

I. Introduction

- A. *“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness 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. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit...”* (Ephesians 6:10-18)
- B. We have been talking about the Christian in Complete Armor, and my talk today is part 5 in the series. And this of course comes from this passage of Scripture. It is not the only place in the Bible that speaks of spiritual warfare.
- C. From Genesis to Revelation, God has revealed a fierce and unceasing warfare in the invisible realm of the heavens. This warfare involves God and Satan, angels and demons, truth and deception, heaven and hell, believers and unbelievers, the saved and the lost.
- D. It is the Cosmic Conflict of the ages.
1. All of human history is involved in it. Each human being is impacted by it. Every single culture is influenced by it.
- E. We wrestle against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.
1. **1. CORE - The battles of my life are spiritual at their core.**
- F. For the last two messages, I have been teaching on the subject of Strongholds, based on 2 Corinthians 10:4,5.
- G. A stronghold is what happens when you a false view of God, and of your life, and of your world into your mind, and when you accept that false view as normal. An error connects to a lie which is bonded to a half truth, and rests on an untruth and layered over with a true truth so that you believe the whole pack of lies.
- H. A stronghold is a deceptive philosophy that takes on a life of its own inside, you, right inside your soul. It's like a machine that keeps on running. It spits out confusion. Pain. Temptation. Fear. Anger. Sadness. And enough pleasure to keep you from noticing what's going on.
1. A stronghold is a worldview. It is an operating system. And in this case, its is constantly fueled by the devil.
2. **DEFINITION - A stronghold is a mindset of defeat that causes me to accept as unchangeable a state of affairs that is contrary to the gracious promises of God.**
- I. Last two times, we've been developing this whole teaching from the Word of God.
- J. And last time, I not only taught on the subject, but I led you in a particular prayer. In that prayer, we began to cast down strongholds. That means we began to dismantle the devils lies, and we began to repent of giving a foothold in our lives (Ephesians 5:26). Because the devil turns footholds into strongholds.
- K. I've gotten a ton of feedback from the last message. So many stories of God's power at work. Casting down strongholds. It's pretty awesome.
- L. Now today I want to exhort you to keep going forward with God. God has called us to cast down strongholds. Which basically means to dismantle and deconstruct demonic lies.
- M. And now the next step is to construct something new, so that we have something to put in its place.
- N. We have something that must be put in its place... and that is:
1. **What is the Armor of God?**
- a) Which is our topic for today.

II. The Windswept House

- A. I'd like to start with the teachings of Jesus. There is an account in the gospel of Luke about Jesus casting out demons. The legalistic religious rulers object. They say he is doing this by the power of Beelzebub... which is another name for the devil.
- B. Jesus takes religious rulers apart both logically and biblically.
- C. And then he offers two short parables, talking about spiritual warfare with the devil and his demons.
- D. *“When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace.”* (Luke 11:21)
1. In context, the strong man is Satan. Jesus has just encountered a heavily demonized man. The demons have taken a foothold and from it built a stronghold in his life. They are the heavily armed thugs. Satan is the strong man, and his demons guard the palace of a human soul...
2. And there is the strong man, armed with his power and his wiles, with ignorance, with error, with unbelief, and with pride.
3. He keeps guard over his palace. Once in possession of a human heart, or on any corner of a human heart, he does all he can to tighten his grip on it. And it says, “his goods are in peace.”
4. There is a messed up kind of “peace” in the heart of a person who has turned against God.
- a) They have a good opinion of themselves. They flatter themselves. They justify themselves... and worst of all...They settle for a normal that isn't normal.
- (1) **3. TACTICS - A sub-normal status quo dirtiest trick in the devil's playbook.**
5. So Jesus paints this picture of a spiritual casualty, a heart, soul, and mind captivated by the Strong Man Satan, and bewitched by a stronghold of darkness... and bent over beneath a burden of sadness and despair.
- a) But here comes Jesus.
- E. *“But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils.”* (Luke 11:22)
1. The Strong Man is dangerous and fierce. But thank God for the Stronger Man, Jesus Christ.

