

Sonoraville Baptist Church
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The War of the Worlds - Ephesians 6:12

Introduction: A reporter was interviewing an elderly man on his 100th birthday. *"What are you most proud of?"* he asked. *"Well,"* said the man, *"I don't have an enemy in the world."* *"What a beautiful thought! How inspirational!"* said the reporter. *"Yep,"* added the centenarian, *"outlived every last one of them."*

It'd be nice if we could live in a perfect world where we would have no enemies wouldn't it? No Saddam's, no Hitler's, no neighbors who dispute property lines, no bosses who's main goal is to make life miserable for you. But the world isn't perfect, so in this life, we do have enemies, and chances are none of will ever outlive them. In fact, I want to talk to you today about an enemy that is very alive, very real, and very relentless. He's a supernatural, spiritual enemy, and he exists to challenge and oppose our faith in God.

This morning I want to bring this enemy to your attention because he's the one we're up against. In fact, he's the one who is the object of something Paul wrote about in **Ephesians 6:12 (NIV)**. *"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."* Using this Scripture along with some others this morning, the first thing I need to point out is:

1. The Reality of the Spirit World

The Bible teaches that there is a spirit world populated by spirit beings which were originally created by God to serve Him. But today, we know them as both angels and demons. Satan, who was originally one of the chief angels, led a rebellion against God. In Isaiah 14:12-17, Ezek. 28:11-19, and Rev. 12:3-4 we read how this beautiful angel wanted to be like God. So much so that he became exalted in his own pride and was thrown out of heaven. As he was cast down he took a third of the angels with him. These followers of Satan are the demonic enemy.

From Scripture, we know some things about these spirit beings. First we know that they were created by God. **Col. 1:16 (NIV)** says, *"For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him."* The invisible spirit beings refer to angels. God created them.

We also know that they are gender neutral. Jesus says in **Matt. 22:30 (NIV)**, *"At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage, they will be like the angels in heaven."*

We also know that these beings never die, they are eternal. In **Luke 20:36 (NIV)** we read, *"and they can no longer die, for they are like angels."* Angels have no limit to their existence.

We also know that although these beings are eternal, they are not omniscient. That means they are limited in knowledge. Jesus, speaking of His return, says in **Mark 13:32 (NIV)**, *"No one knows about that day or hour, not even angels in heaven."* Concerning the gospel, in **1 Peter 1:12 (NIV)**, we read that there are *"Even angels long to look into these things."*

But don't be deceived; these spirit beings are powerful. We read in Isaiah 37:36 how one angel killed 185,000 men in one night. **Psalms 103:20 (NIV)** says, *"Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word."* They are not omnipotent like God, but are far more powerful than any of us.

We also know that angels are active in the lives of believers. In Daniel 6:22 we read that God sent His angel to shut the lions' mouths and saved Daniel from certain death. In 1 Kings 19:5 we read of the angel ministering to Elijah when he was in the midst of despair. In Acts 5:19 and 12:8-11 we read of how an angel twice delivered Peter from prison.

And we also find in Scripture that there are millions of angelic beings in existence all over this world and that there is both rank and organization of angelic beings. Even our text for today talks about *"rulers... authorities... powers of this dark world... and spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."* So there are different ranks of spirit beings.

All this emphasis in Scripture should teach us that we should have more than a superficial acquaintance with these beings. We should be aware of their activity among us because even though some are friendly towards us and guard our lives, there are others who are extremely hostile toward us. They are our enemies, and we need to

understand who they are, how they work, and how to keep from becoming a casualty when they attack.

So, we understand from Scripture that there is a spirit world and in that realm, there are unseen forces at work who are interacting in our lives - some in a friendly way, and others in a hostile way. Herein lies our problem. So next, I want to point out:

2. The Reality of Spiritual Warfare

The reality of the spirit world brings us face to face with the reality of spiritual warfare. We are engaged in a war of the worlds – a real war that pits God’s children fighting against spiritual forces. We need to realize this because every one of us, without exception, will come under the attack of these spiritual forces.

Our text emphasizes this warfare in words such as: “*struggle*” and “*against*.” We are in a struggle, a war if you will. But we’re not at war against each other. We’re at war against spiritual forces of evil in the spirit world. And that means that whether we like it or not, we have been drafted as spiritual soldiers in the army of the Lord. We don’t have a choice about whether we’ll fight or not. The only choice we really have is whether we’ll be effective soldiers or defeated casualties in this war of the worlds.

You see, these demonic spirits are dead set against us. Their purpose, just like their leader Satan’s, is to fight against God and His work. Satan is a liar, and they are liars. Satan is a deceiver, and they are deceivers. Satan comes to steal, kill, and destroy, and so do they. This is their purpose. And the way they try to accomplish their purpose – their strategy if you will is to attack Christians in our minds. They try to influence the way we think. According to Scripture, if these demonic forces can accomplish that, they can then control our behavior. For example, **Proverbs 23:7 (NASB)** says concerning a man with selfish behavior, “*For as he thinks within himself, so he is.*” Satan knows that man is by and large weak-minded, and selfish. He knows that the mind of man can become his playground. He knows that if he can get us to believe a lie, if he can deceive us, then we’ll live our lives based on that lie.

This is similar to a strategy used by animal trainers in training circus elephants. They will take a baby elephant and tie it to a stake. The baby elephant tugs away at the stake over and over until over time, it realizes that it can’t get away. At that point, its elephant memory takes over and it remembers for the rest of its life. Even when it is fully grown and could easily rip up a stake and get away, the elephant still believes that it can’t get away from the stake.

