

Christian Combat - the Fact and Foe of Christian Combat

by David Guzik

David Guzik's sermon emphasizes the reality of spiritual warfare Christians face and the importance of being equipped with God's strength and armor.

Duration: 41:03

Scripture: Ephesians 6:10-16

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Christian Armor"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of Christian combat or spiritual warfare. He emphasizes the importance of recognizing that there is a battle going on in the spiritual realm. The speaker uses the analogy of a physically fit soldier with the best weapons and armor, but if he is unaware of the battle, he will be vulnerable to surprise attacks. The speaker references Ephesians 6:10-12, where Paul encourages believers to be strong in the Lord and put on the whole armor of God to stand against the schemes of the devil. The sermon highlights the need for Christians to remember the spiritual dimension of their problems and to actively engage in the battle through prayer and reliance on God's power.

Transcript

This morning, we're in the second part of a six-part series and the subject of it is what I call Christian combat. You can call it spiritual warfare, you could call it Christian combat, you could call it our daily struggle. You know what I'm talking about.

It's the thing that we as Christians face in the Christian life in coming against the spiritual opposition that we face. What I want to talk about this morning is number one, the fact of the Christian combat that we face, and number two, the foe that we face in our Christian combat. The reason why I want to talk about those is because that's what is explained to us in the verse of scripture that we're going to take a look at this morning, and that's Ephesians chapter 6 verse 12.

Ephesians chapter 6 verses 10 through 20 is one of the most wonderful and detailed passages in the scripture dealing with these principles of Christian combat. So over six weeks, we're taking an in-depth look at Ephesians chapter 6 verses 10 through 20, and this morning we're taking a look at verse 12, but since last week we started at verse 10, let's get a running start, and I'm going to start at verse 10, and then we'll conclude at verse 12. We read, finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his

might.

Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Now last week when we began this series, I spoke from verses 10 and 11, and I spoke on what I call the two pillars of Christian combat. Just as much as your body is built upon two pillars, you call them legs, and you really need both of them to get around, don't you? If you only have one leg, it's going to be a much harder time to move around properly.

But with both legs, you can usually function pretty well. What happens if there are two pillars or two legs to the Christian combat that we face? One of them is mentioned in verse 11, and it's familiar to many Christians. You may have heard a dozen sermons that relate to this topic, and it's the idea of the armor of God and how Christians are to wear it and be equipped with it, and we're going to talk about that plenty in coming weeks.

But I think that the other pillar, just as important, and as a matter of fact, not only is it just as important, it comes before the second pillar is contained for us in verse 10 where we read, finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, and unless you do that, nothing else really matters in Christian combat. You're not strong in the Lord. It doesn't matter how great your weapons are.

You need to have strength in God, and I think that's God's word to us last week. I think God wants to remind some of us about that this week. You just simply need to be strong in the Lord.

Not strong in yourself, not strong in the power of your own might, but be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. God has given his might as a resource of power to us because we're his children, and he says, so to speak, pipe into my power by faith and I will give you my power for you to live your Christian life, and that's an exciting thought. So if we take a look at our life and say, okay, I'm living in this strength, I'm living in this power that God makes available to me, then what? Well, we put on the armor of God, which we'll talk more about in coming weeks, but I want you to think about something.

You could have a soldier who is incredibly trained physically. I mean, his muscles look like they're chiseled out of granite, and this guy is unbelievably fit, and then you could put the best weapons and armor in the world on him. I mean, he has every kind of technical gadget that men love and sort of, you know, play around with and all these different things.

I mean, he's got it all squared away. He is a fighting machine, both in his physical makeup and in the armor he has. But if he never knows there's a battle going on, he'll probably get beaten by a surprise attack.

That's what we have to recognize here. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age. When Paul wrote, but against, we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers in verse 12, but against means that there is a battle for the followers of Jesus to fight.