- a) He is the Mighty God. All power is given unto him in heaven and on earth. And when he flexes his muscle and tells the Satan and his thugs to run, they turn tail and scurry off as fast as their diabolical legs can carry them.
2. Jesus Christ is far stronger than the strong man. He has already won the victory, already triumphed over him, already sealed his doom, already crushed his head, already broken his back, already proven his lie, already demolished his pride.
3. Jesus says that he, the stronger man, takes from Satan, the strong man, all his armor in which he trusted.
4. What is Satan's armor? What are the weapons of his warfare?
 - a) Fear of death... temptation... hatred... lust... distraction... addiction... dysfunction... error... deception... delusion... hopelessness... disobedience...
 - b) All these things are from the dark side. They may be human in origin, but they are demonic in continuance. There's a demon there.
 - c) But... Whatever tools fill the Satanic tool belt, when the Stronger Man comes to town, those tools are nullified and broken down. Jesus takes away the strongman's armor.
5. If the devil is strong, Jesus is stronger.
 - a) *"Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in [the power of the Cross]."* (Colossians 2:15)
6. Jesus takes possession of the citadel of the heart and drives out the usurper. His weapons of warfare are mighty through God. And those are the weapons he has given you and me, if only you will wield them. So the demons are expelled and disarmed.
7. Then Jesus adds this.
- F. *"He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters."* (Luke 11:23)
 1. In this great conflict, there is no neutral ground.
 2. I will come back to this, because it will make more sense what he is saying if we look at the very next little parable by Jesus.
 3. And this is where I'm going to show you how important it is that the prayer you prayed last week is a great beginning, but you can't walk away from that, consider the job done, and expect Satan to leave you alone.
- G. *"When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first."* (Luke 11:24-26)
 1. It's not enough to evict the bad guys... if you don't but something in their place, the bad guys come back, and things worse off than before. It may be swept out, but it hasn't been filled yet. It may be put in order, but it's not occupied by the Lord Jesus Christ. Nature abhors a vacuum, and so it is in the spiritual realm. Something is going to fill that vacuum...
 - a) **4. THE VACUUM - When you pull down demonic strongholds you create a vacuum, so you have to build up something in their place.**
 2. The biblical word for that vacuum is vanity. It means emptiness. It means a vacuum. The word is translated vanity or now it's translated futility
 - a) So Paul warns against a vanity of the mind (Ephesians 4:17), and he says don't live that way. Because that vacuum draws in something, and in the spiritual realm that *something* will be fed in from the dark side.
 3. In the natural realm, everything seems great and in order. But in the spiritual realm, there is a vacuum that is drawing in the doctrines of demons.
 - a) This describes at least two-thirds of Christians I know.
 - b) People who have been saved, walked with the Lord, and then dropped out.
 - (1) Dropped out of church. Dropped out of worship and prayer. No quiet time. No prayer. No dedication to sitting under preaching of the Word of God. No Christian service, and no meaningful walk with God.
 - c) But everything else is fine.
 4. The house is swept. The house is put in order. No really gross sins. I'm not out killing people. Do you know how many times someone has said that to me?
 5. Well done. That's an amazing Christian life — you're not killing anybody.
 6. Or not committing adultery. Not doing anything bad.
 7. Yes, a very fine neat and tidy house you've got there... in the natural.
 8. But spiritually speaking empty. Vanity. A vacuum in the soul. An emptiness within.
 - a) And you have to know that the devil and demons are standing by ready to fill that spiritual emptiness again and to rebuild what you've torn down.
 9. **5. THE DANGER - In the spiritual realm, it's not enough to subtract the bad stuff. You have to add in the good stuff, or the bad stuff comes back with a vengeance.**
 10. In verse 23, Jesus said, "He who is not with me is against me. He who does not gather with me scatters."
 - a) Which means that a deactivated Christian is in great danger.
 - b) Yeah, you're a decent person but are you walking with Christ? Are you with him? Are you gathering with Christ... contributing your time, your talents, your treasures to help people find and follow God?
 - c) The one who is not with me IS AGAINST ME.
 - d) The one who does not gather with me SCATTERS.
 - e) And the evicted demons are saying, I will return to that house, and keep you hypnotized in a spiritual slumber all your days.
 - (1) And their moral and spiritual state is worse than before.
 11. Have you taken your stand for Christ? Will you somehow in some way gather with him, for the Gospel's sake?
 12. When you turned from the dark side, did you actually turn to the light of Christ to walk with him and serve the Lord?