Satan knows that if he can get us to believe his lies, he has driven a mental stake into our mind. Then, he continues to use that deception because we’ve conditioned ourselves to believe his lie. Even mature adults can become hindered and even defeated in their Christian life, because they’ve been held back by the Devil’s lies.

That is the devil’s primary strategy he uses against God’s children in this spiritual war of the worlds. Are you aware that the war is going on? Do you understand that the devil and his demonic forces are attacking your mind? I hope you are because this war is real and the stakes are high.

My last point deals with how we can combat this demonic activity that is certainly going on around us in the spiritual realm. I want to point out to you:

3. The Reality of Supernatural Weapons

If we are engaged in warfare, we need to understand that there are certain and specific weapons that are available and at our disposal that we can use to defeat the enemy. But since we are engaged in a spiritual conflict, we also need to understand that we fight this war with spiritual and supernatural weapons.

The supernatural weapons available to us consist of two powerful offensive weapons and a number of defensive pieces of armor. In the verses both before and after Ephesians 6:12, the armor of God is mentioned. The pieces of armor which are given to protect us include a belt of truth, a breastplate of righteousness, the gospel shoes of peace, a shield of faith, and a helmet of salvation.

Now like physical armor, these pieces of spiritual armor are all defensive in nature and I could spend an entire message on each one of them. But for the sake of time and in keeping with the theme of today’s message, I want to focus on the only two supernatural offensive weapons we have at our disposal. I say “*only*” because these two are all we need to combat the spiritual darkness and wickedness we encounter. We can attack our spiritual enemies with the sword of the Spirit which is defined as “*the Word of God,*” and with the weapon of prayer.

We can fend off the attacks of Satan by being clothed everyday in the full armor of God. That means that every day, we must be diligent in being sure of the truth, being covered in the righteousness of Christ, being ready to share the gospel, exercising our faith, and being sure of our salvation. When we’re suited up for battle, we’re

leaving ourselves less exposed to Satan's strikes, and his flaming missiles will just bounce off. But when we go on the attack against our enemy, we had better be sure we are relying on the power of God's Word and staying in constant communication with our commander-in-chief through prayer.

You see, the function of God's Word and prayer is to transform our minds into thinking biblically. When we pray and take up the sword of the Spirit, we are allowing the mind of God to penetrate and permeate our minds. We're allowing the light of His Word to dispel the darkness that keeps us from seeing our enemy and his tactics clearly. We're able to recognize the enemy when he attacks because we know he doesn't look nor act like God. That can only come through knowing God through prayer and Bible Study.

But there is one main reason why all of this supernatural weaponry is utilized. That reason is found in vs. 13: *"that you may be able to stand your ground."* The main method which brings us success against the attack of demonic powers is the power to resist.

James 4:7 (NIV) says, *"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* Our strategy in using the armor and weaponry of God is to **submit** to God and to **resist** the devil. We are promised that if we will do these things then the devil will flee. This is the truth of God.

Remember, one of the devil's biggest lies is that he can do more to us than he really can. Demons are real. They can do terrible things and we must not make the mistake of acting like they don't exist. But we also must not make the mistake of assigning to them more power than they have. We can't defeat them in our own strength, but if we resist them in the power of God they will flee.

Now this may sound easy, but it isn't. This struggle – this war we're engaged in is very real and it is very intense. If it doesn't seem intense to you, perhaps it's because you've already given in and Satan's gained the upper hand. But if you're seriously engaged in battle against the enemy, you know what a struggle it is. That is why these two most basic disciplines of prayer and Bible Study can be so hard to do at times. The reason you have to work hard at your prayer life is because you're under attack by the enemy who doesn't want you to pray. The reason you struggle to read your Bible or come to Sunday School to study God's Word is because you're under attack. The devil doesn't want you to open God's Word and see the truth. He doesn't want us to live in obedience to the Word of God because when we do, he'll have no choice but to leave us alone. When we stand against the enemy, and resist his attack in this way, then he'll flee.

The spirit world is a reality. Spiritual warfare is a reality. But remember also that in Christ and in Christ only, victory can be a reality. But in order for victory to be assured against the evil powers of the spirit world, we must clothe ourselves in the armor of God, and we must use the powerful weapons that are provided by God.

Conclusion: I close with a story from Exodus. As the Israelites were making their way to the Promised Land, they were encamped at Rephidim when they learned that they were about to be attacked by a group of people called the Amalekites. Moses instructed Joshua to assemble an army to defend themselves, while he, Aaron, and Hur went up on a hill to intercede to God on behalf of the people. **Exodus 17:11-12 (NIV)** says that *"As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning."* **Exodus 17:12 (NIV)**

So while Joshua was wielding the sword down below, Moses was praying to God from on high. And as long as Moses kept the prayers going, Joshua was winning the battle. The point of this story is that we, as God's soldiers cannot fight spiritual battles in our own power, no matter how strong or talented we may think we are. Prayer is the power for victory over Satan and his army. The prayers of God's people is the energy that enables the Christian soldier to even wear the spiritual armor and wield the sword. Without prayer, we might as well be fighting the war with BB guns.

So, let's realize that we're in a war of the worlds – a real war against a powerful enemy. But more importantly, may we always stand ready to fight armed with the right weapons, and relying on the power of God to gain the victory. May we always be praying with all kinds of prayers. May we always be praying in the Spirit, watching and staying on alert and recognizing when the enemy is attacking. And may we always be in an attitude of prayer for each other because we all face a common enemy who roams about like a roaring lion, seeking to steal, kill, and destroy.

We're in a real war folks, so let's put on the armor every day. Let's take up our weapons and use them every day. Let's band together. Let's stand together, and let's fight together as an army of one, and we'll have victory in Jesus!