You're in it. I want you to understand something very clearly this morning, friends. Paul does not call the believer to enter into Christian combat.

You're in it. You woke up in it this morning. You're in it right now.

Now, if you're unaware of the fact, you're probably getting beat pretty bad and you may not even know it, but you're in it. Sometimes as Christians, we talk about entering into spiritual warfare, and that can sort of be a shorthand way of saying, I'm going to recognize the fact that I'm in spiritual warfare and act accordingly. But really, if you think about it strictly, we don't enter into spiritual warfare, we're in it.

And what we're called to do as believers is simply recognize it. You are in a spiritual battle, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and so forth. And if you're ignorant of that fact, or if you ignore that fact, you're probably not winning the battle.

It shouldn't surprise us that we're in a spiritual battle. You might think it's unfair. You might say, well, what did I ever do to these principalities and powers that they want to fight against me? But let me just say, it's enough that you're a follower of Jesus Christ.

If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, first of all, you need to remember from the life of Jesus that he battled the powers of darkness, didn't he? He was tempted by Satan for 40 days in the wilderness. That was a time of battling against the powers of spiritual darkness. So if you're his follower, does it surprise us that we would face the same thing? He battled against demonic spirits when he saw them tormenting other people.

So it shouldn't surprise us that we have difficulty. Jesus battled against spiritual forces of darkness when they came against him, sometimes from his enemies, sometimes from his own disciples. But if he had these battles, it shouldn't surprise us that we do, because we are his followers.

So that's a very simple principle. I mean, we could talk about why, or this or that, but the fact is that we're in this battle, we're in the battle because we're followers of Jesus Christ, and how much trouble we find ourselves in as Christians because we forget that we're in a spiritual battle. So here's your problem.

The problem is raging all around you, and what you've done is you've forgotten the spiritual dimension to your problem. I used this example of first service, and I may as well use it second service, even though my wife is here, second service. There have been times in our marriage when my wife and I, for some of us, we're just butting heads, or we're just at cross purposes.

And it's just one of those difficult, stressful times, and this and that, and there have been occasions where we've lived through a day or two of this kind of awkwardness, or sort of just an attitude or air of conflict, and then one of us, typically my wife, will kind of wake up to the fact, you know, I think Satan's really trying to rip us off here. Now, before, we never saw the spiritual dimension to our problem. We thought our problem had, you know, it was because I'm right, and they're wrong, or this is the problem, or that's the problem, and well, they need to fix that, or I need to fix this, and you think about all the different dynamics of the problem except for the spiritual dynamic of the problem.

Now, when you forget that the spiritual dynamic of the problem is present, and when you forget that it is the most important dynamic to the problem, then you're not understanding what Paul wrote in Ephesians 6.12. And what's amazing is when we wake up to this understanding, and when we start to address the problem on a spiritual level, not just an emotional level, not just a practical level, and sometimes those are just as important to address as well, but when we also address the spiritual dimension of the problem, it's incredible the light that breaks through. I mean, it can just be like opening up a window in a dark room, and the light floods into the room, and you feel like such an idiot, don't you? You say, here we are, we've been butting heads for two days, when all along this was just a strategy of Satan against us, and if we would

have saw it two days ago, this would have lasted five minutes, instead it lasted two days, but you start to understand, wait a minute, I'm in the midst of a spiritual battle, and when I lose sight of that, when I lose sight of the fact that the problems, the trials that I face have a spiritual dimension to them, then I lose out a lot, and I'm not going to see a lot of great success in my life when it comes against these struggles. But let's not kid ourselves.

These are struggles. Did you see the word that he used in verse 12? For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood. Do you know how hard it is to wrestle? I'm not talking about the kind of wrestling that's on TV, you know, the theatrical kind of thing.

