Centuries of Great Preaching*).

Our armor includes also...

The helmet of salvation (verse 17)

And, we must put on the helmet of salvation. I believe in this sense Paul is referring to salvation in its future dimension. This is our great hope of future glory. This awareness and hope will keep our minds in proper focus, and will help us keep present difficulties and temporal experiences in proper focus. We must measure the value and impact of things against eternity, and always remember the crown of life that awaits the faithful soldier of the cross. We must have God's eternal perspective on things, and learn to think his thoughts after him, realizing his ways are not our ways nor his thoughts our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8).

Perhaps the helmet is also a symbol of surrounding our minds with the awareness of the presence of God. Christian counselor Leanne Payne emphasizes the crucial importance of practicing God's presence in order to experience the healing of memories and living in emotional and spiritual victory (See especially her book *The Healing Presence: Curing the Soul through Union with Christ*).

And next, Paul gives the offensive weapon of the Christian soldier's equipment, which is...

The sword of the Spirit (verse 17)

And, we take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. This part of the armor leads us to consider the Christian soldier on the offensive. He not only stands his ground, but also is now able to launch attack against the forces of Satan, wielding the sword of the Spirit that is sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). In *The Message*, Peterson gives the more up-to-date analogy in Hebrews 4:12, saying that God's "powerful Word is as sharp as a surgeon's scalpel, cutting through everything, whether doubt or defense, laying us open to listen and obey. Nothing and no one is impervious to God's word. We can't get away from it—no matter what."

A lot of people have a Bible, yet are as deft and adept at using it as I am with a double-edged sword I purchased in Lome, Togo, which is so strange and awkward to me. For them too the Bible is unfamiliar and strange—useful just for decoration. There’s even a sense for some that having the Bible in the house is like having a protective charm to ward off misfortune.

CH Spurgeon says we need to make the sword of the Spirit, the Bible, our sword, so we can use it. Like Jesus himself, we need to draw it out and use it when tempted (Matthew 4:1-11). We need to use it when discouraged and needing to be strengthened in God (Psalm 119:9-16). We need to use it to encourage others, and to instruct our children, and to bear witness to the lost. It’s the sword that penetrates the most hardened heart and conscience (Hebrews 4:12).

It is our spiritual weapon we must learn to use (2 Corinthians 10:4). It’s up to us to daily put on the armor God has provided us. John Calvin wrote that God has provided the protection we need for spiritual victory and as followers of Christ we must not be so lazy as to fail to don the armor he provides (See his *New Testament Commentaries*, vol. 11).

Finally, our victory in spiritual warfare depends on our...

Fighting the Battle (verses 18-20)

The Christian soldier who has taken up the sword of the Spirit and is armed for the conflict is now ready to take the offensive against the Foe. As is true for the entire living of the Christian life, the key to victory in spiritual warfare is living daily in the fullness of the Holy Spirit (5:18). And the fullness of power, wisdom and protection from the Holy Spirit comes by daily appropriation through prayer. So, Paul admonishes us, “Pray in the Spirit on all occasions.”

We put on the armor daily, and we engage in spiritual warfare by daily, continual prayer in the Spirit. This is what Eugene Peterson means by turning your life into prayer. Or, as the old gospel song says it, “Put on the gospel armor, each piece put on with prayer” (George Duffield, Jr., *Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus*).

I have never been more aware than I am right now of the absolutely crucial need in my life to be a man of prayer and to lead our church to be a praying people. Real, fervent prayer in the Spirit is the greatest weapon we have to use against the devil, and ironically, is probably the most neglected activity we use to battle against Satan’s strongholds.

King David was vulnerable, and would have been less at risk had he gone to war, wearing his armor with his troops, “at the time when kings go off to war” (2 Samuel 11:1). At least had he gone to war, he would have been wearing his armor. But instead, David remained behind, and was vulnerable to the tempter who enticed him to sin with Bathsheba. That’s why I say the safest

place is always in the center of God's will, even if it's in the fray of the battle. We must put on the armor with prayer and engage in the battle, with our dependence on God. Putting on the armor isn't enough. There's a battle to be fought.

Neal Anderson says, "You may be wondering, 'If my position in Christ is secure and my protection is found in him, why I have to get actively involved? Can't I just rest in him and let him protect me?'" That's like a soldier saying, 'Our country is a major military power. We have the most advanced tanks, planes, missiles, and ships in the world. Why should I bother with wearing a helmet, standing guard, or learning how to shoot a gun? It's much more comfortable to stay in camp while the tanks and planes fight the war.' When the enemy troops infiltrate," says Anderson, "guess who will be one of the first soldiers to get picked off!" (See above citation). The only safe place is in the will of God and the only safe activity in spiritual battle is to walk with God and stand in his strength alone.

In fighting the battle, we must first be...

Praying for ourselves (verse 18)

We must guard against presumption and pride, which seems to be what Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 10:12. I have learned how absolutely crucial it is to begin my day in personal worship and prayer that is shaped by the chapters I read in the word of God each morning. God has a word for me that is vital for my spiritual preparation for that day's challenges. I must open the word each day for God's light and words of correction and encouragement (Psalm 119:105; Romans 15:4).

We need to remember our authority over Satan as those who have been freed from his power and given the greater power and authority of the Holy Spirit. As James reminds us, "Submit yourselves...to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). We, like John Bunyan's Christian in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, have been given the weapon of All Prayer. Like him, we must wield it while we journey through this danger-ridden Valley of the Shadow. Prayer is the means of keeping on the armor, and staying fit for the battle.

