

Our Unseen War

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[0:00] The reading for this morning is taken from Ephesians chapter 6, reading from verses 10 to verse 20.!

And, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.

And also for me, that the words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel. For which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly as I ought to speak.

[1:36] This is the word of the Lord. Thank you very much, Jamiko, for reading for us this morning. Last Sunday, we considered two chief concerns that we are all called to pursue as we live the Christian life.

And those are the glory of God and the salvation of others. And this morning, I want to direct our attention to this particular passage that's just been read.

Because what we will find in this passage is that the main opposition that we face in living out and pursuing those two chief concerns is what this passage addresses.

And that is the issue of an unseen war. An unseen war that we who follow Christ face every single day.

And what we see in these verses is that the Apostle Paul, as he is concluding his letter to the church at Ephesus, he brought before them, and is this morning bringing before us, this often overlooked issue of spiritual warfare.

[3:09] And if I were to describe the approaches that we have to spiritual warfare, it would be on two spectrums. It would be one, ignorance of it or obsession with it.

And brothers and sisters, neither of those is an option. It is not an option to be ignorant of spiritual warfare. And it is also not an option to be obsessed with it.

It is an ongoing reality in the Christian life. Though it is unseen, it is real. And therefore, we ignore it to our peril.

So let's take a moment and look to God's word before we consider what this passage says to us about spiritual warfare. Let us pray.

Father, we ask that you would draw near to us this morning and you'd attend to our hearing of your word.

[4:12] Lord, you know where each one of us is and what we need, and we pray that you would draw near to us at our various points of need. Lord, I ask that you would draw near to me as I seek to be faithful, to proclaim your word to these who are gathered, to these who I love and want to serve.

We ask, Lord, that you would be glorified in the preaching of your word and help us all to both hear it and heed it for your glory. It's in Christ's name we pray.

Amen. As we consider this issue of our unseen war that we as believers face every day, I want to highlight three aspects of it that the Apostle Paul raises in this passage before us.

And the first aspect is the nature of our war. Look at how the Apostle Paul describes it again in verses 10 to 12.

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.

[5:34] 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.

I think the first lesson we should learn from what we just read is that spiritual war is not ultimately our war. It is ultimately God's war.

It is a war that we have been drawn into when God, by his mercy, saved us and brought us out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear son.

And so verse 11 says to us that we are to take God's armor, God's whole armor, so that we may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

It's God's war. It's God's armor. And we are called to put it on because we have been drawn into the war because we've changed kingdoms.

[6:47] In Revelation 12, verses 7 to 11, we have a very helpful description of the devil, the enemy of our souls. And it gives us insight into how he fights his war against God and against the people of God.

This is what it says. Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.

But he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, the ancient serpent, who was called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.

He was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come.

For the accuser of the brothers, for the accuser of our brothers, has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

[8:04] And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they have not loved their lives, even unto death. Now time doesn't allow me to go into the background and context for this passage from Revelation 12, but I bring it to our attention this morning to highlight four descriptions that we find of the enemy of our souls in this passage.

Four descriptions we find of Satan, and it helps us to see how he fights this unseen war that we are engaged in. In verse 9, Satan is called the great dragon, the ancient serpent, and the deceiver of the whole world.

And in verse 10, he is called the accuser of the brethren. Again, these four descriptions really give us great insight into how the enemy of our soul fights in this unseen war that all who belong to Christ are engaged in.

The weapons that he and his angels use are fear, the dragon, deceit, and craftiness, an accusation. In their various forms. Those are four particular ways that Satan fights us through fear, through craftiness, through deceit, and through accusation.

[9:51] And what we're going to see shortly is that the armor that God gives us, this whole armor of God, is designed to protect us against these four particular ways, and others, of course, but these four in particular, the fear, the craftiness, the deceit, and the accusation that he brings.

In verses 11, 12, and 13, Paul gives us a three-step argument that we really need to follow if we're going to embrace what he's saying to us.

Look again how he makes this argument. First, he says in verse 11, put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

The schemes are his strategies, his ways in which he fights the people of God. Now, why are we to do that? He tells us in verse 12, for or because we do not wrestle against flesh and blood.