I'm talking about just good old-fashioned wrestling, real kind of wrestling that, you know, they would have in the Olympics, or as big in colleges and such. Now, I was never on the wrestling team in high school or anything like that, but I worked out a few times with the wrestling team, and we did it as part of our PE class and all that kind of thing, and I remember, you know, when you look at it from the outside, you go, how hard is that? And then when you get in a wrestling match, you realize it is absolutely exhausting. Each round only lasts a couple of minutes, and there's not that many rounds, but all of a sudden, you realize, this takes absolute, every effort of every muscle in my body to succeed.

It's a real struggle, and you have to address it that way. And friends, we might not understand anything else here, but we do understand that it's a struggle. Wrestling is never easy unless you lose so quickly that there really isn't a battle.

You're pinned in the first 10 seconds. Well, that wasn't hard. No, it wasn't hard.

You lost so quickly that it wasn't difficult. That's how it is for a lot of Christians. You're, well, that's, you're wrestling.

Wow, you're pinned. Oh, wow, that wasn't hard, yes, but you've lost. Well, it shouldn't be that way for us, and so I really want us to grab a hold of just exactly what Paul says here in verse 12, that there's a fact present.

There's a battle in the Christian life. We have a combat that we're called to as Christians, and you're in it. You can whine about it.

You can hate it. You can wish it was different, but you're in it. That's all there is to it.

Now, it's also very important for us to understand who our enemy is. Again, let's take that analogy of a soldier. The well-equipped soldier is physically conditioned.

In other words, he's strong. Then the well-equipped soldier has the right kind of armor or weapons present. We'll talk about that later.

Then the right kind of soldier knows that he's in a battle, correct? But the fourth dynamic here is a well-equipped soldier understands something about his enemy. He knows who his enemy is. If you don't know who your enemy is, you might be shooting at the wrong person.

You might be taking your sword out and attacking the wrong person altogether. And notice, the first thing Paul tells us is who our enemy is not. It's in verse 12.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood. Now, what does Paul mean when he says flesh and blood? He doesn't mean, like, animal flesh and blood.

Like, your real battle isn't with your house pet. He means, no, people around you. The real battle isn't with the people around you.

Instead, it's with spiritual entities. Spiritual beings, whom Paul calls principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this age. You see, the fact that our real battle is not against flesh and blood, that's completely lost on many Christians.

When we're in a conflict or a difficulty or a trial, we love to find some person to focus our difficulty against. Let's say at work, you have a boss who is just a terrible person. It's very difficult for you to get along with this boss.

And it's constant conflict. It brings a lot of stress into your life. It brings a lot of turmoil into your life.

It's a difficult situation because of this boss. Now, it's very easy for you to focus your anger, your disappointment, your frustration. Might I say, sometimes, let's just lay it on that, sometimes your hatred against that boss.

It's easy to do. He's a flesh and blood person. He seems like such an inviting target.

And you know what? Your boss is wrong. What Paul wants to do is gently take you by the shoulders, look you in the eyes and say, look, I know your boss is a terrible person, but your real battle isn't with your boss. Your real battle here is with spiritual entities.

Now, wait a minute. What does that mean? Well, first of all, let's understand that the Bible teaches us that our life, our career, if we're using the example of a boss, our spiritual life, our regular life, all of it, it's not in the hands of this boss. It's in the hands of the Lord God.

This boss, whoever he or she is, that's not really your enemy. No, instead, since the Lord is in command of your life, it's much more of a spiritual attack than it is anything else. And so it's very important for us to understand this, that we're facing a spiritual battle and to not focus the difficulty against the flesh and blood person that the attack may come through.

Paul's idea here is much the same as what he says in 2 Corinthians 10. Let me read that to you. It's in verses 3 and 4. He says, In other words, in the mindset of many of us, when we're in this kind of battle, when we're in this kind of conflict, it's very easy.

First of all, to war according to the flesh. The boss comes against us and we're angry and he's trying to intimidate us. So what do we do? We answer back with intimidation or manipulation or deceit.

