

What in the World is Going On!?!

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Preacher: Dr. Daniel Heeringa

[0 : 00] I want you to turn to Ephesians chapter 6, Ephesians chapter 6. Do you ever get shocked and dismayed by what you see happening in the world? If opening ceremonies didn't get your attention of the Olympics, it ought to.

Do you mean to tell me that they were celebrating the made-up gods of Greek mythology that were filled, if you do the research, with blood sacrifices and sodomy while at the same time blaspheming the name of Jesus?

Yes, it's exactly what they were doing. It was a front to Christianity and it is confronting Christianity. Jesus told us we would be hated.

So don't be shocked when we are. I really want you to understand what all of that comes from. Not just a French opening ceremony, but the celebration of all things that are against the things of God, especially when the name of Christ is brought up.

I'm just not speaking though of stuff out there that the world's doing. I'm speaking of us as well. We are fighting in a war.

[1 : 24] It is a war that has already been won, but the battles continue to rage on in a very real sense. It rages on more real than you can see.

It's not a national battle. It's not a world war. Yet the effect of it highly influences our nation and our world.

I speak of a personal battle. A battle that is so common that we all face it. Yet so different that none of us are the same.

And it's not a battle that we can see like the conflicts of the Middle East, although they're fueled by this same war. It's an unseen battle in the hearts and the souls of lives, yet the evidence is all around us and within us.

And just because you can't see it does not mean it's not real. I can't see the wind either, but I've seen it do devastating things. In fact, it's more real than the wars that you see.

[2 : 34] In reality, it is the seed of the wars that you see. It's at the heart of every conflict that we face. And it wars against our family, and it wars against our church, and it wars against our psyche, and it wars against our soul.

When a church takes a hit, it's due to the influence of the enemy. When a family takes a hit, it's likely under the influence of the same enemy.

When we personally take a hit, we hit a bump in the road, get knocked off our feet, get back slapped by life. So many times, so much of that comes back to a war that, listen to me, was won long ago.

Yet still rages on. The battle that I fight affects you. And the battle that you fight affects me.

It affects us. It's our own battlefield. But I got news for you. It's a crowded battlefield. It is individualized.

[3 : 46] But yet, it is so very similar. It can be utterly confusing when the truth of it is rather plain.

It can appear justified at times when it's not justified at all. It's a war, and we can't avoid the battles therein.

Thankfully, it is one that Scripture warns us of. It is one that Scripture guides us through. That is what's going on in our world.

And one of the best explanations of this spiritual war that's taking place is mentioned in Paul's letter to Ephesus. And I will tell you that Ephesians chapter 6, 10 through 20 is the bedrock passage on this subject of spiritual warfare, the real spiritual war that we fight.

And we'll spend several weeks talking about it. And this Scripture is where we'll dock. Now, we'll venture throughout Scripture over the next few weeks to understand more of where it came from, how it's manifested, how the Satan's worked in the past, and how he works in the present, to understand what we face.

[5 : 13] But I will tell you from the beginning, we'll come back here in Ephesians chapter 6. Ephesians, again and again. Ephesians chapter 6, beginning in verse 10, says, Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Therefore, take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand firm.

This passage begins with him saying, finally, what does he mean by finally? Well, it's in the latter part of the book of Ephesians.

And all of the matters that he's dealt with in this letter has led up to this final instruction. He has spoken of the spiritual need that we have.

[6 : 23] Ephesians 1 is beautiful in that way. And then it gets to a key, maybe the two best words in all of Scripture.

But God. But God. And then he describes the difference that God has made in our life. He goes on to show us how that makes a difference in our daily life and how we apply that truth to when we go to work, when we live at home, and wherever we go.

And now after all of that, he finally says, he finishes up by saying, finally. In a world that you're living in and the people that you're around, we need to understand and commit to these necessities.

Now listen, we'll work through them in the days ahead. We'll understand them better in the days ahead. But I'm asking you to join me in committing completely to these necessities in our walk with God.

The first one is this. Understand the enemy. Understand the enemy. No matter what you may go through, you need to understand a basic premise about our enemy.

[7 : 43] And that is, I am not, and you are not, and we are not. We are not his prime targets. Christ is.

