

SATAN HAS A PLAN
Power Struggle Series - Part 3
Dan Burrell

Good morning Life Fellowship. It is good to see you guys today. Please open your Bibles to Ephesians Chapter 6 as that is where we will be today as we continue our series on 'Power Struggle.' It is good that each week we are seeing a few more people coming to the service, as many as we are allowed to with the social distancing and so forth. We are looking at the 13th of September to begin going back to dual services and also doing Kid Life in a very restricted way, but in a way that gives the kids another opportunity. I am glad to see so many kids here this morning. You guys are awesome, and I am glad you are here, and we will also have the Kid Life option coming up on the 13 of September. So gradually, as we get guidelines, we are kind of expanding this.

For all of you who are watching online, thank you again for tuning in as you do each week. I also want to mention that I appreciate the fact that right now this service is being viewed by people all around the world. There is a young lady in Ghana who watches every single week and she usually sends us a greeting. So we are glad to have her as well from Ghana. I know someone else watches from Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam every week. I know that we have friends who watch us from Tirana, Albania. So we have folks all around the world who are joining us for worship and isn't that pretty cool? *(Applause.)*

And I also enjoy it when they leave us little notes on Facebook, or sometimes they send me emails during the week. Also before we get to this passage, I just want to tell you that I am praying for you parents who have either already dropped off your kids at college, or you are just in the process this week of dropping your kinds off to college. I know that is a rough thing. Pray for Pastor Ben who this weekend is dropping off his first and oldest son at Cedarville University in Ohio. I have been praying for him all weekend. Pray for Jason and Vincil Neer as their son is going back up to Ap State this week and I think he will be leaving after church. And I know a couple of guys who are heading up to Liberty this week and some others are already in other places.

So all of you who are going to college we are praying for you, we love you, and we want to hear from you. And for all of you parents who are going to be using up the Kleenex inventory this week we will be praying for you as well. Having been through that myself in the past, most recently last year when my youngest left for the military, I will tell you that it is the best of times and it is the worst of times, particularly when it is the last one leaving. I cried like a baby when we dropped him off at the Marine station, but I have been enjoying going out to eat and having extra money ever since. *(Laughter.)* So it is kind of a mixed blessing, but it works. I certainly don't want him at 35 years old living in my garage, so this is God's plan, and I just have to accept it.

We are continuing with the idea of 'Power Struggle,' and this morning I want you to remember this, if you don't remember anything else during our time together, and that is this - Satan has a plan for you defeat. When we talk about spiritual warfare we have to make sure that we keep in mind, as victorious as we are, as wonderful as salvation is, as

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sure as Heaven is, Satan has a plan for your and my defeat and destruction. He wants to render us defeated in this life.

So we are going to be in Ephesians Chapter 6. First of all before we read the passage, I just want to kind of set a little bit of a stage to help you understand this. Every book of the Bible is written in unity. From Genesis to Revelation God is telling the grand narrative of man's fall, of the redemption plan and the fact that He is coming again. This is the overall narrative that God gives us in Scripture. But every book of the Bible is unique in that it has a particular theme that God is stressing to us through His Word. And in Genesis, which is the book of beginnings, the book of foundation, it tells us where everything begins. In the New Testament Matthew is talking about the kingdom. And so there is a lot of imagery about the kingdom of God that is being restored and completed through salvation.

And then there are the pastoral epistles. For instance the book of Galatians has a theme of freedom. Philippians has the theme of joy. Each book of the Bible has a theme. So the book we are in this morning where we talk about the overall issue of spiritual warfare is the book of Ephesians. And in Ephesians, if I were to give it a theme it would be this - we are to live like winners. We have to remember this, that in the spiritual battle that you and I are engaged in, the battle has already been won. There is no reason, there is no rationale for us to live like we are defeated.

And yet I know it seems that way sometimes. It seems like everywhere we turn, everything we do, that Satan is there opposing, and fighting us. And we look around and we see the mayhem that he creates in civilization, in our lives and in our very homes. And yet the whole book of Ephesians is just basically a reminder that we can win in this life as we get ready to spend eternity with Christ. And it reminds us of an important truth. In Chapter 1 he is talking about blessings, and thanksgiving, that posture that comes with knowing Christ that we see all the good things that God gives us, and we are blessed by them, and we give thanks for them.