All of those things are of the flesh. God doesn't want you to practice any of those things in this struggle with your boss. And so when you war according to the flesh, you're defeating God's purposes.

And then it says, We don't use those fleshly weapons of intimidation or anger or bitterness or deceit or manipulation. No, we use mighty weapons and pull down spiritual strongholds. And so when I'm in this situation, I say, Well, listen, I know that my boss is not a good person.

He's doing bad things. But the real problem as it touches me is a spiritual problem that I need to address spiritually and not in a fleshly way. And you could retranslate this and say, It's not for us.

No, we have a different battle to fight. Instead, notice, Well, Paul's going to tell you right here in verse 12. Against what? Against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this age.

Principalities, powers, and rulers describe the spiritual beings that we fight against. Those are terms that Paul uses to refer to spiritual beings. And I want you to notice he uses a variety of terms.

I mean, let's kind of count them off here in verse 12. Against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness. Now, probably when he says spiritual hosts of wickedness, that's a broad term that encompasses the previous three.

Because do you know what a host is? When he says spiritual hosts of wickedness, he's not thinking of an evil army of Martha Stewart's or something. A host of wickedness is an army. A host is a biblical word for an army.

And sometimes it talks about the host of the Lord. And that's the angelic armies that the Lord commands. But then it also talks about armies organized for evil in the spiritual realm.

And that's what he means by spiritual hosts of wickedness. And so it's almost as if Paul says, well, here's an army. The spiritual army of wickedness.

And here are three different types of soldiers or officers in that army. You have your principalities. You have your powers.

You have your rulers of the darkness of this age. We should regard them as being on many different levels, having many different ranks, but they all have one goal. It's to knock down Christians.

It's to defeat their effectiveness in their Christian life. Friends, as far as the devil is concerned, you are infected with Christianity. He looks at you and, you know, he did the best he could to keep you from getting infected.

He tried to keep you away from other infected people. He tried to keep the germs of the gospel, so to speak. This is how he might see it.

Away from you. To no avail. Now here you are.

You are a follower of Jesus Christ and you are infected. Now Satan says, well, I want to keep this person weak. I want to keep them quarantined.

I want to keep them ineffective. God forbid, he would say, or Satan forbid, or whatever Satan would say, he would say, I don't want them to spread it to anybody else. I don't want it to go to anybody else.

And so that's what Satan sees when he looks at you. So simply put, we just really need to realize that this is the spiritual battle that we're in and we're against these different ranks, these different levels of spiritual beings. I don't know about you, but when I read a passage like this, it really starts getting my curiosity going.

Principalities. Powers. Rulers.

Well, what's that all about? I mean, where did they come in? Why are they called that? So all you have to do is open up your Bible and take a look at some different passages that speak about principalities and powers and rulers in the sense of being spiritual forces of darkness and say, well, what else do other passages of Scripture say? So let's take a look at some of them together. You might want to keep a finger there in Ephesians 6, because we're going to return there, but turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 8, verse 38, and let's take a look at a principle relevant to these principalities and powers. Now, in Romans chapter 8, Paul is concluding the chapter in verses 38 and 39 in this tremendously triumphant way of assuring us that there's nothing that can keep us from the love of God.

And in the midst of that, he says two interesting things about principalities and powers. Let's take a look here, Romans chapter 8, verses 38 and 39, where he says, For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Isn't that wonderful? Now, this suggests two wonderful things to us about principalities and powers.

First of all, it gives us a clue to their identity. Did you notice how he grouped, in verse 38, angels with principalities and powers? He says, Nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers. In other words, it seems that, and we know it from here and from other passages of Scripture, that principalities and powers describe angelic beings.

Now, it's probable, although the Scriptures don't give us as much information on this as we perhaps would like, just to satisfy our curiosity. But it's probable that before the Fall, angels were organized into ranks and divisions. You know, some being higher than others, some having different duties or different abilities than others.

