Erased – Part 3

# The Believer’s Spiritual Battle

(Ephesians 6:10-18)

Welcome to Christ’s Community Church. Today we’re continuing in part three of Erased as we consider the supernatural and how it plays into the natural world that we live in. This is so important, because we can’t see this other world, this spirit world, but just because we can’t see it, doesn’t mean that it doesn’t exist or that it’s been erased. And actually, there’s so much more than what we see with our eyes, there’s a whole other world, a spiritual world, that’s just as real, that greatly influences our physical world. As a matter of fact, the Bible tells us, it’s actually in the spirit world that there’s a war raging between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. And this is a very real spiritual battle that influences, spilling over into the natural world that we live in; and so, we’re going to consider the Believer’s Spiritual Battle as we look at a very well-known passage of Scripture on spiritual warfare in the New Testament letter to the Church in Ephesus.

Now in this letter, the apostle Paul presents to us some of the great realities of what it means to be in Christ; to be a believer; having been adopted, belonging to God, and having the Spirit of God living inside of you. And so, he begins with all this practical teaching on how to live the Christian life; you know, literally drowning in the love of God, having resources to do far beyond whatever we could even ask or imagine. And he encourages us as believers, telling us because of our new identity in Christ how everything has changed; how we should be thinking, talking, and acting differently. Very practically he tells us, our relationships should be different, our marriages should be different, our families should be different, our lifestyles should be different because of the power and resources that God has given us to live a victorious Christian life in this world.

But then Paul tells us, there’s another thing, just one more thing that you need to know. He says, in spite of the presence of God, in spite of the power of the Holy Spirit, in spite of all this divine truth that’s been revealed, even though…in spite of all that, there’s the Dark Side. You see, because you’ve chosen to love and serve Jesus Christ, you’ve set yourself in opposition to the enemy, the adversary, Satan; who wants to withstand every good thing that God has set out to do in our lives. And so, in the final verses of this letter, Paul warns us, making us aware that there is a spiritual world and that believers are in a very real sense in a Spiritual Battle.

As a matter of fact, this was a battle that basically consumed Paul’s life. His body was marked with battle scars from the many times that he’d been whipped, beaten with rods, even bruised, broken, and crushed by large stones; rocks that were intended to take his life. And so, Paul was marked and disfigured, a veteran, who had engaged in the Believer’s Spiritual Battle. He was a soldier of Jesus Christ who had endured great hardship in the battle, who lived on the brink of death every day; but he never once retreated and relentlessly engaged in battle on the front lines against the enemies of God. Paul knew firsthand that the weapons that we fight with are not the weapons of this world, we don’t fight this battle with guns or bombs, but we engage in this Spiritual Battle by faith in the Lord and in his mighty power. He tells us in Ephesians chapter 6, verse 10, in conclusion he says,

“Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:10-12).

Paul tells us that even though we’re in Christ, even though we have every spiritual blessing in the supernatural realm, in spite of all that, he reminds us that this isn’t going to be easy, because this is war, there’s a very real Spiritual Battle going on. And so even though we’ve been given so much in Christ, even though so much more is promised, we’re still not strong enough to win this battle on our own. Therefore, he warns us, “If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!” (1 Corinthians 10:12).

You see, our spiritual enemy is plotting and scheming to destroy us; and this is a very real battle, but it’s not against other people, the government, or even Hollywood… it’s against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. And so, we need to understand that what we see with our physical eyes in the physical world is not all there is. There’s so much more than what we see with our eyes, there’s another world, a spiritual world that’s just as real which influences our physical world. As a matter of fact, I want to share a passage of Scripture which illustrates this very well.

In the Old Testament book of Second Kings, it tells about when the king of Aram was at war with Israel. But every time he would make a strategic move, the prophet Elisha would tell the king of Israel. Of course, this enraged Ben-Hadad, so he sent his army to surround the city where Elisha was. Verse 15 says that when Elisha’s servant got up in the morning he discovered that “an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked. "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, "O Lord, open his eyes so he may see." Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire…” (2 Kings 6:15-17).

The Lord gave Elisha’s servant a glimpse into the spiritual realm so that he could find courage in the Lord; realizing that the one who was with him was greater than the one who is in the world. This morning, you and I need not fear, but we can be confident in the Lord remembering that there’s so much more than the eyes can see. There’s a very real Spiritual Battle going on, but we simply need to put on the full armor of God so that number one, we can take our stand against the devil’s schemes.