In Chapter 2 it is about living in grace, having grace for each other, and accepting God's grace in our lives. And that creates unity, a unity with God, a unity with His family, and a unity with those who are living by truth. And then in Chapter 3 there is the idea of prayer and strength. How we get our strength by being constantly reminded of our relationship with God.

And then in Chapter 4 there is another passage that deals with unity - unity in the body, unity in the believers. And we see this quite a bit in this chapter. In other words living like a winner means walking like a winner, and that means we don't have to fight every battle. The battle has already been fought and it has already been won. We need to live like winners, live like we are victorious, live like the redeemed.

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In Chapter 5 we see again the idea of loving God, loving each other and having peace in conflict. Paul begins a passage that he kind of concludes with in this passage where he says, “**Husbands, love your wives.**” And even if you are an employer you can love the people that work for you. And the people that work for you ought to have respect and affection for those that give them employment, because there can be a lot of conflict right now. There was economic conflict even in those days like there is today, so we ought not be at war with those that are in different levels than we are.

And then finally, Paul addresses children and parents with the idea that we can be unified there as well. Living like winners, remembering what is ultimately at stake, and then Paul closes Ephesians with today’s passage. I think it is really interesting because he says we have won, we are to live in unity, pray, enjoy the victory, but then at the very end he says - by the way you are still in a war. You are still in a war.

And that is where we are going to read beginning in verse 10 of Ephesians 6 this morning. “**Finally** (and again Paul is concluding his summation). **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.**” I want you to note the word ‘schemes’ there. “**against the schemes of the devil,**” because he has a plan for our defeat.

Verse 12: “**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. 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 firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.**”

Verse 16: “**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.**”

Another passage that kind of relates to this whole theme that Satan has a plan for our destruction is found in I Peter Chapter 5 and verse 8. Many of us know I Peter Chapter 5 and verse 7 which says: “**Casting all your cares on Him, because He cares for you.**” The English Standard version says: “**Casting all your anxieties.**” In a time of great anxiety that is a very comforting verse. But when you look at the next verse after that in I Peter 5 and verse 8 it says: “**Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.**”

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So it is kind of interesting that in verse 7 it says not to be anxious, and then in verse 8 it is like, *'but a lion is coming to get you.'* In other words we can walk in victory, but we must be diligent as we do so. Why is this important? It is because Satan has a plan for our defeat.

You know in verse 11 there is a word that is such an interesting word to me. And that is the word 'schemes.' And if you go back and look at the Greek origin of this word you will find it is a very complicated word. But for the sake of this application this morning here is a definition of 'scheme' that fits into Satan's strategy for our defeat. It is this: *'a large scale, systematic plan or arrangement for attaining some particular object, or putting a particular idea into effect.'*

That is a pretty sophisticated definition, isn't it? It is a large scale, systematic plan or arrangement that has in its mind a particular object (that would be us) or putting a particular idea (that would be Satan's philosophy) into effect. Where - in our lives and in the world. Satan is the mastermind of our defeat.

Now there are several things I want us to look at this morning as we kind of get into this, and man, this is one of those passages where you peel off a layer, and there is another layer, and peel that off and there is another one, and still another one. And I want to just mention this to you real quickly. This is a passage that I think would be a good idea for parents to go over with their kids at some point. There is a lot of imagery here that is good. I don't care how old you are you need to understand this - Satan has a plan for your defeat. He has a plan for your defeat when you are seven and he has a plan for your defeat when you are seventy. He wants you sidelined. He wants you living for him rather than for God. He wants you walking in lies rather than in truth.

And parents, there is no age at which your family is immune from Satan's schemes, because it is a sophisticated plan and it is a long-term plan. And it is a plan that ultimately we have the power to defeat, but we have to be smart about it. That is why we call this spiritual warfare. That is why it is a power struggle. You may be in elementary school. Some of you kids are going back to school in real time and some of you are going back virtually, and I understand that. But regardless of that, you are connected whether you are in first grade or tenth grade, the level of sophistication by which you are connected is different, but there are temptations for you.