And when Satan fell and drew aside a third part of the angelic host with him, that they kept their ranks, and they were organized in this host of spiritual wickedness in the same ranks. And so you have, in this spiritual army of wickedness, angelic beings who are organized into ranks, and apparently principalities and powers describe those ranks, or at least two levels of that rank. So that's sort of interesting to see the connection between angelic beings and principalities and powers.

The other thing, the glorious thing in verses 38 and 39 is simply this. What? That principalities cannot keep us from God's love. Isn't that wonderful? Oh, they would love to.

My, how they would love to do it. Oh, how he would love to come, and Satan or any one of his agents would love to come, and if there was some way that they could separate you from the love of God, don't you think they would do it? Maybe right now in the headquarters of Satan's whole works here, and we wouldn't say that his headquarters are in hell. We understand that, don't we? Satan is not the master of hell.

Satan is going to be imprisoned in hell. He's not going to be the master of it in any regard. But anyway, what I want you to see is wherever Satan's headquarters are, wherever the councils of Satan are, I can just imagine a great research department seeing if there's any way they could get around this.

If there's any way they could separate a child of God from the love of God, and they can't do it. It just can't happen. They would do it if they could, but they can't.

And this tells us something. It tells us a very important principle. Because of Romans 8, 38, and 39, we can say that therefore we know that there is a limit to the power of principalities and powers.

They can't do everything they want to do against us. They're on a leash. They're on a boundary.

It's not as if we live out in this wild world, and there's these wild animals, so to speak, of principalities and powers, and they'll just do whatever they want to do against us. No, they're on leashes. There's a limit to what they can do.

Let's take a look at another principle. It's in the book of Ephesians. We were just in Ephesians chapter 6. Now I'd like you to turn to Ephesians chapter 1. And the main place where I want to speak to you begins at verse 20, but let's start back at verse 18.

There in Ephesians chapter 1, verse 18, Paul tells us something else about principalities and powers. He says that the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places. Now look at verse 21.

Far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come. Friends, do you understand what this tells us? It tells us that right now Jesus is enthroned in heaven far above all principalities and powers. That's where he is.

Now we can deduce from this a very important principle. That Jesus is not the opposite of principalities or powers, or Satan himself for that matter. Sometimes we get confused on that, don't we? It's just a bad habit of thinking more than anything.

You get to the place where there's hot and then there's cold. There's white and then there's black. There's good and there's evil.

There's Jesus and then there's Satan. As if somehow Satan were the opposite of Jesus. And friends, wipe that thought out of your mind forever.

There is no cosmic yin and yang in God's universe. Jesus is God and Satan is a created being. There is no match at all in their might or dominion or authority or nature and power.

And that's all there is to it. God is a divine being. Satan is an angelic being.

And we are human beings. And there's a difference between each one of the three. So what you need to understand is that Jesus is not the opposite of Satan or of principalities.

He's enthroned in heaven far above all principalities and powers. Colossians chapter 1 tells us that Jesus created principalities and powers. He made them.

Therefore he can unmake them any time he wants to. He has full authority over them. Colossians chapter 2 tells us that Jesus is the head over all principalities and powers.

That's the might, that's the dominion that he has. So we know first of all that there is a limit to the power of principalities and powers. We know number two that Jesus is not the opposite of Satan or principalities.

Let's look for a third principle from Ephesians chapter 3. And this one is both majestic and mysterious. Let's take a look. Ephesians chapter 3. Let's begin at verse 9. Where it says, And to make all people see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things through Jesus Christ, to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Let's sort of work our way back through those two verses, verses 10 and 11. He says that there is an eternal purpose, right? Okay, great, God, you've got an eternal purpose. Isn't that wonderful? What is your eternal purpose? And God says, look at verse 10.

I want to make my wisdom known. Well, that's great, God. You have an eternal purpose.

You want to make your wisdom known. And that's wonderful, Lord. Now, who are you going to get to make your wisdom known? God, why don't you do it yourself? You already do it in creation.