He's always been aiming at Christ, and he's always aiming at Christ. It's been that way from the beginning. Hebrews chapter 2, verse 14 and 15 says this. That through death, he, speaking of Christ, might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

That is the war. And what we're experiencing in our lives are the battles. Satan has always sought to destroy Christ.

At his birth, King Herod issued a decree to have him killed, and a lot of male babies died in that effort. In the desert. Satan tried to knock him out of ministry before he ever got started.

And then at the cross, he thought he had him. Thank God he didn't. At his death, 1 Peter tells us that Christ even proclaimed his victory over hellish forces.

[8 : 56] Now, I want you to notice the opposition at every hand. Notice this. Christ is the truth. Satan hides the truth. Christ gives life.

Satan takes life. Christ empowers us to produce spiritual fruit. Satan leads us into the works of the flesh.

Christ allows trials to come to build up our faith. Satan tempts us in an attempt to destroy us. And by the way, those two coincide at the same time.

The trials of God, the temptations of Satan. They coincide in our lives at the same time. Christ set us free. Satan enslaves people to sin.

Christ advocates for us. Christ, I mean, excuse me, Satan accuses us. But I want you to understand. Satan is not opposing you.

[9 : 58] He's not opposing me. He's not opposing us. He is opposing the work of Christ. And he wants to weaken it by weakening us. Satan wants to limit the power of God in the world by compromising the lives of Christians.

And Satan wants to take as many to hell as he possibly can by leading them astray and getting Christians to not let them go, let them know that they're astray.

To not give them warning. But I want you to understand something. It's just not about us. It's bigger than that. But it affects us.

It affects our families. It affects our church. It affects the world around us daily, minute by minute, even second by second. We have to commit, I believe, to understand the enemy.

The second thing is to recognize his schemes. Recognize his schemes. Ephesians chapter 4 tells us that God gave us apostles and prophets and evangelists and shepherds and teachers to equip us so that we will not be tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every word of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes.

[11 : 29] There is a spiritual storm of hurricane strength trying to twist and to turn us to the waves, the waves of the evil one.

And it is led by false doctrine. How do you know what's false? How do you know what's true? And how do you know what's false? Let me tell you how you don't do it. You don't do it by watching society.

Because society is going to change. You don't do that. But instead, you do it by turning to a timeless book.

A book that, although written a long time ago, is still true. It still applies. God's not surprised by the world we live in. God's not caught off guard by that.

He knew much of America would turn into a bunch of nutty fruitcakes. He knew that. And he knew that we'd try to marginalize morality. But I want you to be clear about something.

[12 : 32] The book doesn't lie. It doesn't lie. It's not outdated. And when the Bible says Christ is the only way and that his way is perfect, it's true.

It's true. It's true. When we watch that sacrilege on the opening ceremonies and we saw a guy beat up a girl in a boxing ring and all that kind of stuff. We see those things.

I looked over at my daughter. I paused the TV and looked over at my daughter and I said something. I said, listen. In your life, this stuff is going to become normal. It's going to look routine.

It's the world you live in. But I want you to understand something. It'll never be right. I don't care if everybody says it is. It'll never be right.

The word of God's not outdated. He spoke the truth. In the world in which he lived, and I'll be honest with you, in the world that Jesus lived in on this earth, it may surprise you what all was going on then.

[13 : 34] At that time, God's not surprised by what we face. No one can change the truth of the word of God. Don't be fooled by human cunning, trickery, craftiness.

That word, if you took it, literally speaks of cheating as in playing dice and cheating at dice. The devil will use humans to try his best to cheat you out of your life like a watch salesman at Chinatown.

He'll try his best to get you. By crafty schemes, Satan will rip you off. He'll wine you, he'll dine you, and he'll poison you.

He don't want to ruin your night. He wants to ruin your eternity. And if you're a child of God, he can't do that. So you know what he's going to do? He's going to try his best to ruin your life and ruin your testimony.

I think we have to commit to understand the enemy, and we'll do that together. We've got to commit to recognize his schemes, and we'll do that again. Like a football team studies another team's schemes before a game, we're going to study God's word together to understand that.

[14 : 42] I think we need to commit to that. But through all of that, we also need to commit to stand with the Lord. Stand with the Lord.

Paul is telling us at the end of this letter, be strong. Understand what you're dealing with. Understand the need to stand strong.