It could be something as simple as cheating. And by the way there are a lot of you young people who are going to be watching your teacher online, and you are going to be having tests and quizzes and papers to do, and the temptation is going to be really strong there to cheat. And you wonder, *'How do you know that, Pastor Dan?'* And it is because when Pastor Dan was in high school he had his own version of distant learning. I went to a unique kind of a lab type school and we didn't have lectures and a teacher up front, and so a lot of our work was doing independent study. And do you know what I found? It was really easy to cheat if I wanted to do that. And do you know what that is?

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That is part of Satan's scheme. It is part of his scheme to get you to start making compromises in your life that later will lead to bigger compromises, that will lead to bigger decisions, that will have greater implications.

Now maybe you will think, *'Aw, it is just a math quiz. It is not that big of a deal.'* Or *'It is just a homework assignment and no one will ever know.'* That is not the issue. The issue is this - when we make decisions to do wrong on little things, then we will make the next decision with a little more ease, and a little more, until the next thing we know we will be asking ourselves, *'How did I get here? How did this happen?'* And it will be because we chose to take shortcuts on the little things.

So parents, this is a great opportunity I think to use this passage as a teachable moment. Some of you guys are going back to high school and to college and this will be one of those times where Satan almost gives us the idea that, *'Hey, this is my time. Mom and dad aren't around and I am free for the first time. I can do what you want. I can just party and I can just ignore everything I have been taught.'* And you are going to be surrounded and embraced by people who have a strategy for seeing how far they can get you to go, and how much they can get you to do. Understand that they may be your friends and that this is the way it is at school. I know what it is like to be 18, 20 or 22 years old in the year 2020. I get all of that, but understand that you have a future, and God has a plan, and Satan has a scheme. And Satan's scheme is to destroy your future so that you don't experience the best of God's plan. And I want you to understand something. Even at 18, 19, 20, or 22 years old in these circumstances you can still live this passage.

But Satan's schemes don't just stop there. Sometimes it affects us as adults as well. We want to get ahead, we want peace in our lives, and we want the great American dream. We want all these things and in order to get them sometimes we are willing to compromise to do so. Why is that so? It is because Satan has a plan. And whether you are 22 years old or 92 years old the temptations are still real. We will look at that just a little bit more in just a moment.

But let's talk about what Satan's plan is. Number one - let's remember this, there is an unseen war raging all around us. There is an unseen war raging all around us. Now if you are a left brain person, if you are a logical person, if you are a person that likes to lean into science and the knowns and the facts you can read this passage and kind of go, *'Whoa, what in the world are we talking about - powers and principalities and present darkness and spiritual forces in the heavenly spaces? What is going on there?'*

This week President Trump, or one of the secretaries, announced the fact that there is now a whole division to explore UFOs. That was on the news. I was listening to NPR on my way to church this morning - don't judge me for that, I just do that on the weekends - but on NPR this morning they had a whole segment on exploring UFOs and

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what is going to happen. And that kind of stuff just kind of creeps me out. I don't know what it all is, but now they are going to be exploring it and talking about it.

I do know this, that the Bible told us a long time ago that there are things in the universe that you and I cannot see, we do not understand them, we may not even be physically aware of them, but God in His sovereign design and in His love for us warned that there is a battle that is raging around us of which we may not be fully aware. And that is because it is a spiritual battle. It is a battle that originates with Him in the heavens. There is a Satan, there is evil, there is conflict and there is a plan in place for our defeat that is part of the strategic plan that Satan has.

Here is what we need to remember - the battle, the scheme, the plan that Satan has isn't about you and me as much as it is about him and God. It is about him and God. This war began before you and I were around. This was when Satan said, *'I will be God. I will sit on His throne. I will have His authority. I will receive His worship.'* And it was that pride, that arrogance that created the conflict. And while you and I feel it personally this is really a war between Satan and God. And we have to remember that because we are how Satan wants to get to God. If he wants to defeat God he has to defeat His children. If he wants to wound God he has to do it through God's family, through the redeemed, through those who love Him. So we have to see it in these pictures in Scripture.

