

**THE BIG IDEA: Because Jesus won the war, we can stand and fight.**

### The Take-Off

When I was a sophomore in college at Pfeiffer, I had a job at the YMCA here in town. I picked up the paper and saw that Wingate was starting football program and decided to transfer to play. For me, this was the first step toward a professional football career, one that I had no doubt was God's will for my life. I transferred and told everyone I knew why I was going to Wingate. If talking about the NFL could get you a roster spot, I'd have been in the Hall of Fame before the first snap of spring ball. It was a dream, and I could taste it right up until I got smacked in a scrimmage game and then it tasted more like blood. But that one hit brought me back to reality - I wasn't gonna be playing in the NFL! Sometimes Christ followers are like that, aren't we? We talk a good game, but forget that this isn't just a game. We are in a war. It's real, and I love that Paul closes out this letter talking about it. We aren't the spoiled brats of a King who get everything handed to them. We're soldiers, warriors, and Paul sums up the letter with that kind of language. We're going to be in Ephesians 6:10-20, and while we read it you're going to hear a lot of stuff about standing and fighting, and we need to remember that what we've take 16 weeks to study, the Ephesians heard in one sitting. That means that while they heard these words calling them to a fight, they never confused the fight with the war, because they war has been decided. Jesus won that, and not just barely, but convincingly. So while they heard the words here in Ephesians 6, they could still remember the words from Ephesians 1:20-23 about a King who left no doubt about Who won the war. Jesus won, and He fills all things and is over all things. You and I don't have to try to defeat Satan - he's already defeated. Jesus won, and that means we win, too. So, hand clapping and high fives all around, right? We win, that's that and let's go eat yellow peeps. Um, no. There's more to it than that, which is why right now many of us are thinking, "If we win, why does it feel like I'm losing?" That's what Paul is going to address right here in Ephesians 6, and so I need you to write down today's Big Idea because it will help us kind of navigate this passage.

**Because Jesus won the war, we can stand and fight.**

Never for a moment think you secured your salvation. Jesus did that. That's what Easter is all about. But a defeated foe is not a dead foe, and that's why there are still times that we are called to fight. Our victory is secure, but the battle is still raging. Have you ever seen a police chase? The helicopter is out and the car is being chased by 5, 10, 20 police cars. Do you ever think the dude's getting away? I don't. I know that the end is inevitable and who will win and who will lose. But there is still the chase, and that's why when the car approaches an intersection, we cringe because we know that if an innocent driver pulls into it, there's gonna be damage. Here in Ephesians 6:10-20, Paul is writing to make sure we get to the end - the victory that is secure and never in doubt for a moment - with as little damage as possible. To do that, we need to remember 3 things:

#### 1. We have an enemy

- a. I'm not sure where you stand on the whole devil thing
- b. Some people think he's everywhere, but he isn't because he can't be. He's not God.
- c. Some people think he's nowhere, but he isn't because he's real. Paul said so right here "stand against the schemes of the devil."
- d. Satan probably loves it when people debate whether or not he exists, because he doesn't really care if you believe in him. he has a job to do and he'll still do it.
- e. Sometimes we forget who our real enemy is and we get caught up fighting the people and circumstances that we can see instead of the real enemies that we can't.
- f. Your fight isn't with people, it's with the powers behind the people.
- g. Jesus recognized this when he called Peter, Satan. (Matthew 16:23)
- h. Our enemy schemes. He's a little better than a one trick pony, because he has 3 tricks (John 10:10).

- i. If something is trying to steal your peace and joy, kill your confidence and destroy your security in Christ, you can be sure it's Satan.
- j. Our enemy is a schemer, a planner. He strategizes and whiteboards. He has a file on us.
- k. He has limited power and a limited playbook, and so he's very crafty and very patient and has learned how to get the best return of investment when he attacks.
- l. That's why we're told to be sober minded and vigilant (1 Peter 5:8)
- m. Our enemy isn't playing around, and he doesn't stop fighting just because he's defeated, and the Christ followers who fail to take him seriously will find themselves in a world of hurt.
- n. Like me on the football field, you'll be looking through the earhole of a helmet wondering what hit you.
- o. I'll tell you what hit you: your enemy, and because he's mad, he hits hard.
- p. But God knew that, and has given us what we need for protection against it.