And by the way, that word there, be strong, is in the present tense. And in the Korne Greek, when you deal with the present tense, it means continual.

That means that you don't just stand strong with the Lord one time. You continually stand strong with the Lord. It's a source that you can constantly tap into. I believe there has to come a point in your life when you admit to God that you're a sinner, that you've done wrong, and that you need his salvation, and you commit your life to follow him from that day forward.

You're not in charge anymore. He's in charge. God, forgive me coming into my life and change me, dear God. And from this day forward, I'll live for your honor and glory. I believe that happens one time in someone's life if it happens at all.

[15 : 52] One time. And when you're saved, you receive the capability to have all the resources that God has given you in your life.

However, you must focus on the Lord, get this, constantly to tap into the strength that he's enabled you to have.

If somebody were to come to me today and give me a gift card to a restaurant or a store, a generous gift card, and I would have put that in my pocket and tell my wife, hey, let's go to the store.

We got a gift card. And boy, I tell you, she could spend it. And we go to the store, and we pick out what we want, and we get up there to pay. And she said, we got a gift card. Yeah, but I don't want to use a gift card now.

I mean, that thing's valuable. I'm going to hold on to that. We pay for whatever we're doing. The next time we come back, fill up the buggy again, go up there. How about that gift card? Yeah, I want to save that gift card now.

[16 : 52] That thing's valuable. How much good is that gift card going to do in my pocket? It might even expire if I'm not careful. You got to use it.

I got it. It's mine. But you got to use it. When you give your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ, you get all of Jesus that you're ever going to get.

You get all of the Holy Spirit that you're ever going to get. It'll take the rest of your life to tap in and understand what you've got. And I'll just go ahead and tell you, when you get to the end of your life, you'll still not understand completely what all you have when you have Christ Jesus.

I believe it becomes adamantly clear when we see him face to face. But I don't know that yet. But I trust it. Let me tell you something.

Salvation is not a gift card you put in your pocket and not use. You better pull it out every second of the day. Every minute of the day. Use the resources that God has placed before you.

[17 : 54] Continually is what the word means. Not only that, but it's also a verb that's a passive. And a passive word means that you can't make yourself strong.

This is not something that is within you that you have to just reach down and get. Your salvation is not in you. It's in God. Your strength is not in you.

It's in God. You reach to him for strength. You rely upon him for strength. I chaperoned a youth rafting trip a few years ago.

And before we got in the raft, they taught us what to do when disaster hits. And they said the guide in the back of the boat has a rope. It's a handy little thing in a bag.

And he'll throw you that rope. And you just, when you go underwater, you just look up and look for the rope. Okay? I'm a simple-minded man, so I just thought, look for the rope. Don't fall out the boat, but look for the rope.

[18 : 59] We went into a place called the washing machine. They put me at the front of the raft. Another big old boy was at the back of the raft. And we went through what I call the washing machine because when we got through it, I looked back.

And a girl was in there, and she was doing a 360 in the water. And she'd come up and go, ah! And then she'd come back and go back in, ah! Like that. It was funny for a minute, and I thought, she may not make it out.

But anyway. But we went through there, and big boy in the back fell off, fell out. And when he fell out, that caused the front end to seesaw up, which caused me to push over toward the little girl that was beside me.

I looked right past her, and I saw a rock on the other side of her. And I thought, if I crash into her, she'll crash into the rock. Not only will the little girl be hurt, but her daddy's going to kill me.

And so in my cat-like, athletic way, I rolled out of the boat. What are you laughing at? I rolled out of the boat because you just roll out and look for the rope.

[20 : 05] What I didn't know was when I rolled out, it plunged me under the water. And it would throw me down under the water for a long way. I'd say about 75 yards. First time I told this story, I think it was about 50 feet.

But it's grown over time. But either way, 100 feet or so, give or take, it took me a long way down. And I don't know what the capacity of that life jacket was, but I know it was about three pounds less than what I weighed.

Because it got me close to the surface, enough to know what I was doing, but not enough to get up. I saw the light, but it wasn't warm and fuzzy, and it wasn't drawing me. I couldn't get to it.

It was the sunlight coming through the water. Finally, when I did come up, I couldn't find my boat. There was no rope. I don't know where they went. Come to find out, rope boy fell out too.