And from the book of Genesis to the book of Revelations Scripture records Satan's plan to replace God with himself. The Old Testament is the story of Satan's desire, Satan's plan to prevent the Messiah from coming. We see it in Genesis Chapter 3 where it says, ***"He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."*** When we see that passage it is the introduction of the conflict that we experience on earth. It is not the introduction of the overall one, but it is the introduction of what we are experiencing on earth. What did that mean? It meant that there was a Messiah that was coming. His name was Jesus and He was going to pay the price for our sins. And He said that in the end while it will look like a bruise occurred whenever Jesus is crucified, in the end God is stomping on his head. He was going to crush Satan's head.

Now I won't get too deeply into this today, but an apologetic moment that may be worth exploration on your part is this - why so many times in the Old Testament did it look like God was into genocide? Why was it that there were times when God said to kill them all? We look at that from our human perspective and it looks horrible. But when you look at it from a spiritual perspective here is what was going on. God knew Satan had a plan to keep the Son from being born. God knew Satan needed to wipe out the bloodline, he needed to wipe out the birth, and we see it all throughout Scripture, whether it is the defeat of Israel, whether it was the captivity in Egypt, whether it was even Herod having all the boys under two years of age killed.

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Satan left no tool unused to try to disrupt God's plan for redemption. And God, in His loving compassion, knew that unless that Savior came there was no hope for mankind, and He also held nothing back so that we might be saved. Maybe you are thinking, *'Well, I don't understand all that about God.'* Well, neither do I. Do you know why? It is because you and I aren't God. But in the end we have to believe and trust that He is good and in doing so He made it possible for our redemption to occur. And that is an important thing because that is an argument that often the people that are hostile to the gospel will bring up. *'I can't serve a God that _____,'* and fill in the blank.

Remember this - you and I are not in a position to cast judgment on God, His motivations, His outcomes or anything else. We are the created; He is the creator. And while that may rub against the way we like to think, we are not God. And until we get to the point where we are willing to humble ourselves to the authority of God, we are not in a position to trust Him. We have to get to the point where we realize that God is God and we are not. And we need to be more concerned about whether we are submitting to Him than whether or not we agree with Him, because in the end truth will always be truth, God will always be powerful, and we will always need to submit. And with those realities we ought to respond biblically.

Another thing I want us to keep in mind is this - we as followers of Christ are part of the battle as well. The battle involves satanic schemes. The devil and his demons are constantly carpet bombing the world in general and Christians in particular with the evil works in order to diminish the power and authority of a holy God. Satan's strategy is to discredit God. Does he need to discredit God through those who make no pretense of being affiliated or associated with him? No! The person this morning who says there is no god, or if there is he doesn't matter, is not doing any damage against the reputation of God.

Then who is it that Satan might want to defeat? Who is it that Satan might want to use to damage the reputation of God and the reality of truth? Well, it is you and me, it is those of us who bear the name of Christ. Do you realize how important that is? Often when I was growing up, and as a teenager my dad or my mom would say this before I would go out with my friends ,or go out on a date: *'Remember who you are as you go out. Remember your last name. Don't bring dishonor to the family by the way you may behave because we will find out about it.'* It probably wasn't the best parenting technique, but it was the one they used, okay? We lived in a small town and everyone usually knew what happened by the time I got home, so my parents knew they would find out what I did, and they didn't want me to dishonor their name.

And because I loved my parents and didn't want to damage my relationship with them it weighed on me how I behaved as well. I didn't want to do something that would break my parents' confidence in me or their trust in me. So that became my motivation. So how much more then should we feel as those who bear the name of Christ? As Christians should we not care both about the reputation of Christ and the fact that we love

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Him, the fact that He is the one who redeemed us, He is the one that allowed us to be born again? That ought to have an impact on how we live as well. We are part of the battle.

Now the battle against Christians can take a lot of forms. And let's make sure we know this because many times we have this bad habit of assigning things that are from Satan to God, and we need to be careful about that. There are some things that are very overt that Satan uses to tempt Christians. It is pride, it is sexual temptations, addictions, hatred, violence, idolatry, pornography, coveting, lying and so on. We could sit here for the rest of the hour and talk about all the different things Satan uses. And Satan is overt on that. He is not subtle. He wants you to be a liar. He wants you to be a cheater. He wants you to be immoral. He wants you to be addicted. He wants you to be violent. He wants you to be angry. He wants you to be jealous. That is what Satan is all about. That is his scheme that is very overt and very out front. That is why we try to live sometimes in our own strength the righteous life because we know that is destructive conduct.