That gives us a hint right away that the armor that God is going to give us is not a physical armor because 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.

[11:15] And then he says in verse 13, therefore, 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.

So we take the whole armor of God because we are in a warfare, a spiritual warfare, and we need it so that we can stand when the evil day comes and it will come, brothers and sisters.

And I have no doubt that for some of us, even now, the evil day is upon us. For some of us, even now, we are in a season of onslaught of the enemy.

And it is only as we take the whole armor of God that we will stand. I can't emphasize enough what the Apostle Paul says in verse 12.

He says that our fight is not flesh and blood. Brothers and sisters, if we're fighting flesh and blood, we've already lost. If we think this morning that flesh and blood, if we think this morning that the fight that we have is with an individual, with a fellow human being, or in some physical form, brothers and sisters, we have already lost.

[12:34] Paul says our wrestling, our fight, is not against flesh and blood. It's not against that which can be physically touched. This is a foundational lesson in understanding the unseen war that we have.

When we fall for the lie that it's otherwise, again, we are already defeated. I wonder how many of us, for example, recognize the role of spiritual warfare in much of the relational conflict that we experience.

You see, it's so easy to relegate it to flesh and blood. It's so easy to relegate it to some purely human activity. But brothers and sisters, so much of the relational conflict that we experience in our homes, our workplaces, and our community, they're not flesh and blood.

It is the enemy of our souls at work in his craftiness and in his deceit and in his accusations and his schemes that he brings about.

And he's ancient and old and wise to do it in such a way that we actually can't see anything other than flesh and blood in front of us. And what is behind what we see is spiritual warfare.

[14:10] It's easy to think that the issue is my nagging wife or it is my irritating husband or my rude children or my difficult boss or co-worker. very often, Satan would bring into our lives discouragement and despair and doubt and unbelief.

And we just think it's natural circumstances. But behind it is the enemy of our souls fighting and seeking to destroy our spiritual life.

And he would destroy us if he could, and he can't. If he could, he would. God has given us all that we need to stand against the ploys and schemes and strategies of the devil.

Notice also in verse 12 that Paul doesn't only tell us what our fight is not against, but he also tells us what our fight is against. He says, the fight is against rulers, authorities, cosmic powers, and spiritual forces of evil.

Paul's point is that we need God's armor, which is spiritual, because our war is spiritual. Now, there's some people who think that this reference to the rulers and authorities and cosmic powers and spiritual forces of evil in verse 12.

[15:46] They say that that's four ranks of devils, and they go into all kinds of elaborate explanations about that and say that's what Paul is getting at.

But what is Paul saying in verse 12? Is he describing Satan's demonic activity in four different ways, or is he describing four different levels of demons and demonic forces?

First of all, let me say that I have no doubt that there are ranks in fallen angels and demons that Satan has under his control.

It's very clear scripture teaches that Jesus himself says in Matthew 12, 43 to 45, he talks about some demons being more evil than others, meaning they have more power to do evil than others. We know that there are angels and archangels, Michael an archangel, Gabriel an archangel, and so it is reasonable to conclude that yes, there would be that kind of differentiation and rank and power in Satan's ranks as well.

[17:03] but I think the natural reading of verse 12 is not that. I think the natural reading of verse 12 is Paul is referring to demons and demonic activities in four different ways.

Talking about the same thing in four different ways. And the way we see this is notice that Paul uses the word against four times. he doesn't use it once and he doesn't use and in the sentence. This is really just a matter of reading comprehension and construction. So notice what Paul does not say. He does not say we wrestle against the rulers, the authorities, the cosmic powers, the cosmic powers over this present darkness, and then the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

He doesn't say that. What he says instead is we wrestle against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places.

There's no and there. He's not giving us a series of four things. He is repeatedly describing the same thing in four different ways. But let me say that it really doesn't matter which it is.

[18:36] It doesn't matter if Paul is simply giving us a repetition of the same reference to demonic activity and demons, or it doesn't matter if he is giving us four ranks of devils.

people. Because we're called to fight anyway. Whatever they are, and I believe that he is describing the same reality in four different ways, but whatever they are, we need to be aware that we are in this fight, our fight is with them, that force and the demons in one way or in four different ranks, and God has given us an armor, an effective armor, to successfully stand in the spiritual fight.