He couldn't help me at all. Three scrawny little high school boys in a raft came up beside me. They're all strapping young men today. But they come up beside me, and I was just sitting there thinking in that water, their best intentions is going to drown me.

[21 : 13] They'll never get me out of here. And if I throw my leg up on the side of that raft, I'll get a cramp, and I just might as well drown. I thought I was dead. Those boys had listened to their instructor, though.

They said, Preacher, come here. They got me up beside that boat. They grabbed the straps on my raft. They put their feet on the side of that raft, just like he told them to do, and they all three pulled.

And when they did, they pulled me up over the side of that raft like a beach whale. Woo! I came up, son. I didn't get out of that water.

I didn't get out of that water. Until I was dependent upon them. I was stuck.

I was scared. And I became dependent. I had to be passive. I couldn't do it myself. Neither can you end this fight.

[22 : 16] This word is also an imperative. It's an imperative meaning it's a command. And it is aimed at the Christian. So the combination of that, and it's a second person plural, which means you.

It means all of us as Christians. So when you put that together, it's a present passive imperative. Second person plural meaning we are to allow ourselves to be strengthened.

See, a lot of people think it's in their own strength. And it's not. So I want you to be clear about the third part of our strategy.

I'll detail it in the days ahead. But if we don't commit to it, knowledge does us no good. Understand it. Understand it. You can't win this on your own.

You will not stand with the Lord. Understand the enemy. Recognize his schemes.

[23 : 19] And stand with the Lord. Set your heart on the Lord. Strive for victory. Work to win with the Lord. But you'll never win alone.

He is for you. And he'll stand with us. The strength of the Lord is an overwhelmingly powerful opportunity for us through Christ.

Paul tries to describe it. And I want you to listen to how he piles up powerful words on top of each other when he gives this description in Ephesians 1 verse 19. He says, I don't cease thanking the Lord for what?

For what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe according to the working of his great might. If you were to ask some boy to describe that kind of strength, he were to tell you he's a super duper big time strong.

That's what that means. God's strong. That's what we have in him. God's strong. And so let's commit today. I want to understand what's going on.

[24 : 29] I want to understand the enemy. I want to recognize his schemes. And I want to stand with the Lord. And when we do, my friend, victory will come in our lives.

And lives will be changed because of our strength. With every head bowing, every eye closed, I want to know this morning. If there's ever become a time in your life when you've admitted to the Lord that you've done wrong, that you're a sinner, and that you need him to forgive you for that sin.

Because, see, when God forgives you of that sin, he reunites you in a relationship with the Lord. He empowers your life with the power of the Spirit of God.

Gives you guidance and direction in your life. Gives you strength to fight in the midst of the battles that we face. If you've never committed your life to the Lord Jesus Christ, I want you to know there's a well chest of opportunity waiting on you when you surrender your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

You've never done that. We're going to stand in a moment and we're going to sing. You come and say, Pastor, I want to give my life to Christ. I'd love to guide you in what that means. Maybe you've done that privately, but you've never acknowledged that publicly.

[25 : 50] Jesus, by his example and by his commission, told us that we do that publicly through baptism. If you've never been baptized as a believer, and you want to stand boldly for the Lord and tell others what Christ has done in your life, you come.

I'll guide you in that process. Maybe you're here and God's drawing you to Pickens First Baptist Church. What an exciting day in the life of our church. God's doing wonderful things.

And if you feel like God's leading you to be a part of that, you come. Love to guide you in that. But the majority of you just got stuff. You got battles going on.

Stuff you need to lay before the Lord. And I'm telling you today, you need to commit to understand the enemy. You need to commit to recognize the schemes.

You need to commit to stand with the Lord. And you can do that where you stand in just a moment. You can do it at this altar. Pastor can pray for you. Makes no difference to me.

[26 : 52] I don't know where you are. I don't know what God's telling you to do. But I know you'll never be satisfied unless you follow exactly what he'd have you to do. Just let him lead you. Lord Jesus, I love you and thank you for the opportunity today that you've given us.

To worship you, Father. And I pray that we'll end it the correct way. By simply being obedient to follow as you lead, Lord. We love you dearly. Lead us now, we pray.

In Jesus' precious name. Amen. And I pray that we're in Jesus'áticas.