## 1. Stand Against Satan’s Schemes

You see, we’re not unaware of his schemes, because the Bible tells us specific things that Satan and the evil spirits do. Now, I imagine that most of you have experienced times when you read God’s word, but it’s hard to pay attention and your mind is wandering. Or maybe, you’ve heard something about God’s will for you and you were purposefully leaning into the things of God, you wanted to make that Word your own; but no sooner did you walk away, all those encouraging thoughts, those words of hope and promise slipped away and they were gone. For the life of you, you just can’t remember what it was. Well, Jesus spoke about this in Matthew chapter 13, he said,

“When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and doesn’t understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in (their) heart” (Matthew 13:19).

And so, Jesus tells us why it disappeared, “The evil one comes and snatches away the Word of God.” But this is nothing new, because the devil’s schemes have been the same for centuries. God said to Isaiah over 2,500 years ago, that people would listen carefully, but not understand. That they would watch closely, but never learn anything (Isaiah 6:9). And so, our enemy is very skilled at snatching away the Word of God and the Bible even says in second Corinthians,

“The god of this age (Satan) has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel…” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

And so, Satan tries to blind you, stealing the Word of God, leaving you wondering “What was that? You know, I thought maybe I should – well I can’t even remember what it was anymore? It’s gone!” Because the evil one comes and snatches away the Word of God. And not only that, he’s called the tempter, he wants to trap you, and so he entices you to do his will instead of God’s will. That’s why the apostle Paul urges the young pastor Timothy to gently instruct those who oppose him; so “that they’ll come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who’s taken them captive to do his will” (2 Timothy 2:26).

But today as believers, we’re not unaware of the enemy schemes, and so we’ll stand firm, resisting the devil, not allowing ourselves to become entangled in his web of deception and be taken captive to do his will. However, Satan’s relentless in his attempts to block the work of God in your life. He doesn’t give up! For example, maybe you hear a good teaching and determine that you’re going to get out of debt, or you’re going to share your faith like never before, or you’re going to have a great marriage. And so, you head home and the car breaks down, you miss that opportunity to speak to that person, and by the time you get home you’re late for dinner and you have the fight of the decade. You see, it’s a spiritual battle and the forces of darkness are trying to stop you from doing what God has called you to do. Even the apostle Paul experienced this, he said, “We wanted to come to you — certainly I did, again and again — but Satan stopped us” (1 Thessalonians 2:18).

And so, the enemy comes and snatches away what was sown in our hearts, he deceives us, blinds us, enticing us, taking us captive to do his will, stopping us and blocking our way; because he wants to destroy everything that lasts, everything that matters to the heart of God. You see, there’s a very real spiritual battle going on right now between the Kingdom of Light and the kingdom of darkness. What you see with your eyes is not all there is and it’s for that reason that the Bible warns us to,

“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

And so, Satan wants to devour your marriage, taking you out with sin. He wants to destroy your children, getting them hooked on drugs and pornography. He wants to devour you, taking you captive, destroying your finances, your health, your witness and your relationship with God. Satan hates you more than you can even imagine, but you can be confident in the Lord, standing against the devil’s schemes, and number two, you can fight in God’s mighty power.

## 2. Fight in God’s Mighty Power

As Paul concludes this letter, he’s very clear that this world is a battleground between God and Satan, the holy angels and the fallen angels, good men and evil men, and therefore, the Christian life is a struggle, in which we as believers are in a Spiritual Battle. It’s for that reason, that he tells us in verse 13,

“Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist…” (Ephesians 6:13-14).

And so, Paul tells us how we engage in this Spiritual Battle. That you put on the full armor of God, you take your weapons, and by faith you resist Satan; knowing that Christ has already defeated him. Even though the day is evil, we fight in God’s mighty power knowing that “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31). And so, you stand firm with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, because you can’t run into the battle to fight the deceiver, the father of lies, when your pants are falling down. The belt of truth sets you free allowing you to leap, jump, and run leaving your hands free to battle. And just as important, the belt of truth also secures your sword which is the Word of God; ensuring that we’re people of integrity, that we’re practicing the truth, and effectively using the Word of truth.