## 2. We have weaponry

- a. We have an enemy and he's ticked. He knows his time is limited and he wants the most bang for the buck.
- b. What are we to do? "Take up the whole armor of God"
- c. God gets blames for a lot of stuff, doesn't He? Things go wrong and we blame Him, and yet He's not the kind of God to put us in a fight unequipped. We're the type of people to go into a fight unprepared.
- d. So, we have weapons to use in the fight against a defeated, angry foe.
  - We have the belt of truth
    - truth centers us, holds everything together
    - we need it because we're fighting the father of lies (John 8:44)
  - We have breastplate of righteousness
    - this guards our heart, who we are
    - we need this because we're fighting the accuser (Revelation 12:10)
  - We have shoes for preaching
    - we're to always be ready to share the hope of the Gospel (1 Peter 3:15)
    - we need these because we're fighting a distractor who loves to delay us (Daniel 10:13)
  - We have a shield of faith
    - faith fills the cracks in others and ourselves
    - these are the small places that darts can find
    - the shield was often drenched in water to put out the fiery arrows and darts
    - we need this because we're fighting a snake who tries to find an opening (Ephesians 4:27; 2 Timothy 3:6)
  - We have a helmet of salvation
    - the battle is in our minds long before our surroundings!
    - we must wage the war in our minds (2 Corinthians 10:5; Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:23)
    - we need this because we're fighting an enemy who loves to plant doubt (Genesis 3:1)
  - We have a sword
    - our only offensive weapon, because it's the only one we need (Hebrews 4:12; Isaiah 55:11)
    - we need this because it is the one weapon that defeats our enemy (Matthew 4:1-11)
- e. What does a loving Father do when he knows we're in a fight against a defeated enemy?
- f. He equips us because he loves us.
- g. Don't be caught naked in the fight and then blame God because of it. Get dressed everyday.
- h. Wouldn't even hurt to spend time each morning reading through these weapons and facing the day armed for battle.
- i. Not only would we feel more equipped and protected, but putting on the armor changes our mindset from victims to victors, and that makes all the difference.

## 3. We have victory

- a. Honestly, we want to believe it when I say We Win, but we often don't feel like we're winning.
- b. Look back at verse 10: Paul wrote be strong "in the Lord" and in the strength of "His might"
- c. First off, we're not winning if we aren't trusting in what Jesus has already done
- d. Listen to what He's done for us:

- Colossians 2:15 - Jesus disarmed and humiliated Satan
  - John 16:33 - Jesus has overcome the world
  - Psalm 108:13 - Jesus walks on our enemies
  - Deuteronomy 20:4 - Jesus fights for us and gives us victory
  - 2 Corinthians 2:14 - Jesus always leads the victory parade
  - 1 Corinthians 15:55-57 - Jesus gives us victory
- e. So why does it feel like we're losing? Sometimes because we haven't trusted in Jesus for victory over sin and Satan.
- f. Sometimes it's because we just want the fight to be over.
- g. But remember the police chase? The idiot who is going to be caught but is still running into cars and people? It may be finished, but it's not over, and so our response to the victory of Jesus isn't drinks with umbrellas but armor with swords.
- h. Look back at 1 Corinthians 15. After Paul wrote that we have been given victory, he wrote verse 58: "be steadfast, immovable, and still working."
- i. Sounds a lot like Ephesians 6, doesn't it?
- j. 4 times Paul tells us to stand. The Greek meaning of the word tends to border a bit on the stubborn side, to make firm, to not waiver, to respond to the enemy's attacks like you would respond if you had the winning lottery ticket and someone tried to take it from you.
- k. You've already won, but you're putting up a fight.
- l. And the first words out of your mouth would be, "This is mine!"
- m. Jesus has secured the victory. He has won a war that we couldn't.
- n. Without Jesus, we had no power to defeat Satan, but because of Jesus' work on the cross we have the power to stand and tell him that he is defeated.
- o. We have an enemy, but we have weaponry, and because of Jesus, we can - and do - have victory.

### The Landing

As we wrap this up, let me be very clear about victory, feelings and circumstances.

We can be winners and still feel like losers. In fact, sometimes the best picture of a victorious Christian is actually a picture of Rocky: the champ, but all busted up.

We don't like that picture because we want to look good, and that's simply pride. People who trust fully in the work of Jesus don't care how they look, they only care that they are looking at Jesus.

They see Him and His victory, and He is greater than anything they face.

That allows us to have victory IN our circumstances IN SPITE OF our circumstances.

You may have never trusted in Jesus like that, and today is the day for you to begin.

Will there be hard days past this day? Sure. Paul wrote Ephesians from prison!

Paul said we put on the full armor to be ready for the "day of evil" which literally means "when things are at their worst."

But you can't stand and fight in those days without first trusting in Jesus for winning the war.

But when we put our trust in Jesus and His work, we fight in victory for a King who is victorious.

And though we may be bruised and broken, but we will never hang our heads and say it's over, because Jesus won, and that means we win, too.

## HOME COMING

Everyone in heaven watched  
As he staggered to the throne.  
Another warrior -  
Bruised and beaten -  
Who was finally coming home.

He looked around and quickly noticed  
That he wasn't quite the same  
As all the others  
Who were there  
And he could feel their puzzled stares.

He looked at God and then he knew  
Why he was different from the rest:  
Their armor shone,  
But his was worn.  
He bowed his head – he was alone.

He thought of all the other warriors  
And of how well they must have fought  
The fires of life  
To still come through  
With armor shining as if new.

He then glanced at himself in shame  
And wondered where he had gone wrong?  
His sword was nicked,  
His shield was bent  
And his soldier's suit was dull.

And then God, knowing all his thoughts,  
Reached down in love and picked him up.  
“Your armor's dull  
Because you fought.  
Their armor's shiny 'cause they did not.”

And then God placed him by the throne  
And told the warrior he was home.  
The soldier smiled -  
Then God reached down -  
And placed upon his head a crown.