But there also are areas that we need to be remembering that are chronic in our life. In other words they are a part of the human condition. You are going to deal with them at some point in your life and you may be dealing with them right now. It can be illness, it can be depression, it can be a sense of isolation, it can be discouragement, it can be weakness, or even proclivities or tendencies.

I think if all of us are honest we know that in some area of our lives we have a tendency toward a certain kind of evil. I have known people who just were angry, violent people, and given the right circumstances their anger would create a physical violence. They were brawlers and they would get into fights. They didn't suffer in other areas of their life, but this was the one that we would say was their Achilles' heel. This is the one where they were the most vulnerable.

For other people it is money. Money, money, money, got to have money. They want to earn money, get money, steal money and spend money whatever it takes, because they have to have money to get more stuff. For others it may be pride. *'Look at me. Don't you question me. Don't you challenge me. Look at what I have. Look at what I've done. Look at what I've earned. Look at how many degrees I have.'*

For others it may be immorality. Everywhere they go their mind immediately goes the wrong direction. And they imagine, they get addicted to pornography, they have affairs, they live the promiscuous life and that is their weakness. I don't know what your weakness is and it may be different than my weaknesses. I do know my weakness and I know I have to put double guards around it. There are some things that are not a temptation to me. In terms of addictions I learned a long time ago that I have the kind of personality that if I really like something I am dead. So I have learned a long time ago never to go there. That is the reason I have made several decisions that I am very careful

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about what I put in my body other than Diet Coke which I probably should add to the list. But there are a lot of other things I don't put in my body.

The reality is there are things that really don't appeal to me either. But there are some things that appeal to me that I have to watch all the time. Maybe you wonder what those are, but I am not telling you. What is it in your own life that Satan uses as the hook to do war with you? Those are the things we need to be aware of.

The second thing I want us to remember is this - none of us are immune to targeting by Satan. No one is immune. I started off by telling you kids that you need to be aware of this. Teenagers and college kids you need to be aware of this. Young twenties and thirties with small children need to be aware of this. Old folks need to be aware of this. All of us need to remember that there are none of us who are immune to being targeted by Satan.

So how do I know this? First of all remember that Jesus was a target. He had the temptation in the wilderness when He was physically weakened after fasting for forty days and then Satan shows up. By the way remember this, Satan wants to show up whenever we are most vulnerable, whenever we are discouraged or defeated, whenever we feel like throwing up our hands when we are hurting, or disappointed in someone. And at times like that just look for Satan to show up to try and add insult to our injury. He is going to try to make it a clean sweep with us.

Jesus experienced three levels of temptation - lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and pride of life, which are the same things that we face. And Jesus did not give in. In fact how did He respond? It was with Scripture. There is a whole sermon right there. Satan was defeated every time with Scripture. We could talk all morning about Satan being defeated in Scripture. I will just give you three examples real quickly.

Remember Solomon? He was the wisest man that ever lived, and yet Solomon fell. And what was one of his biggest weaknesses - it was women. The man had way too many wives, and beyond that he had concubines. He was rich, he was powerful, he was wise, but he was broken. Then remember Samson who was the strongest man who ever lived. He had great physical strength, he was a judge of Israel with great insight and ability to discern - except when it came to Delilah. And he lost his strength, he lost his reputation and ultimately lost his life humiliated before his enemies.

What about David? David was the most spiritual man that we find in Scripture. The Bible says he was a man after God's own heart, and yet we know that when other kings were at war he was out on his rooftop and who did he see but Bathsheba. And he paid mightily for it. So if the wisest man, the strongest man, and the most spiritual man in the Old Testament all experienced temptation, what makes us think we are going to be exempt from it? We are not. Why? It is because Satan has a plan for our defeat.

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I want to just point this out to you that if you are doing ministry, if you are in spiritual leadership, if you are even a parent or a business owner, you may be particularly in the crosshairs of Satan. I have said this over the years, and I think our staff team knows this, certainly my family knows it, and that is every time I go on a mission trip when I come back it is like the world has fallen apart. My most recent mission trip by the way was the last week of February when I was in Myanmar. And I came back to Covid.

