

Sermon Series: As for You
Fight Like a Christian – by Jeff McClain
Ephesians 6:10 – 24

Boone UMC
November 20, 2016

Bottom line: Life is a battle. Put on God's armor and be ready to stand/fight like a Christian.

Last sermon on Ephesians – timed really well – how to prepare for (Thanksgiving) battle

Life is a battle

- Paul reminds us – it's bigger than we think
- We aren't taught to fight well, don't have good examples
- My fighting prep
 - o Parents were educators – behave, not fight
 - o someone accused me of liking a girl, things escalated, bear hugging, stop drop and roll
 - o Could've used some advice on how to fight. Not prepared for battle

Paul's advice for battle – read **Eph 6:10-24**

Finally – in light of everything else I've said, remember this

- Summary of Ephesians
 - o power that raised Christ is also ours
 - o we participate in Christ's death, resurrection, inheritance
 - o Our ID is Christian, in Christ
 - o Saved by grace through faith, one in Christ, no longer strangers but saints
 - God broke down the dividing wall between us
 - o Old life has passed away, new life of righteousness and holiness
 - o Submit to one another in mutual love out of reverence for Christ

Sounds great. Now truth telling about state of the world – life is a battle

Rallying cry, call to battle

- False gospel: because we're Christian life should be easy
- Paul tells the truth – life is a battle – and it's bigger than you imagined
 - o Sin, death, power of the devil impact everything
 - Obvious in things like violence and destruction, disease and death but also see effects in political divisiveness, anger, frustration, fear, insecurity, even arguments with crazy uncle – all part of bigger battle

- **Verse 12** For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the **spiritual forces of evil** in the heavenly places
- CS Lewis intro *Screwtape Letters* – most prefer to ignore forces of evil, pretend they don't exist – caricatures of devil with horns and hooves – can't believe in that, can you?
- The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist (Usual Suspects)
- Man on plane – Why did you say that? What do you know about God?

Battle is real, bigger than we imagined it

Most people never consider that their small struggles might be part of a larger campaign.

How do we prepare for battle?

- recognize there is one, and we're in it

Be strong in the Lord (v10)

Put on whole armor of God (v11, 13)

- v14 Belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shield of faith (v16)
 - Paul may have been in prison writing this
 - Paul was expert in Jewish law, scripture
 - **Isaiah 11:5** (Messiah) Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.
 - Emphasizing further our unity in Christ, inheritance children of God
 - **Isaiah 59:17** He (the Lord) put on righteousness as his breast plate, and the helmet of salvation on his head
- **Eph 6:15** As for shoes...put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace
 - **Isaiah 52:7** How beautiful on the mountain are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace
 - What shoes of peace look like: practicing Easter trumpet at Mepkin – Mighty Fortress
 - Fr Gueric's response – We occasionally sing Luther's hymns here. He's got some good ones. And by the way, the monks are really enjoying your trumpet playing
 - It's gotta be the shoes! Choose your Thanksgiving shoes wisely!

Listen again to the armor so far

- belt of truth – Jesus is the way, truth, life – let that reality hold you up

- breastplate of righteousness – being in right relationship with God protects your heart
- shoes – whatever helps you proclaim peace
- shield of faith – to quench flaming arrows of evil one – by grace saved through faith

None of armor listed so far is an offensive weapon, none used for attacking

Isaiah 59:17 He (the LORD) put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in fury as in a mantle. (the LORD, to fight injustice)

- Paul does not include vengeance and fury as things for us to “put on.” Vengeance and fury are not part of our Christian equipment – they’re left to the Lord (Rom 12:19)

Eph 6:17 Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. “Take” better translated “receive” – a gift from God, nothing you can take. Like God’s grace, communion

First offensive weapon – sword of Spirit, word of God.

- How not to use the sword
 - o Literally – as a weapon of destruction. Vengeance is Lord’s.
 - o Don’t throw bible at people! Shane Claiborne – yelling bible verses never changed minds
- How to use the sword
 - o Let it pierce our hearts – Word of God is living, active, sharper than two-edged sword
 - o Fill the holes in our hearts with God’s Word, stand on its promises – earlier in Eph
- Sword more than just Scripture – also powerful creative Word of God
 - o Let there be light – and spoke creation into existence
 - o Word that spoke through Moses – Let my people go
 - o This is my beloved Son – listen to him
 - o Calmed the wind and waves by saying, “Peace, be still!”
 - o Word that called Jesus forth from tomb
 - o Word of salvation that does not return void
 - o Word of God – Sword of Spirit – is gift to church in mission of peace. Paul says receive it!

Very countercultural weapons – truthfulness, righteousness, peace, faithfulness, gifts of salvation/word

- This is how to fight like a Christian; these are our weapons
- It’s our duty to use them whenever we see the spiritual forces of evil in action; We stand against

- Story of bullying at school – group of kids surrounded another student. How respond?
 - Stand with that person. Ignore bullies, engage one being bullied
 - Let them know they're not alone. You're not either- Jesus stands/fights with you

Christians fight differently than the rest of the world

- No confidence in ordinary weapons of war
- No confidence in ourselves – can't withstand evil on our own
- Confidence in God alone – where does that confidence come from?

Christ the King Sunday – Jesus is Lord

- Advent – Jesus entered the battle with us
- Jesus fought with those same weapons, same full armor of God
 - truthfulness, righteousness, faithfulness, peace
 - not with his hands clenched in fists or grasping a sword but open and nailed to a cross
 - He was crucified, dead, and buried
 - Can you imagine how the forces of evil must have felt at that moment?

Andrew Peterson – High Noon

Now the demons, they danced in the darkness
 When that last ragged breath left His lungs
 And they reveled and howled
 At the war that they thought they had won
 But then in the dark of the grave, the stone rolled away
 In the still of the dawn, on the greatest of days

Jesus is Lord. That's where our confidence comes from. That's why we have faith in God's armor. That's why we know we can stand strong against the forces of evil – because 2000 years ago Jesus entered the battle and won the decisive victory over sin, death, and the power of the devil once and for all. In the still of the dawn, on the greatest of days.

Battles we're a part of – though very real – are only small part of a war that's already been won
 Doesn't make the spiritual forces of evil very happy

- doing their best to disrupt and distract us, from now until Jesus comes back in final victory

Don't lose hope – even when it looks like evil is winning. That's not the end of the story.

- The enemy is real, but his days are numbered.

- **Luther: A Mighty Fortress**
 - The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
his rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure;
- The battle is fierce, but we have all the resources we need.
- Put on the full armor of God and fight like a Christian – standing with Christ for truth, righteousness, faithfulness, and peace. Amen.