- a) In the spiritual realm, it's not enough to subtract the bad stuff. You have to add in the good stuff, or the bad stuff comes back with a vengeance.
- 13. These are CHRINO's, Christians in name only.
 - a) I believe they are saved. I believe they are saved forever.
- 14. But I also believe they are casualties in the angelic conflict, and strangers from the full experience of the blessing of God, and prisoners of war in the minds, in their emotions, and in their wills (2 Timothy 2:26).
- 15. You can't do the first half of the job, skip the second half, and then call it good.
 - a) *"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."* (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)
- 16. If you've started to tear down strongholds, that's fantastic. God is working in you.
- 17. But don't skip that last part. Don't skip the part where we bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.
- H. Because it's time to understand there is another kind of stronghold in the Word of God.
 - 1. *"The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."* (Psalms 18:2)
 - 2. *"The LORD is good, A stronghold in the day of trouble; And He knows those who trust in Him."* (Nahum 1:7)
 - 3. *"The name of the LORD is a strong tower; The righteous run to it and are safe."* (Proverbs 18:10)
 - 4. *"Be my strong refuge, To which I may resort continually; You have given the commandment to save me, For You are my rock and my fortress."* (Psalms 71:3)
 - 5. *"I will say of the LORD, 'He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.'"* (Psalms 91:2)
- I. **6. PROCESS - We tear down strongholds that are demonic... so that we can build up strongholds that are divine.**
 - 1. And this is where the armor of God comes in.
- III. What is the Armor of God?
 - A. So what is the armor of God? I've been puzzling over this for a while. What is the armor of God. It's not literal armor. It's a metaphor. But a metaphor for what?
 - B. And then it hit me. All the pieces of armor fit together. It's a system. A matrix. The pieces snap together like pieces in a Lego set.
 - C. In other words, the armor of God is another kind of stronghold.
 - D. So what is the armor of God?
 - 1. **7. WHAT - The Armor of God is a DIVINE stronghold to replace and displace the DEMONIC strongholds of Satan.**
 - E. So Paul gives us a list with six pieces of armor. These are taken from the armor of a Roman soldier. St Paul, who made this list, is very familiar with this, because he was in Roman custody on his way to trial before Caesar. He saw these soldiers all day long. And he saw them put on and take off their armor countless times. Here are the six plus one pieces of armor.
 - 1. **The Belt, The Breastplate, The Boots, The Shield, The Helmet, The Sword...** Then we have to add... **Prayer**
 - F. Each piece represents...
 - 1. **The Belt of Truth, The Breastplate of Righteousness, The Boots of the Gospel, The Shield of Faith, The Helmet of Salvation, The Sword of the Spirit which is Word of God, Prayer**
 - G. What are we talking about? These are not a bunch of words to say if you're scared of the devil.
 - 1. Okay, devil, I hereby put on the belt of truth and, and I hit you in the head with the Sword of the Spirit, and I lift up the shield of faith... and for extra luck I'm holding up a crucifix! These are not magical words. This is not superstition.
 - H. Each piece of armor is a whole way of thinking. A mindset.
 - 1. A mindset of truth to understand reality and weed out delusions.
 - 2. A mindset of righteousness to understand the moral rectitude of God and his ways of aligning you to it.
 - 3. A mindset of the Gospel as both your mission and your hope.
 - 4. A mindset of Faith, so that you will believe what God says is true enough to act like it.
 - 5. A mindset of Salvation, so that every thought you entertain is filtered through the power of the Cross.
 - 6. A mindset of the Word of God, to drive back the darkness and bring in the light.
 - 7. All of which is cemented and mortared together by prayer.
 - I. **8. DIVINE STRONGHOLD - Each divine mindset locks together with each other mindset... and all together you have a stronghold, and it is a stronghold in the Lord.**
 - J. So the Bible speaks of strongholds of Satan and of a stronghold in God. And that is the building project of your life.
- IV. The First Song
 - A. When we opened this worship center, we held a dedication ceremony. Many of you were here for it. We worshiped, we prayed, we declared Scripture, and we dedicated this building to God for the glory of Christ and the propagation of the Gospel.
 - B. Question... do you remember what is the very first song we ever sang in this church building. I was very intentional about it.
 - 1. **It is a classic, historic hymn of the Church. It is a song of spiritual warfare. It dates back over 500 years. It was composed by Martin Luther... ANSWER: A Mighty Fortress is Our God**
 - C. The first song ever sung in this sanctuary is A Mighty Fortress. That is not an easy song to sing. It has an awkward melody. The rhythm is uneven. And it really needs a pipe organ, and the organ needs to rumble your chest.
 - D. I picked it on purpose for a lot of reasons.
 - 1. One is, I wanted to establish this church, and our mission, on the great historical foundations of biblical Christianity. We are rooted in 2,000 years of Christian witness and martyrdom.
 - 2. Another is that I want to ensure that our church would always be about pressing the battle against Satan. That we would not be content coasting, or resting... I wanted our church to always be a battleship, not a cruise ship.