Now maybe you are thinking, *'Did God put Covid in place just because you went to the mission field, because if that is so you are not going to the mission field ever again.'* (Laughter.) But no, that wasn't why it happened, but I will tell you what has happened has been a huge distraction and it has impacted me. There have been times in the past where literally when I got off the airplane walking up to the runway to the terminal when my phone would be ringing with problems. I will have had this great time on the mission field, seeing people getting saved, people being disciplined, and great things going on. and then I can be literally walking off the plane when my phone starts giving me news that throws me into crisis, problems and distractions.

When I was a little boy usually the Wizard of Oz would be on Sunday night at 6 o'clock, and we had to be at church at 7. So we would watch the first part of it and then get in the car and go to church. And it seemed like the Wizard of Oz would always be at the part where the flying monkeys came when we had to leave for church. If you have seen the movie you know about the flying monkeys. And those things terrified me, and I still don't like to look at the flying monkey scene in the Wizard of Oz because to me they look demonic. And I have always said as I am coming back from a mission trip that I have to be ready for the flying monkeys when I get off the plane. If you have ever gone with me on a mission trip I am sure you have heard me say that.

Now understand this, Satan has some flying monkeys he wants to send your direction. You may be going through a great victory, or you may be in the midst of turmoil and difficulty, when Satan sees you as vulnerable and he has a flock of flying monkeys he wants to send in your direction. Why? It is because he has a plan for your defeat.

The third thing is this - there is a spiritual dimension we cannot ignore. This is a spiritual battle. It impacts us physically, but it is spiritual. And we need to be aware of the subtle ways in which Satan gains entry to the spiritual domains of our lives. I can't tell you how frustrated I am about the little time we have to explore topics like this. Again, I am just going to show you the menu and I urge you to get into some study on it. This may be something you want to talk about in your Life Communities, it may be something you want to talk about in family devotions, or to read privately about, but there are gateways spiritually that we need to be very aware of.

This can include the occult, getting involved in séances, or mysticism. My parents had a really important rule that I believe is important today. And you may think

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that is just silly, but I do not believe it is silly. My parents would never let me play with an Ouija Board, because there is a connection to the supernatural spiritual domains there that I don't understand, but I know that I am vulnerable to.

It can be drugs. It is interesting that in the Old Testament the word used for drugs is *Pharmacia*, and *Pharmacia* is also connected to witchcraft. One of the reasons people like to take drugs is because they disconnect from reality, and they experience an alternate reality. It isn't real, but it is spiritual and it impacts them. So we need to be very, very careful about anything that distorts reality, from alcohol to crystal meth and everything in between. If you are under the influence of it there is a problem and we need to be careful of it.

Pornography is one of the things that will fundamentally rewire you. I wish I could spend a whole sermon on this. The number one thing that the pastors of this church deal with on a regular basis is with people who are addicted to pornography. Maybe you think, '*Not in my house,*' but that is a dangerous statement to make, because every young man will get exposed to pornography at some point in his life. You don't have to go looking for it, it will come for you. And many times because of the shame of it, and because it is not something that people like to talk about, when an addiction occurs it strangles their relationships, strangles their reality, and Satan has a heyday with it. And guys, none of us are immune from it. Research shows that about thirty percent of women have an issue with it as well. We have to be careful of it.

Subliminal messaging may also be something we don't realize. And again I am not trying to be freaky, and I am not going to play any records backwards for you like they did when I was in a youth department. But I will say that if you listen to the lyrics of many of the songs that are popular today, you are going to hear messages that are far short of the truth of God's Word. And you may not even realize it because you just think it is secular music, but it can program how you think. I am not trying to be legalist, I am saying we need to be discerning. Be aware and be careful. Why? It is because Satan has a plan for your defeat.

Very quickly I am going to give you the last one. God gives the believer what is required to defeat Satan. This is the good news. After this huge warning He says here is the good news, '*You have the tools that are needed to defeat Satan.*' Now when I was in Sunday school as a kid, and some of you may have seen this, but there was always a poster in the classroom that dealt with spiritual warfare. There would be this soldier on the poster and there would be a big belt with 'truth' written on it. And there would be a helmet and a breastplate and a certain kind of shoes. There would be a sword and a shield and each of them would have a corresponding name on them.

