

## **Ephesians 6:10-17 — Spiritual Warfare**

**June 15, 2014**

Most of us know the Elliott Rodgers story. He was a college student at the University of Santa Barbara that on May 24, less than a month ago, decided to kill. He stabbed his three roommates multiple times, brutally taking their lives. He went to a sorority, planning to massacre the dorm. Thankfully, he wasn't let in. He did manage to kill three women. He hopped in his car and drove into a deli, killing another young man. He ran over a pedestrian with his car. He shot multiple people while driving around town shooting out the window with his gun. He hit a bicyclist at such a high rate of speed that the cyclist's body collapsed his windshield. All this before he died by taking his own life.<sup>1</sup>

Why did Elliott go nuts? The news, tells us he was mentally ill. He needed medication. A few chemicals were out of balance in his brain? I wonder. Was there something more behind his brutal, pointless killing spree?

Many of us think everything can be explained by science. It wasn't always this way. For most of history people believed not every problem in the world has a purely physical cause. For most of history the world has believed there are also unseen spiritual forces at work in our physical world. Some of these forces are dark and evil. We call them the devil and his horde of demons. The devil and his demons tempt. They tempt Christians and non-Christians to heinous acts of evil and destruction. They sow hideous thoughts in our minds and sometimes these thoughts are acted on. Was there something demonic behind

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<sup>1</sup> <http://abcnews.go.com/US/elliott-rodgers-trail-carnage/story?id=23858106#>

Elliott Rodger's killing spree or was it just an imbalance in his brain? What do you think?

The Bible doesn't attribute every physical sickness or mental problem to demons but it does attribute some. When Jesus was on Earth, he not only healed the sick but he cast demons out of people that caused physical and mental sickness. The Bible is clear that unseen dark powers that the Bible calls Satan and his demons exist, and they are fighting against us physically and mentally. Today, we will learn how to do battle against the demonic temptations and attacks of our enemy that each of us will face.

If you are new, my name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors at CrossWinds. As a church, we are in a series of studies on the book of Ephesians. When we began our study, we studied Acts 19, which told us how the backstory about how the church in the city of Ephesus began. One of the things we learned is that Ephesus was filled with the occult. It was the epicenter of witchcraft in the ancient world. It was a city with a large publishing business for books on spells and witchcraft.

Serious levels of demon possession happened in the city. When the Seven Sons of Sceva, a Jewish exorcist group that we read about in Acts 19, tried a ghostbuster move on a demon-possessed man and attempted to use the name of Jesus like a lucky rabbit's foot to exorcise a demon, the possessed man attacked them and beat them up.

In Acts 19, we also learn that when Ephesians came to Christ they burned their magic books. The value of those books in modern day currency was

roughly \$6 million. All this is to say that Satan and his demons are real and were deeply entrenched in the city of Ephesus. The Ephesian Christians found themselves in battle with powerful demonic forces in the city on a daily basis.

How did Paul tell the Ephesians to face this demonic assault? What can we learn to battle against demonic attack today? This morning, we will find those answers and much more. Let's open our Bibles. Our verses break apart under two main headings: 1) The War — What do I need to know about spiritual warfare? and 2) The Weapons — What are my weapons I fight with and how do I use them?

### **The War — What do I need to know about spiritual warfare?**

I am going to take these verses in reverse order beginning in verse 13 and working my way back to verse 10.

#### **Who is the enemy?**

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. Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)

Colossians 1 tells us that at the command of the God the Father, God the Son made the entire physical seen world and the son of God also made a vast unseen world of spiritual beings. Every physical and spiritual being was created by Jesus at his father's will. Genesis 1:31 tells us that when Jesus was done creating everything at the command of his father, it was good. By the time we get to Genesis 3, there must have been some kind of angelic rebellion in heaven because Satan, who was originally created good, rebelled against God and took a third of the angels with him. They were cast out of heaven and are on Earth

where Satan, in the form of a snake, tempted Eve. What a better way to irritate God than try and destroy Adam and Eve, the first man and woman. Adam and Eve were the pinnacle of God's creative will, because the Bible tells us Adam and Eve were created in the image of God.