And this brings me to my second point, the armor of our warfare. Paul describes the armor given by God to his people to stand against the devil's schemes in verses 13 to 17.

Notice what he says in verse 13. 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.

Notice the goal for taking up the whole armor is to stand. The goal in the whole armor, to take up the whole armor, is to be able to withstand against the forces of evil.

[20:18] that come against us from Satan and those who are with him. So what is this evil day that Paul is referring to?

What's this evil day? I'm sure you've had days where, no, I shouldn't say you, but I can tell you that I've had days where, I know that Satan is not omnipotent, he doesn't have all power.

I know that Satan also is not on the present, he's not everywhere all the time, but I've had some days where it felt like he was here in Nassau, or he was here on my corner, just present, fully present in all of his limited power.

But I think the evil day that Paul is referring to, he's not talking about every single day. I think he's talking about times and seasons where Satan's fight against us is intense, and it is direct.

And I think a helpful way for us to think about what Paul is saying here is, when you think of a soldier, a soldier has to always be ready when he's in war, he's always ready, but he's not always on the front line.

[21:37] The battle is not always engaged all the time, but he has to be ready. But there are days when the battle is engaged. And what the soldier's really doing is the soldier's being prepared, especially for that day when the battle gets engaged.

And that is what we do, brothers and sisters. The time to have the whole arm of God on is not when the battle comes to be trying to put it on.

We need to have it on when the battle is engaged in a direct way around us. So I don't think Paul is speaking about the general spiritual warfare, but he's speaking more about that personal and direct spiritual warfare that happens to come to us in a particular time and season.

And thank God that we don't all face it at the same time. Thank God that sometimes we can come alongside brothers and sisters and encourage them and strengthen them and help them to focus where they need to focus when they are walking through the time of trial, that evil day that comes upon us as we serve the Lord.

Now in verses 14 to 17, the apostle Paul lists six pieces of armor in this whole arm of God that I want us to think about.

[23:07] And this may be a little long, but I want you to try to follow because at the end you're going to see how wise our God is, how good our God is to prepare us for this fight that is a reality for us as we live the Christian life.

Now it's possible that the apostle Paul had a Roman soldier in view and the armor that they would have worn in terms of how he describes this armor that God has given to us to stand against the devil's schemes.

The first piece of the armor is mentioned in verse 14 and it is the belt of truth. The belt of truth. So the Roman soldier would have had a belt usually made of leather and it was part of the underwear and it gathered his tunic together and kept it so that it wouldn't get in his way when he was fighting and it also was a place where he would place his sword to be ready for the battle.

Now when we think of the belt of truth, some people say, oh, that's the word of God. But it was not the word of God because Paul tells us in verse 17 that the sword of the spirit is the word of God. And actually that is the only part of the armor that Paul actually interprets for us. The others we have to interpret it in accordance with scripture.

[24:46] And so think about this belt of truth. I think what Paul is saying is that we are to be people who take the truth and embrace the truth and we fasten the truth to our lives.

We fasten the truth to our hearts and minds. We hold on to the truth. We hold on to truthfulness. We don't hold it loosely.

We attach it to ourselves. We are people of the truth. It speaks to integrity. It speaks to honesty. It speaks to walking in the light. It speaks to not being in deception.

It speaks to being people of the truth. This is how we fight the one who walks in darkness. This is the way we fight the one who's the father of lies.

That's what Jesus describes Satan as, the father of lies in John 8, 44. He's a liar from the beginning. And it's interesting that the first piece of the armor that we are called to put on is a direct protection against one of the primary activities of Satan.

[26:01] Remember in Revelation 12, it says that he deceives the whole world. He's the deceiver of everyone and everything. everything. Has the whole world under his deception.

And the first part of the armor that we're called to take on is the belt of truth. We have to fasten truth to our lives. Brothers and sisters, when we aren't inhering to truth, when we're not holding on to the truth, we're siding with the father of lies.

We're siding with the one who deceives. And so deception should not be part of who we are because if we do that, we have chinks in our armor. We're not protected.