And the problem with that is that my focus was always on the armor, but not what the armor represented. So I am not going to focus on the armor here, but I am going to

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focus on what it represented because I think sometimes we miss the tools that we have to engage Satan if we are not careful.

So look if you would back at the passage in Ephesians Chapter 6 and verse 14. ***“Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.”*** The first thing we see is truth. The battle of truth and lies is the original battle when Satan said to Eve, *‘Can you really trust God? Is He really telling the truth? Does He mean what He says? And is He being honest with you?’*

And that is the same battle that Satan will use with you. *‘Can you really trust God? Does He really mean what He says? And is He telling you the whole truth?’* Without truth we are vulnerable. And once you know God’s Word is true, we are invincible because we possess that which Satan will not grasp, because he will not believe that God is who He really is. So that is truth.

Then we see the breastplate of righteousness. Why is righteousness important? It is because righteousness is the result of truth. You won’t be righteous if you don’t know what truth is. You can’t be righteous unless you know what truth is. Otherwise righteousness becomes a matter of opinion. Living right, standing up for right, all of those become a matter of popular choice or opinion. *‘What works for me. What other people are doing. What the majority says.’*

And today there are virtues that are being raised across civilization that are not virtues in the eyes of God; they are virtues in the eyes of man that the Bible says nothing about. I will give you one - tolerance. Today the most important value in the modern culture is to be tolerant of everything. But God doesn’t tolerate sin; He judges sin. And so we don’t need to be self-censoring. We must continue as people who are waging the spiritual battle across the universe as it is being exchanged. We need to be able to stand up and say, *‘It is not my opinion, it is God’s Word. You may not believe it, but I do, and this is why it is important.’*

We can say this, *‘Truth is truth whether or not anyone believes it or not,’* because truth is truth in all people for all places at all times. Truth could have zero people believing it and it doesn’t make it any less important. So whether or not it is received, whether or not it is accepted, embraced or lived out, does not in any way negate the power of truth. You and I know it, we have it; therefore we ought to live righteously. We know the difference between right and wrong. We know that there is a battle. We know that salvation is real. We know that damnation is possible. We know that sin is the condition of every man. Knowing these things it ought to be reflected in how we live.

Then there is the gospel. The gospel is God’s plan and it is represented in the feet. The Bible talks about those who spread the good news of Christ are blessed - the feet that take us around the world sharing the good news. And folks, it is always about

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the gospel. That is why Jesus came. That is why the war is raging. That is why the conflict is real because it is about the salvation of our very souls beyond this life. So the gospel is essential. Don't get so enamored with all the other arguments that are out there that we forget that every argument is solved with the gospel. This isn't a political world; this is a spiritual world. And when we emphasize politics and power and money and ignore the gospel, or we compromise the gospel so that we get those things, we are in danger. And so that is why we always want to be a church of the gospel.

And then there is faith. The Bible says "*without faith it is impossible to please God.*" We have to have the faith. And then there is salvation. Salvation is that surety that we have that we are God's, that Heaven is ours, that we are part of His family, that we are redeemed, protected and preserved by Him. Why is that important? It is because it gives us confidence that in the end we can be abused, we can be ridiculed, we can even be killed, but no one can take our salvation. And that gives us confidence. We believe in the battle.

And then there is Scripture. The Bible says "*the Word of God is quick and powerful sharper than any two edged sword.*" When Jesus was being tempted by Satan, what did He do? He quoted Scripture. The best thing that you and I can do is quote Scripture. I love what Billy Graham used to do when he was preaching. He would say this over and over and over, and he had a particular gesture he would use as he said this: "*The Word of God says.....*" "*The Bible says.....*" "*Scripture says.....*" And all throughout his message, while he would use other illustrations, when it came down to the meat of his message it was always, 'The Word of God.'

And folks, people may disagree with the Word of God, they may ignore the Word of God, they may not think it is important, but you and I know that it is. And the most powerful words you will ever utter are not your opinions, not your intellect, not your knowledge, but the words of God. And that is because the words of God are supernatural and the Holy Spirit takes the words of God and uses them. What does the Scripture say the Word of God does? "*To divide, to pierce, to cast asunder.*" That is the work of the Scripture. You are not responsible for the outcome, but you are responsible for the battle.