**What was the original sin of Satan?** It was pride. Other passages in the Bible lead us to believe Satan was an angelic worship leader, who decided not to pass all worship on to God but to keep some for himself. He wanted to be like God.

**When will my enemy attack?** Fallen angels are known as demons. They typically attack us at our weakest moments. In Luke 4 and Matthew 4, Jesus' ministry began with fasting for 40 days in the wilderness. At the end of 40 days, when Jesus was at his weakest point, he was exhausted from hunger after not eating for 40 days, that was when Satan began attacking him with temptations. Each time Satan attacked Jesus with temptation, the way Jesus fought back was by rebuking Satan by quoting the Bible. After Jesus rebuked Satan three times with the Bible, it says Satan left him and waited for an opportune time to tempt him again. When was the next opportune time? When Jesus was weak. When Jesus was majorly stressed. Before Jesus went to the cross, Jesus was again tempted by Satan in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22) with such intensity that in his stress, Jesus sweat drops of blood. When do demons typically attack our thoughts and place temptations in our minds? When we are physically and emotionally weak. The other time he tempts us is not just in our moments of weakness but in our moments of success. He tempts us at that point by pride and thinking we don't need God for everything but that we can handle life on our

own because we are pretty smart. We can live lives independent of God. Those are the times we are most vulnerable to demonic attack, when demons place dark thoughts in our mind.

**What are the names of my enemy?** The chief name given to our enemy is Satan. This name is used 53 times in the Bible. It simply means adversary. The number one thing Satan wants to do is destroy. He wants to destroy God and he wants to destroy us because we are the pinnacle of his earthly creation. We are created in God's image. Satan describes who he is. He is our adversary.

Satan is also called the devil. While Satan is his name, the devil is his game. Devil means temptor. This is what our adversary does. He specializes in tempting us to sin. Dr. Jones is a fish doctor. He specializes in bait. He specializes in tempting a fish to bite a hook so they end up in the frying pan as dinner. In the same way, the devil does the same thing. He tempts us. He works hard to get us to bite the hook of sin.

One way he does this is by putting thoughts in our minds. For example, the devil put it in Peter's mind to try to dissuade Jesus from going to the cross. When Jesus rebuked Peter, he rebuked Satan at the same time because the devil was behind the thought in Peter's head.

And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man." Matthew 16:22–23 (ESV)

Satan is given many other names in the Bible that describe what he does. We could have an entire sermon just on his names but there is one additional one I want to mention. Our enemy is called Beelzebub 11 times in the Bible.

That is one of Jesus' favorite names for him. What does that mean? It means "Lord of the flies." Where did that come from? The Egyptians worshipped the sun god Baal. Baal was said to be head over the flies. Archaeologists have even unearthed golden flies that the Egyptians used in worship. Guess who the Egyptians were worshipping? Satan and his demons were behind the idols the Egyptians worship. By the time of Jesus, the name Beelzebub as "Lord of the flies" had become a slang term for Satan. Satan was called king of the maggots. That is what Jesus called him. The maggot king. Now you know how Jesus felt about Satan.

**Who does our enemy work with?** Paul said we do not battle with Satan alone but Satan has an entire army working with him and for him. They are called demons or fallen angels. Paul said:

...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. Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)

This verse is very helpful. First of all, we learn that Satan's demons are ordered like a military unit. Not all demons are the same. Just as angels differ in rank and power, so do demons. The Bible does not give us the details on the differences in power between angels that are rulers and authorities, Jewish tradition speculates on what they did but there is nothing biblically definitive, just that there are differences in power and rank of demons.

The cosmic powers over this present darkness is an interesting term. The term cosmic powers is never found anywhere else in the Bible. Why is it used here? Remember that Ephesus was hugely into the occult. Archaeologists

discovered religious artifacts in Ephesus with this Greek term, the cosmokrats, written on them. In Ephesus they apparently worshipped demons they believed came from other planets. Paul didn't deny this, he simply said that as Christians, we are in a battle against those demons.