We're not taking the armor that God gives us, which is the truth and truthfulness and be people of the truth and be fastened to our lives. We say this is what we are.

This is who we are. We are those who walk in the truth. The second piece of the armor is the breastplate of righteousness.

[27:11] We see this in verse 14. And the breastplate was a protective piece of armor that the Roman soldier wore that covered his vital body parts.

We can think of it almost like an ancient kind of a modern bulletproof vest. It protected his vital body parts.

And when we think of this breastplate of righteousness, I think we need to think of it in two parts. First, we have to think of it in terms of the declared righteousness that God gives to everyone who comes to Christ.

Everyone who belongs to Christ. God takes the perfect life of Jesus that he lived. God takes the substitutionary death of Jesus that he died and the penalty that he paid for sin.

God declares us not guilty. God declares us uncondemned in his sight. And this is protective armor. This is protective armor against the one who would seek to accuse us of our many sins.

[28:22] This is protective armor against the one who would seek to condemn us. And to hold us hostage with his accusations.

And whenever Satan accuses us, our conviction that Christ's righteousness is our righteousness becomes a protection against his onslaught against us.

righteousness. And that is the true righteousness that we have. But it's not just the righteousness that God credits to us, which we can call that positional righteousness.

It's a righteousness that we get because we are in Christ. It's not our own righteousness. It is righteousness that we get as a gift because we are in Christ.

And that is the true righteousness that we have. That is the only righteousness that matters before a holy God. But there's another part to this righteousness, this, this breastplate of righteousness that we are called to take up.

[29:31] And it is what we may call functional righteousness. It is a commitment to walk in righteousness. It is a commitment to do what is right in the sight of the Lord.

It is a commitment to understand that it is more than just taking, yes, I'm righteous in Christ because of what God has imputed to me and credited to my account.

But it is a commitment to live righteously. It is a commitment to say no to sin and yes to godliness. It is a commitment by the grace of God to desire to please the Lord in how we live and what we do.

And brothers and sisters, as we do this, this is a protection against the onslaught of the enemy in our lives. No, we will not do it perfectly.

And yes, he can still come and accuse us for our shortcomings and for our failings. But you know what? Let us get a grade for effort.

[30:36] Let us be in the fight. Let us be failing forward if we do. Let us be intentional to seek to please the Lord.

To obey his word actively and intentionally and consciously. And let us not actively and consciously engage in sin.

Because when we do that, we're game for the devil. He has place in our lives. The Bible says, give no place to the devil. But if we live lives that are unrighteous, brothers and sisters, we're welcoming the devil and all of his schemes and his attacks.

As a matter of fact, he doesn't have to attack us because our own sin will do that for him. The third piece of armor that Paul identifies is in verse 15.

It is the shoes of gospel readiness. The shoes of gospel readiness. Notice that it is not, that the shoes are not the gospel of peace.

[31:47] The shoes instead are the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. I think we all know how important it is to wear the right shoes for the kind of activity that we engage in.

So for example, you don't wear flip-flops and go to war. Or you don't wear soccer cleats to play basketball. You have the kind of shoes that are appropriate.

And the Roman soldier had a kind of shoe that was for battle. It was the kind of shoe that enabled him to grip the ground so that in hand-to-hand combat, he would not slip and he would not fall.

Paul says that the gospel, which he calls the gospel of peace, and I think this is insightful what Paul does here because often what we find in the New Testament is we generally see the gospel, but there are times when we see like the gospel of peace or the gospel of the grace of God.

And Paul here refers to the gospel of peace. And the idea is that the gospel is foundational to our lives and the idea as well is that part of the fight that we are engaged in is to know that we have been put at peace with God because our sins have been forgiven, but we also have peace with those around us.

[33:19] We have peace with our fellow man. Because in Christ, barriers are broken down. Because in Christ, we are able to, for example, forgive.

We are able to overlook sin. The Bible says that love overlooks a multitude of sins. And so this fight that we're in, we know that we have peace with God and we are at peace with our fellow man.

Paul says that the gospel gives us a readiness to stand in the battle that we are engaged in with Satan and his forces. We're able to stand when the conflict comes.

We're people of peace relationally. You know that when you consider the Sermon on the Mount, the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, do you know which Beatitude identifies us as belonging to God?