And then the last thing is prayer. And I would love to spend more time on this, but we don't have time this morning. In verse 18 it talks about prayer and it is the armor they are speaking of. It demonstrates that we can't rely on our own strength. When we pray it demonstrates that we need protection and we realize it. Understand when we talk about armor we need to remember when David was a young boy and he fought Goliath. King Saul wanted him to put on his own armor because he had proven that armor and he knew that his armor was good in battle. But it wasn't the right size for David. And Jesus has proved our armor. He has proved it. He prayed and set the example. He told us to pray.

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And it is interesting when you look at the last part of verse 18 to see that it also tells us that we need to pray for each other. And that is how I want to close this morning. Are we praying for each other in the battle? Too often I think as Christians when we realize that Satan has a scheme for our defeat, and we look around us and we see people who fall by the wayside, that are wounded by sin, that have lost a round, that have fallen victim to their addiction, or to their anger, or to their lust - what is our response? Too often it is too condemn, to walk away, or to isolate them, when the Scripture says we are to pray for them. And pray for each other.

And may I challenge our church this morning to do just that. These are weird times, unprecedented, I have never experienced anything like this and I have never dreamed I would experience something like this in ministry. People are edgy, they are cranky, they are isolated, they are confused, and they are anxious. You know that too. You see it as well as I do. So are we praying for each other? Because when we pray for someone we want to meet them, we want to draw near to them, we want to encourage them.

And Satan is doing his best to leave a wide swath of damaged believers. And if we don't lift each other up, if we don't pray for each other, if we don't encourage each other, who is going to do it? That is our privilege. That is our calling. And so Paul said to pray with all supplication, with all earnestness for the saints. Who are the saints? We are the saints. We are the ones who bear the name of Christian. And this is the conclusion of a passage that basically tells us to live like winners, to realize that we are rich, we are redeemed, and we are restored. Live like the winner you are, but never forget Satan has a strategy for your defeat.

Our heads are bowed and our eyes are closed. I left three more points on the pulpit this morning. I just couldn't get to them all even though you know I talk fast. But with that in mind I hope that you gained a fresh awareness this morning that we are engaged in a power struggle with Satan, but one in which we can emerge victorious.

So will you lay claim to the promises of Scripture, hold fast to the tools that God has given you? We are not to be just in a defensive posture; we are to be in an offensive posture. The gates of hell cannot prevail against the united church that lives in truth. That's our calling, that's our mission, that's our purpose and there is no scheme, no plan that Satan has ever come up with that is more powerful than the commission that God has given us. So let's walk like winners and be aware that Satan has a plan.

Are you defeated this morning? Are you hurting or discouraged? The opportunity for prayer is right here. You can come over here to the left and there will be someone there who would love to pray with you. If you want to take communion it is available on your way out. You can step aside with your family or friends and just reconnect to the cost of our salvation. If you want to pray you can social distance up here at the crosses, or if you want to stay afterwards to talk to one of the pastors, just stop us

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after service, or give us a call this week. If you don't know Christ as your Savior, if you feel like you are just being pummeled and you don't have hope, please talk to one of us. Whatever you do as we leave this morning, let's walk out victorious in Christ, aware of Satan and determined that he will not gain one second of victory in our lives in the week to come. Let's stand as we pray.

Father, we love you. Thank you for your Word. Thank you, Father, for the gathering of your family. And we have been reminded this year and even yet this morning what an encouragement it is to worship and to be with those who are the called out assembly who love you. So Father, we pray for each other this morning. I pray that you would protect our families, protect our marriages, protect our young people, protect our kids that are going to school, protect our young adults that are going to college, protect our business owners, protect our missionaries who go out around the world.

Protect the leadership of this church, our Life Community leaders, our elders, our pastoral team, our staff. Father, protect each one of us that we would stand against Satan schemes. Father, may we walk out of here more sure today that we have ever been that the victory is ours, and that Satan cannot, will not, defeat us. Father help him to never gain a foothold in any of our lives. Help us to walk in humility and in truth. For it is in Christ's name I pray. Amen.

The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.