Don't we see the wisdom of God as we look out in the created order? God says, yeah, but I can do better than that. You say, well then, why don't you get the angels and enlist them in displaying your wisdom? God says, no, that's not what I have in mind at all. You say, God, then who are you going to get to display your wisdom? And God says, I'm going to use you.

Look at it there in verse 10. I'm not making this up. He says, to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church.

That's us, isn't it? God wants to use us to make his wisdom known. Okay, well then, to who? I mean, to each other? To who? Look at it right there, verse 10. To the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.

Wait a minute, God. These principalities and powers that I'm fighting against and who are fighting against me, you want to use me and the church as a whole to teach your wisdom to them? And God says, exactly. Now, the principle I want you to draw from this is very simple.

God has a purpose in allowing their work. He really does. It's a great purpose.

It's an eternal purpose. Look at verse 11. According to the eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God has a purpose in allowing principalities and powers to do their thing. And sometimes you want to say, God, why did you put me on this earth? Just to be a punching bag for the devil? I mean, I'm tired of this. And God says, no, no, no.

I've got a much, much greater plan. A much, much greater purpose for you and for your life. No.

I want to display my wisdom through you and by you to principalities and powers. Now, when he says principalities and powers in verse 10, I believe that he's including all angelic beings, both fallen and unfallen. But it has special application to what we're talking about now, to fallen angelic beings.

And God is teaching them by you. What kind of lesson is he teaching them? This should remind us, friends, that whatever you live, it's not a small life. You ever feel like that sometimes? That you have a small, little life.

And maybe other people have big lives. Big, important lives. Well, God has a special place for them.

I just have my small, little life. Francis says, there are no small lives. God is accomplishing an eternal purpose through your life.

And it also means that the struggles that you go through have a lot more to do than just you or maybe even your family. Sometimes we do that, don't we? We allow sin or we allow compromise in our life. And what do we tell ourselves? We say, I'm only hurting myself.

So what? I'm making it bad for me. Well, so what? I can do this in my life. I'm only hurting myself.

I don't want to hurt anybody else. And what does that principality or power, what does God say in heaven? He goes, you're not just hurting yourself, you're hurting my eternal purpose. I'm trying to display my wisdom through you.

And all everybody else is just foolishness because of your sin. You have a great life to live before God. There are no small lives.

He has an eternal purpose to display through you and through myself. So it shows us that God has a purpose in allowing the work of principalities and powers. Let's take a look at one more passage description.

Colossians chapter 2, verse 15. You'll find that after the book of Ephesians, after the book of Philippians, which I needed to remember because during first service I tried to find our verse in Philippians chapter 2, verse 15, and it wasn't making a lot of sense. But then I turned to Colossians 2.15 and it made perfect sense.

Colossians 2, verse 15, where we read about the work of Jesus and it says, "...having disarmed," there's our words again, "...principalities and powers, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it." What do you think the it is? It's the cross. You look at verse 14, verse 13, before this, it tells you very plainly that the it Paul is referring to is the cross, and Jesus' work on the cross. So what did he do at the cross? Look at it there in verse 15.

He disarmed the principalities and powers, and he triumphed over them. Isn't that fantastic? Jesus disarmed the principalities and powers at the cross. So you see that army of principalities and powers, they're assembled against you.

Now we're a little nervous, aren't we? I mean, we're like, oh Lord, I don't know about this. You know, this is scary. And so what does Jesus do? He goes, in light of the cross, I'm going to strip the armor from every one of them.

Now they're still there. They'll still try to fight against you, but he has put them at a decided disadvantage. He's put the tools for victory right there in your hand, because he disarmed them at the cross.

Do you realize this, friends? It is very true that the principle here for us is that our victory is rooted in what Jesus did on the cross, not in what we do. This is a principle that I don't know if I can stress strongly enough over the span of this six-week series that we're talking about Christian combat. Because I'll be very straight with you.