The peacemakers. Blessed are the peacemakers, they shall be called the children of God. And in this warfare, so much of the warfare that we face, brothers and sisters, is relational.

[34:39] A lot of it is relational. And Paul tells us that we have the gospel of peace, peace with God, and we can be at peace with one another because the greatest barrier has been removed in Jesus Christ.

As he prayed this morning, Brother Lyndon prayed for those of us who have been sinned against and hurt deeply and who need to forgive. How do we forgive?

forgive? How are we better positioned to forgive? Now we're better positioned to forgive. We're better positioned to forgive by remembering that we've been forgiven.

And by remembering that we have been forgiven far much more than we need to forgive. the parable of the unforgiving servant, the point is that he owed a debt he could never pay, but his fellow man owed a debt that he could go in prison and in about a year's time he could pay.

And so I think when we put in perspective the sins against us compared to our sins against God which he has forgiven us for and he has brought us to be at peace with him we can do the same for those we are related to, those we are connected to we forgive them and we come to be at peace with them.

[36:15] Brothers and sisters this gospel of peace that Paul tells us gives us a readiness it just doesn't come automatically because we belong to Christ. We must meditate upon it we must think about it we must remember we are undeserving sinners who deserve the wrath of God but he gave us grace and mercy instead and he didn't put us on probation he has held on to us and he holds on to us and he says I will never leave you I will never forsake you no matter what and that's we are called to reciprocate to others as well we forgive and we remember that love covers a multitude of sin Satan hates the gospel he hates the gospel because it's through the gospel that people are reconciled to God people are forgiven of their sins through the gospel people are translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear son as we grow in understanding the gospel as we grow in applying the gospel to our lives we will have this readiness that comes through the gospel of peace which Paul identifies as a kind of military shoes that will take us on our journey and will keep us from stumbling in verse 16 the apostle Paul identifies the fourth piece of the armor of God it's the shield of faith notice how he says it in all circumstances take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one the Roman soldier would have had a full body shield made of two pieces of wood that would have been glued together it would have had linen across it and then on top of the linen leather and then capped with some kind of iron or bronze at the top and at the bottom and one of the things that they would do before they would go into battle is they would take these wooden shields and they would drench them in water and the reason they did that was because the primary means of weaponry that they had were arrows and what they would do is they would take the arrow and dip the tip of it in pitch or tar and then they would light it and then they would shoot it and so what was coming at you was not just a spear or an arrow sorry but what was coming at you was a flaming arrow and that's what

Paul captures here in verse 16 he says in all circumstances take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one there are some people who think that faith is just a mental disposition just a strong belief and really it comes down to just faith in faith that's what Paul is talking about here what Paul is talking about is faith in God and faith in the world of God the word of God it is holding on to what God says in his word and believing what he says in whatever circumstance or situation we find ourselves into and so when Satan and he does he shoots those fiery darts at us accusing us and you know sometimes his accusations are true sometimes they're true

I mean Satan is a liar but sometimes he does say things about us that are true he accuses us of sins that we would have committed and they are true but it is the shield of faith by which we are able to quench those from coming and lodging in our souls we believe what God says our sins have been forgiven we have been reconciled to God and that is more real than any accusation that Satan

would bring against us it doesn't matter how dire our circumstance may seem and how despair may seek to try to engulf us we believe in a God for whom nothing is too hard a God who is able to open waters a God who is able to cause an axe head to float a God who is able to raise the dead and our faith is in him in every circumstance we take the shield of faith believe in God and believing his word I think this particular aspect of what Paul is addressing here the shield of faith is primarily for our minds for that battleground that we are so aware of it's not positive thinking it's not that if that were it then we'd have no worries but instead it is against our minds and we have to be choosing to believe God and to believe his word you know one of the most common attacks that the devil brings against us is to cause us to doubt the goodness of God because we live in a broken world in a fallen world where hard things happen we experience hard things and the devil will feed us the lie you know God really doesn't care much about you look at what you're experiencing I bet nobody else is experiencing that and we begin to internalize those instead of quenching them with the shield of faith holding on to the word of God and standing in verse 17 Paul identifies the fifth piece of the armor the helmet of salvation what is the helmet of salvation the Roman soldier's helmet was made out of metal and had some kind of material to cushion it on his head that he could actually wear but it protected it protected his head it was essential and protective wear and I think we would all agree that our brain is probably one of the most essential parts of our bodies and I think as I think about what this helmet of salvation could be for us as believers