- a) We exist that we might mobilize an army to fulfill the Great Commission.
3. And then, I picked that hymn because I wanted to set us all squarely on the victory that is in Jesus Christ. That we don't fight for victory, we fight from victory.
- E. When I was a freshman at Wheaton College, I had a professor who made us memorize this hymn. I remember it all, but here are the words... The problem is that it's all one thought, and once you start, you can't stop.
1. **A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
Our helper he, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great, and armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.**
 2. **Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing,
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing.
You ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is he;
Lord Sabaoth his name, from age to age the same;
And he must win the battle.**
 3. **And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God has willed his truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure, for lo! his doom is sure;
One little word shall fell him.**
 4. **That Word above all earthly powers no thanks to them abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours through him who with us sideth.
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;
The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still;
His kingdom is forever!**
- F. That is a powerful hymn. That is a mature hymn of the church. Those lyrics serve up solid meat for grownups, provision for loyal warriors of the Cross. If you're going to war, sing this.
- G. A mighty fortress is our God. He is a mighty fortress, isn't he. Ask yourself a question... Is God your mighty fortress?
- H. Because this is your great potential as a Child of God.
1. God can be your bulwark never failing.
 2. God can become your helper amid the flood of ills, and difficulties, and hardships, and frustrations, and bad things happening in your life... in the middle of all that... prevailing.
 3. When you run into your mighty fortress, you will not fear... for God has willed that HIS TRUTH will triumph through you.
 4. When you've made God your fortress, you do not tremble for that grim prince of darkness.
 5. You do not tremble... you can endure his rage, he can hit you with his best shot, and you will not be moved because God has become YOUR Mighty Fortress, your refuge, your strength, your stronghold in the day of trouble, your rock, your fortress, your deliverer, and your strong tower.
- I. This is the call of God on your life. This is the main thing. That you will build in your own soul this invincible stronghold... an unshakable sense of the power and presence of God. This is the stronghold you need.
- J. And this is the stronghold you actually construct, brick by brick, as you put on the armor of God again and again and again, going deeper and deeper as you go.
1. **DEFINITION - A DEMONIC stronghold is a mindset of defeat that causes me to accept as unchangeable a state of affairs that is contrary to the gracious promises of God.**
 2. **DEFINITION - A DIVINE stronghold is a mindset of victory that causes me to live boldly and to confess confidently the faithfulness of God and the power of his promises.**
- V. Conclusion
- A. We are going to study the armor of God, piece by piece... But for now, we're going to do something we did last time. Which is to pray together. Last time, we prayed to break down demonic strongholds. Today, we will pray to put on the armor of God, that we may build up a divine stronghold. This is something I used to pray every day, but I've gotten lax. And I want to fix that, and I hope you fix it too.
- VI. Prayer
- A. **Almighty God, today, I put on the full armor of God.**
1. **I put on the BELT OF TRUTH, to understand the times in which I live.**
 2. **I put on the BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, to discern the evil from the good.**
 3. **I put on the BOOTS OF THE GOSPEL, for my mission in a hurting world.**
 4. **I take up the SHIELD OF FAITH, to believe my God no matter what.**
 5. **I wear the HELMET OF SALVATION, to guard my mind from delusion and despair.**
 6. **I carry the SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, to defeat the darkness and lift high the Cross.**
- B. **I declare myself a soldier of the Cross. I stand in the Victory of Christ. I make you, God, my stronghold today.**
- C. **Amen.**