Lastly, he said we are in a battle against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. This is a catch-all term for every other spiritual power lined up against us. There is a vast unseen spiritual realm of demons out there of differing ranks and powers seeking to tempt us to sin like a fisherman baits a hook.

Paul said we don't wrestle against flesh and blood. It is interesting that Paul used the term wrestling to describe our battle with Satan and his demons. This is hand to hand combat. It is close quarters. It is not like firing a gun at somebody or launching a missile. If you have ever wrestled you know it is a sport of raw will, intensity and emotion. It is very hard with absolutely no break in the action. It is mano-a-mano. We are a wrestling family, and I can tell you wrestling is a hard sport. It is a lot of sweat and hard work. Why did Paul use this analogy? Ephesus had a colosseum. As a city, the people were into sports. What was one of their favorite sports in the colosseum? Wrestling! That kind of struggle best describes our battle against temptation. Not running. Not shot put. It was wrestling. It is raw fight club. Incidentally, you should know that ancient wrestling was much more intense than modern wrestling. It made UFC look tame. Losing a wrestling match could cost you your life. In some of the Greek wrestling matches, the price of loss was that your eyes were gouged out. That

gives you a good mental picture of the intensity of wrestling and the kind of struggle we engage in with the devil and demons against temptation.

### **What are the enemy's strategies?**

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. Ephesians 6:11 (ESV)

We will talk about the armor of God in a few minutes. I want to take a few minutes to look at the schemes of the devil. How is Satan trying to hook us?

**False Religion.** Satan's desire is to be God. Satan's plan is to try and copy everything about God. Just as Jesus is the true Christ and the one savior of the world, in Revelation we find that Satan will generate an anti-Christ, a false Christ who will try and pose himself as a savior of the world. Just as God is deserving of worship, Satan tries to gain worship for himself. How does he do that today? There are a few freaks who are worshipping Satan directly. The Bible is clear that all other religions outside of what God did with ancient Israel and today through Christ are actually run by powerful high-ranking demons.

For instance, when Israel left Egypt and was taking over the Promised Land, what were the nations they attacked worshipping? Baal. Asherah. What was behind those false gods?

They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods; with abominations they provoked him to anger. They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded. Deuteronomy 32:16–17 (ESV)

So they shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices to goat demons, after whom they whore. This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations. Leviticus 17:7 (ESV)

No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the



Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. 1 Corinthians 10:20–21 (ESV)

The Old Testament and New Testament are clear. All the other religions of the world are about demonic worship if you are not worshipping Jesus. One time I preached this and I had somebody walk out of the church in the middle of the service and leave the church. I am sorry if this offends you. This is what the Bible teaches. All other religions of the world do not lead to freedom and forgiveness through Christ, they lead to slavery and destruction. The Old Testament Canaanite religions were not about God out of love sacrificing for us, they were about us sacrificing to get God's love. Many of them involved human sacrifice. Child sacrifice in the fire. That is demonic. This is why some Muslims ultimately kill themselves. The demon of Allah wants Muslims to live in slavery. He wants them to kill themselves. There is a demon behind Buddhism. There is a demon behind Hinduism. There are demons behind every false religion.

Do not let anyone tell you all religions are the same. That is one of Satan's schemes. They are as different as worshipping God or worshipping demons. It is a night and day difference.

**Mixing error into truth.** Satan rarely tries to tempt with outright lies. He is a deceiver. He mixes error with truth to make it more palatable. He did this to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. He said to Eve, that God knows if you eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you will be like him and know good from evil. Was that true? Yes! He just conveniently neglected to tell Eve that the result of rebellion was death and separation from God. A deadly lie sugar-coated in truth. For example, some people believe that since we are

saved by grace and God will always forgive us when we sin, then we should continue in sin. They teach that sin doesn't matter because God will always forgive us. That is true but it is not all of the truth. Jesus died not just to save us from the punishment of sin but he died to save us from the power of sin. He died for us so we don't have to continue in sin.