[43:38] I believe it is the protective assurance of our salvation that God has given to us that that protects us that no matter what nothing separates us from the love of God in Jesus Christ nothing present nothing to come nothing separates us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord God has saved us and God will preserve us to the very end even when it feels like we're drowning when it feels like we're at the brink of total loss God has promised God's armor that Paul lists is the sword of the spirit and then finally in verse 17 the sixth and final piece of

God's armor that Paul lists is the sword of the spirit and unlike the other pieces of the armor this is the only one that Paul tells us what it is he says it's the word of God and it is the only one that's both offensive and defensive in terms of the armor and our best example of the word of God as a weapon and as a defense is Jesus himself in the wilderness when he's being tempted of the devil and Satan brought propositions to him and each time Jesus says it is written it is written it is written and so we need to follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ to have his word in our hearts that we can engage when the evil day comes and Satan is seeking to attack hopefully we can see the wisdom and the benefit of memorizing

God's word as we are doing week by week and you know what see here's a practical example of how spiritual warfare works and we would just dismiss it and not see the spiritual warfare I won't ask for a show of hands but I am sure that there are some present who have bought into the idea that you know what my memory just bad I really can't memorize scripture I never had a good memory my mother told me I never had a good memory and so I don't really try to have to memorize scripture brothers and sisters we just bought a lie God has given us incredible brains God has given us brains that are more powerful than the best computer that man has ever made and so to take the lie of the enemy and say we cannot memorize scripture what we have done is we have actually positioned ourselves where we are not going to have that protective part of the armor that God has given to us which is to take his word and hide it in our hearts so that we do not sin against him and so let us not buy that lie and let us recognize that as we are memorizing scripture what we are doing is we are preparing ourselves to engage in the battle to stand and notice what we are called to do

I have seen I am sure some of you have seen it I have seen whole churches dress up in army fatigues and run up and down and take their Bible away that is not what we are called to do we are called to do that we are called to stand as a matter of fact we don't even see that Paul tells us that we would be in this very energetic fight we are called to stand and so I want to encourage us this is the weapon that we are given the word of God let us take it seriously this is what God has given to us notice in verse 18 that Paul connects prayer to taking the sword of the spirit in other words God's word should be in our mouths should be in our mouths when we are praying and Paul says we should be praying at all times with all prayer and supplication and with all perseverance and making supplication for all the saints now Paul doesn't list prayer as part of the armor that God has given to

us but he's connecting it to the armor he's connecting it to the armor and he's saying that we are to be praying and he says that we are to pray in the spirit now here

Paul isn't saying some people think that praying in the spirit means here in verse 18 means we pray in tongues that's what Paul is saying because he would not be saying that we would be praying in tongues all the time in all these different ways what he's calling us to is spirit led and spirit directed prayer that we are to be making our prayers making our supplication aided by the spirit guided by the spirit allowing the spirit to help us and to direct our prayers that we can better pray in accordance with God's will he's calling us to spirit dependent prayer in verse 18 Paul says that we are to pray for one another and we are to be alert with all perseverance now why does he say this why does

[49:59] Paul say we are to be alert with all perseverance what we find in the New Testament is whenever we are called to be alert it is because danger lurks or the stakes are high this is a real war the way in brothers and sisters it's not a casual walk in the park this is a real war and Paul says we are to stay alert with all perseverance and the reason is because danger lurks and the stakes are high and this is my final point the stakes of our war by stakes I mean what is the war ultimately all about Paul touches on it in verses 19 to 20 but let's start it in verse 18 praying at all times in the spirit with all prayer and supplication to that end keep alert with all perseverance making supplication for all the saints and look at what he says in verse 19 and also for me that words may be given to me in opening my mouth to boldly proclaim the mystery of the gospel for which