And then we must be...

Praying for others (verse 18)

Paul says we are to "keep on praying for all the saints." Jesus taught us to pray in the first person plural, "Lead *us* not into temptation, and deliver *us* from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13).

Jesus told Peter that he had prayed for him, that his faith not fail, and that after his fall and restoration he would turn back and strengthen his brothers (Luke 22:31-32). Jesus prays for us, as we know from his High Priestly Prayer and from Hebrews 7:25, and is our example in intercession.

In our living and serving in this spiritually needy and dark place, we absolutely depend on God's grace and power that are supplied through prayer and intercession for one another. Without prayer we would be totally defeated and certainly we could not advance against the forces of unbelief and spiritual resistance. As never before, we as God's people here at IBC must depend on prayer join in God's kingdom work.

We are to pray, not just for our survival in the conflict with the enemy, but we are to be engaged in...

Praying for the good news to advance (verses 19-20)

In verses 19 and 20, Paul seems to be expanding the territory of our spiritual battle to include praying for the advance of the gospel, the good news, into all of the world.

In carrying out our mission in the Great Commission at IBC, one of the most strategically important things we can do is pray. Because of our international and cultural diversity we have a mission field at our doorstep. And we're all aware that we face the advance and resistance of the enemy, who is making great cultural and religious inroads into Western Europe through Islam. For this task we must agree to be a praying people. Paul asked for prayer more than anything else, knowing that the spread of the gospel depended on it (2 Thessalonians 3:1).

Our missionary friends who serve in places where demonic activity is rampant pray and depend upon our prayers for their protection. Yet, their prayers are not for their protection alone, but are primarily for the advancement of the Gospel against the forces of the Evil One. How we also depend just as much on prayer, for ourselves and for each other! We are in a spiritual conflict, even though Satan may not work with his demons in the same ways as in other parts of the world. But Satan is at work to destroy the Christian witness of marriages and churches through conflict, divorce, and division. We need not fear Satan or the battle. Rather, as Jesus said, we should fear the one who can destroy both body and soul in hell. God is the only one we need to fear. And when we trust, love and obey him, we have victory through him who loves us.

It's time for us to show the Gospel of Christ is God's power to deliver us from the Evil One. Jesus can meet every need of ours and through him we can face any situation (Philippians 4:13; 19). Remember, Paul wrote this encouraging letter and referred to himself as "an ambassador in chains." *The Message* has Paul referring to himself as "jailbird preacher that I am." Although he was God's ambassador, he enjoyed "no diplomatic immunity" such as some of you enjoy, as Ralph Martin says (*The Broadman Bible Commentary*, volume 11).

It's time we got into the battle, for our own soul, for our children, and our lost nation and world. God is at work in this conflict, and he is inviting us to join him.

Conclusion:

May God give us the grace we need to be able to say with the Apostle Paul at the end of our pilgrimage, "I have fought the good fight" (2 Timothy 4:7).

If you're a Christian, you can't "dodge the draft." You've already been drafted/enlisted, and you're in the King's Army now. The only reasonable recourse for us now is to be victorious in spiritual warfare and to join in the responsibility of mutual protection against the real Enemy. We realize the importance of national security and vigilance against political enemies. We need to also realize the need for God's security against our constant enemy of our souls.

Let me encourage us all to do something very practical. In the place where you have your daily quiet time, post a picture of a soldier in his armor, and then ask God, before you leave for school or the workplace, to arm you with truth, integrity, righteousness, and the peace of the gospel message. Be sure you are shielded with faith and trust in Christ, and have his mind as your "helmet," being able to see things from a kingdom perspective. And be certain to take with you the word of God as your shield, as you keep on the armor with prayer and as you are prepared to ward off the attacks of the Enemy.

Those of you in the grips of Satan, you need Christ as Savior, as your Deliverer. You may say you don't think your life is demonically influenced or that Satan has you in his control. That is a tacit admission to the truth that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light, and is the quintessential deceiver. If you are not under the saving grace and Lordship of Jesus Christ, you are in the grips of the Evil One.

Trust Christ to set you free. That's what redemption is all about. He has through his blood, paid the ransom price to set you free.

Church is Christ's provision to us to be victorious in spiritual warfare. I think that a number of you this morning need encouragement in this spiritual battle you're engaged in and you need the fellowship of prayer.

Ancient shields were made to link together, so that soldiers would form an impenetrable, massive front, and would advance together against the enemy as an inexorable force.

Perhaps God is leading you to join with us as together we "storm the gates of hell" (Matthew 16:18). Together we can be victorious and successful in spiritual warfare, as we do our mission in the Great Commission.

Questions for personal reflection and/or group discussion:

1. Why do you think some people disbelieve what the Bible says about the existence of a personal devil and his demons?
2. What do you think is the devil's objective for unbelievers? For believers?
3. What are Satan's limitations?
4. What is our authority over Satan and his demons?
5. Briefly, what are the virtues symbolized by the armor of God, and why are they crucial in spiritual warfare?
6. How are we to daily "put on the armor"? What spiritual disciplines aid us in putting on and wearing the armor of God?
7. What are some "chinks in your armor," that is, areas of your life where you need to pray for special and specific protection?

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