During the six weeks, you're going to hear a lot of things that you should do. You should do this. You should do this.

And it's all going to be true. You should do it. But it's very easy to get into the thinking that the key to victory and success in the Christian combat, it's all about what we do.

And that's an illusion. Because it's not true. The key to victory is that our victory is rooted in what Jesus did, not in what we do.

Now it isn't that there's no doing on our part. But you know what our doing is? It's the appropriation and the application of what Jesus did. That's what we do.

We appropriate and we apply what Jesus did. And then we have victory over principalities and powers. And we're going to talk a lot more in coming weeks about how to do that in a very specific way.

Let's go back to Ephesians chapter 6, verse 12. We'll read it one last time here. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

What are we left with, friends? Well, we're left with number one, with the understanding that we are in a spiritual battle. And if you're blind to it, you can't be succeeding in it. Shouldn't that be our prayer this morning? Lord, open my eyes.

So many situations, so many problems, so many conflicts around me, Lord. I thought of them purely in materialistic or naturalistic terms. God, help me to see that there's a spiritual component to these struggles.

And the spiritual component is more important than anything else. There's a marvelous occasion in the Old Testament where an army of men came out to arrest one prophet. The prophet Elisha.

And as that army came and Elisha's home was down in the floor of a valley, and so one day they get a knock at the door and Elisha and his servant get up and they go out and they look outside and there's a whole army all around them. Well, Elisha's servant starts to get very, very nervous. He's shaking, he's like scared.

Look, it's just us against this whole army. And Elisha prays a very simple prayer. He says, Lord, open his eyes.

And the Lord opened the eyes of Elisha's servant and he saw around him all across the valley an incredible army of angels surrounding them. Now, all he could see was the battle on a materialistic level. The army that he could see right in front of him.

He completely missed out on the spiritual level. But once his eyes were opened, it was like, yeah, no biggie. I don't care about this army around me because I see the other army here.

Isn't that our prayer here this morning? Lord, open my eyes. That's the one thing we're left with. The other thing we're left with is this assortment of spiritual powers and authorities that we must do battle against.

They're organized into different ranks. And perhaps they even have different powers and abilities. But they all serve one master and that's the devil.

Look at it here in Ephesians chapter 6, beginning at verse 11. He says, put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood.

In other words, we're combating the wiles of the devil and the wiles of the devil are brought against us through these principalities and powers. You see, at the end of it all, it's completely irrelevant if the particular opponent we face is a power or ruler or darkness of this age. Don't feel like you have to ask for an ID from any one of them.

It doesn't matter. They're all part of the spiritual host of wickedness. The spiritual army that's organized and established into ranks under the headship of Satan, the devil, who is organized against us with his wiles.

We need to wake up to that, don't we? It's not flesh and blood. It's a spiritual battle all around you. So you say, Lord, help me to understand this.

Open my eyes. And I'm bold enough to think that this week, God is going to give you an opportunity to do that. That this week, you're going to find yourself in some place of difficulty or struggle.

It might be a little thing, it might be a big thing. But this week, at some time, you're going to be challenged to see something in its spiritual component when maybe before, maybe before you came here this morning, you wouldn't have seen it in its spiritual component. Now, here's the issue.

How quickly are you going to perceive the spiritual component? Let's pray and ask God, help us to see it quickly so that we can deal with it rightly. Let's make that our prayer right now. Father, I believe that you're working in our lives as we go through this series here on Sunday mornings.

And I believe, God, that you want us to be aware of the spiritual component of these struggles that we face. God, my great prayer for us all, for myself, for every one of us here this morning, is that you'd help us to see the spiritual component quickly and address it rightly. And help us to do it, Lord, all in light of what Jesus has done on the cross.

Lord God, open our eyes to the reality of the spiritual realm around us. And by that, Lord, grant us great victory. We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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