I am an ambassador in chains that I may declare it boldly as I ought to speak in these words what we see being at stake is the advancement of God's kingdom the divine rescue of perishing sinners out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's own son and that's what makes the stakes high in spiritual warfare Satan is ultimately fighting against God and his purposes his redemptive purposes to bring sinners to himself that's ultimately what he's fighting he's fighting against the rescue of sinners from his domain of darkness and again we have been engaged in this war through salvation but this was an age-long war between

God and Satan and just to give us a quick reminder of how long this war was you remember when God created Adam and Eve and put them in the garden he placed a tree in the garden that was called the tree of the knowledge of the good the knowledge of good and evil meaning that at that point evil existed meaning that at that point and indeed I would say before that point Satan had already rebelled and so this is a cosmic war that is going on a cosmic war that we have been engaged in and the way this war is fought on our level primarily is through the preaching of the gospel and people being converted out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear son and this is what is at stake in the warfare this is what

Paul brings it right down to when he urges them he says and please pray for me that I open my mouth and I would proclaim the word boldly as I ought to speak knowing this brothers and sisters we should pray for one another but we should especially pray for those who proclaim the gospel and Paul here's Paul he's in chains that wasn't just because of political reasons that in itself was spiritual warfare as well Paul is placed in chains as a part of this war that is going on it wasn't just the Roman authorities who put him in prison but Satan through that was trying to imprison the word of God not knowing he can't imprison the word of God but the fight is being engaged even as Paul is writing these words and Paul says I want you to pray for me that I may speak the word boldly as I ought

Paul is indicating even there that there is spiritual warfare in trying to prevent him from boldly proclaiming the word of God as we should see sometimes preachers can become afraid of faces sometimes preachers can become concerned with not offending by calling people to repentance and Paul says no pray pray for them pray for me pray for gospel ministers so that they may proclaim the word of God boldly as they ought their spiritual warfare engaged to try to prevent them from doing it now here's the place I wanted to land this morning as I finish when you think of all that Paul addresses in these verses when you think of all that we have talked about this morning you know what it is it is the normal

[55:40] Christian life everything that Paul talks about in these verses and all that I've sought to bring before us this morning brothers and sisters is nothing more than faithfully living the normal Christian life that God has called us to live that's all it is it isn't going and doing some other exercise or some other activity it certainly isn't taking your Bible and waving it around it is living the normal Christian life it's not spooky spiritual this is how we fight this is how we stand in the evil day we stand simply living the normal Christian life we stand persevering and pressing on some time ago someone spoke with me and was sharing with me how co-workers of hers told her that there were people in the office who were working witchcraft witchcraft and they told her you need to anoint your office with oil you need to make sure go around and anoint your office with oil because people are working witchcraft and this person had some doubts about it and called me and asked me what I thought about it and naturally

I told her that there is no precedent in scripture for anointing things with oil to ward off evil spirits think about that brothers and sisters that is darkness and superstition to believe that this God who has saved us this God who has promised to keep us this God who has promised that he will keep our feet from falling that he needs us to take a bottle of oil and go around and anoint our desk and anoint our pen and anoint all the things in the office no brothers and sisters the one who saves us keeps us he keeps us for what we can see and what we cannot see keeps us from what we know and what we don't know and we can put our trust in him and all we need to do to stand against the wickedness of Satan is live the normal Christian life faithfully just do these things living the normal Christian life when Paul says to put them on he doesn't mean oh you can put these on no he means just just have it on as part of who you are we find scripture put on this and put off that it doesn't mean that you know we just do them almost as closed it's just saying that this is the way we are to live this is to be regular and normal for us brothers and sisters the war that we are engaged in we are better positioned to fight by living faithfully as God calls us to live in his word and we need not fear the devil yes we should be sobered by spiritual warfare but not afraid of it and God is the one who is able to keep his own and so day by day let's live faithfully and then the evil day will stand we'll stand because this is the armor that

God has given to us to stand let's pray oh father we are so grateful that you have not left us defenseless lord you have given us all that we need to stand against all the schemes of the devil I pray that you help us to live faithfully as those who belong to Christ so that in the evil day we will be able to stand I pray Lord that you would help us to not be ignorant of these things but to be faithful we ask this in

Jesus name amen as