And then verse 14 tells us that we also prepare to battle “…with the breastplate of righteousness in place” (Ephesians 6:14). This piece of armor, made of metal plates or chains, covers the body from the neck to the waist, both front and back. This piece symbolizes the believer’s positioning in Christ as the Bible tells us in second Corinthians, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). And so, even though the heart is deceitful above all things, recognizing that our best attempts at righteousness are as filthy rags before God, we put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:24). And it’s the breastplate of righteousness that protects your deceitful heart.

And then you run, engaging in battle, verse 15 tells us, “With your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace” (Ephesians 6:15), because we can’t effectively battle barefoot. And so, we need shoes that would give us better footing, better traction, allowing us to withstand the enemy. We also have peace with God that comes from the gospel and so we don’t need to fear the attacks of Satan. But the shoes also have another meaning, we must be prepared each day to share the gospel of peace with a lost and hurting world. This is what the prophet Isaiah tells us,

“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, “Your God reigns!” (Isaiah 52:7).

Therefore, as we fight in the Lord’s mighty power, you and I, being ambassadors of peace, take the gospel of peace wherever we go. But the adversary himself refuses to let us advance, taking back what’s been stolen without a fight, and so he hurls flaming arrows, accusations, slander, and lies. Consequently, verse 16 tells us, you take up the shield of faith…“with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one” (Ephesians 6:16).

And so, if you’ve ever wondered where all those negative thoughts and accusations came from, they’re the flaming arrows of the evil one. So, you fight in the Lord’s mighty power, you take up the shield of faith, not saving faith, but rather living faith, an active faith, trusting in the promises and the power of God. Faith is a defensive weapon; believing who Christ says you are, and then verse 17 says,

“Take the helmet of salvation…” (Ephesians 6:17).

Because Satan wants to attack our minds in the same way that he defeated Eve. But with the helmet of salvation, when God controls the mind, Satan can’t lead the believer astray. And so, we want to be those who study our Bibles, who understand our salvation, knowing that we’re not saved by works, but only by the grace of God through faith in his Son Jesus Christ. When we… when you know that, when you’re confident of that truth, your mind is protected, your secure in Christ, and no one can snatch you out of God’s hand. You’re protected because you’re wearing the helmet of salvation.

And then our offensive weapon, in verse 17, is “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” (Ephesians 6:17).

You may remember that Peter tried to use a sword to defend Jesus in the garden, but he learned at Pentecost that the sword of the Spirit does a much better job. A physical sword can pierce the body, but it requires a hand to control it, while the Word of God, the Sword of the Spirit, pierces the heart, having its own power, for it is living and active. And so, if you’re going to use the sword the way you need to, you need to know God’s Word, you learn God’s Word, you internalize it and you fight like Jesus did. Three times he was tempted by Satan and he fought back with the Word of God. Three different temptations, three different times, but his reply was always the same, “It is written…” He fought back quoting the Word of God, resisting the devil, and eventually the devil fled. And so, you fight with the Sword of the Spirit and verse 18 says,

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests…” (Ephesians 6:18).

If we’re going to fight this Spiritual Battle in his mighty power, we must pray in the Spirit on all occasions. Romans chapter 8 tells us that only in the Spirit’s power can we pray according to the will of God. And so, you’ve got to be connected, in communion with the Lord, knowing that as a believer in Christ, you have access to go boldly before the throne of God and to find help in your time of need. We see this illustrated in the Old Testament when the Amalekites attacked Israel, Moses sent Joshua with a sword to battle in the valley while he went to the mountaintop to pray. Exodus chapter 17 tells us that it took both Joshua’s sword and Moses’ prayer to gain the victory. Therefore, verse 18 continues saying,

“…With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:18).

In other words, watch and pray, keep your eyes open. Like when Nehemiah was repairing the walls of Jerusalem and the enemy was trying to stop the work, Nehemiah defeated the enemy by watching and praying. This is the secret of victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; and so we want to keep on praying, we want to stick to it and never quit. The early believers prayed this way, and in the same way, we want to keep on praying until the Spirit stops us or the Father answers us.

The Bible tells us, “For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world" (2 Corinthians 10:3-4).

And so, we fight in God’s mighty power recognizing that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12). As believers in a Spiritual Battle we understand that there is more to this world than our eyes can see, so we stand against Satan’s schemes and we fight in God’s mighty power. We do battle with the belt of truth, with the breastplate of righteousness, with our feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace, and with the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. And we pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests, relying upon his mighty power.

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