### **Where do we find the strength to win the war?**

**Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Ephesians 6:10 (ESV)**

We called this series in the book of Ephesians, "Who Am I?" One of the big themes of the book is that our identity is from Jesus and is all about Jesus. Christ's victory over sin is our victory over sin. Christ's victory over death is our victory over death. Christ's strength over demonic attack is our strength. Paul said in Colossians:

**He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. Colossians 2:15 (ESV)**

On the cross, Christ conquered Satan and the demonic world. The key to winning any demonic attack is to rely more deeply upon Christ, his love for us and who we are in Jesus. When we face strong times of temptation, read the Bible. The Holy Spirit will take his word and apply it to our lives and bring home to us what we need to hear. We need to pray. As we pray, we rely on Jesus' strength rather than our own strength.

This is so essential to beating our adversary. It is not fighting him with our strength but fighting temptation with God's strength and by relying on Jesus.

## **The Weapons — What are my weapons and how do I use them?**

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. Ephesians 6:13 (ESV)

In a moment we will go over the individual pieces of the armor but we need to understand why we need this armor. There will be times in our lives of intense demonic attack where demons are working hard to tempt us to sin by placing thoughts in our minds, or like Job, difficult circumstances in our lives. Paul called those times, “in the evil day.” In Jesus’ life in Luke 4 and Matthew 4, we find intense demonic attack took place at the beginning of his ministry. After 40 days without food, he was physically exhausted and stressed, and Satan set out to attack him with powerful temptations.

Satan and his demons wait for the opportune times in our lives to tempt us. It is when we are tired. It is when we are stressed. It is when we are away from home. It is when we are away from church and Christian accountability. It is when we are away from reading our Bibles and prayer. Those are opportune times for the devil. Expect that.

### **The Belt of Truth**

Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth,... Ephesians 6:14 (ESV)

As Paul wrote this letter from Rome, he was most likely chained to a Roman soldier. As he looked at the soldier, he described some of his pieces of his armor and analogized it to important parts of the Christian life to win when attacked by Satan.

The first piece is the belt of truth. A Roman soldier wore a long shirt. It looked like a bed sheet with a head hole in the middle. It draped down the front

and the back and needed to be gathered. The belt is what gathered it so it didn't flap around. If your shirt was flapping around in a fight, all the enemy had to do was grab your shirt and throw you to the ground, like a football player is taken down when somebody grabs the back of his jersey. The belt is what holds everything together. It is called the belt of truth.

There is a lot of discussion over what Paul meant with this metaphor. I believe there are two aspects to this. I believe he meant that having the truth and living the truth protects us from demonic attack. As Christians, we have the truth about what the real problem is in the world, sin. We have the truth about what is the real solution, Jesus. When Satan is trying to discourage us, we know the truth. God loves us and will not let us go. Everyone else is living a lie because that is what Satan spins.

Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.  
John 8:43–45 (ESV)

Having the truth about life protects us. In the same way, living truthfully protects us. Truthfulness is protection against demonic attack. When we lie, we give Satan and his demons an opportunity to attack us. Tell the truth. It is spiritual protection from demonic attack.

### **The Breastplate of Righteousness**

...and having put on the breastplate of righteousness... Ephesians 6:14 (ESV)

The Roman soldier wore a breast plate that covered his front and his back. The goal was to protect his vital organs so when he was in hand-to-hand combat,

if somebody shanked him with a knife, he would survive. In the same way, when we are attacked by Satan, Christ's righteousness is what protects us. When Satan helps you remember you never do anything right, what protects us is that our relationship with God is not based on what we do right, it is based upon what Christ has done right for us. God looks at us and sees the perfection of his son.

Just as Christ's righteousness protect us, our righteousness also protects us from demonic attack.

**Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Ephesians 4:26–27 (ESV)**

Apparently when we are angry and we hold onto anger and we do not talk it out with the person we are angry with, over time that gives Satan an opportunity to attack us. Doing what is right is always right. Doing what is right, even though it is hard, protects us from being attacked and tempted by Satan.

**Shoes of the readiness given by the gospel of peace.**

**...and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. Ephesians 6:15 (ESV)**

A Roman soldier wore a heavy duty, open-toed sandal. What made it unique is that while your toes were exposed, the Romans fitted nails into the tread of the shoe. Think of cleated football shoes. The goal was that they didn't slip in battle. Paul was saying that when we are tempted by Satan, we don't get pushed over or tripped up by him when we are relying on the gospel. The gospel means good news and it is good news of peace. As a Christian, all of our sins are paid for. God is not angry at us. We have complete and total peace with God. He loves us. He will never let us go. When Satan tells you that you have

messed up and God is done with you, you go back to your firm footing. I have complete and total peace with God.

### **The Shield of Faith**

**In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one... Ephesians 6:16 (ESV)**

The Roman shield Paul was talking about was not the small Roman hand shield used in battle, it was the big Roman shield used as a column of Roman soldiers advanced. It was approximately 4 feet tall by 2 and a half feet wide. It looked like a door. It had metal edging and was covered in cloth and animal skins. The covering were soaked in water. As a Roman column advanced the enemy would shoot arrows at them. They usually dipped the arrows in pitch so they were flaming arrows. If a flaming arrow hit somebody it created quite a bit of damage. First, the arrow could kill them. If the arrow didn't hit a vital organ and they could continue, the flaming pitch went into the wound and all around the wound. When you have burning tar all over the side of your arm it really freaked you out and ruined your day. The idea with these shields was to hide behind them and the wet covering kept them from burning with the flaming arrows.

Paul said that Satan will launch arrows at us. Arrows of anger, envy, pride, doubt, fear, despair and every temptation he can think of. What we hide behind is the shield of faith. That means I know that I can trust God. No matter what is going on, I have faith that he loves me. I know the plans he has for me. They may not be easy but God is good. He will use me for his kingdom. When life is falling apart, we protect ourselves with our faith and trust in God. He is reliable. We can trust him.

## The Helmet of Salvation

...and take the helmet of salvation... Ephesians 6:17 (ESV)

The last piece of armor we will look at this morning is the helmet of salvation. The Roman soldier wore a helmet of either metal or thick leather that extended down the back of his neck and the sides of his head. Some helmets also had something to protect the face and the nose. The reason they protected the head is because everyone knows if you are going to take somebody out, the quickest way to do it is a head shot. In ancient warfare, horsemen had a special long-handled ax they would ride with just lopping off heads like a weed whacker cutting the grass as they rode through the enemy. The Roman soldier's helmet protected him and kept his head on his shoulders.

In the same way, God's salvation is what saves us. God has promised to rescue us from Satan, sin and death through Jesus. No matter what happens to us, Satan cannot take off our head. He cannot deliver a lethal blow to Christians.

## Conclusion

*(Completed by the Master of Ceremonies after the sermon.)* When Pastor Kurt began, he talked about Elliott Rodgers. He was the young man from the University of Santa Barbara who pointlessly took the lives of students less than a month ago. Why did he do it? Was it just a mental problem where he needed medication or do you think there was something more? Were demons tempting him to do what he did? What do you think?

As Christians, the devil and his demons will tempt us and put us through trials. We don't have to be defeated. Jesus defeated the devil on the cross, and

as Christians, our victory doesn't come from our strength but through him. By relying on Jesus, we find victory over Satan's attacks. We have the truth while Satan spins lies. We have Christ's righteousness. When God looks at us he doesn't see our sin, he sees the purity of his son. We have peace with God. We can have faith in God. We can trust him. We have the helmet of salvation to protect us against a lethal blow.

Next week, as we finish the book of Ephesians, we look at the final two weapons given us for spiritual warfare against the devil. They are the Bible and prayer.



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