

Who is to Blame?

Ephesians 6:10-13

This morning I want to set us up for the next and final section of our study in the book of Ephesians. We have seen that that we have been given more than we probably realize:

- That the power of the risen Jesus Christ, which is now living in us, is making us new
- That the message of the Gospel which originally was given to the Jewish people has now been given to us so that all can celebrate the kindness of God,
- That God's plan has always been to unite mankind to himself and that the world would acknowledge Jesus as their Savior,
- That we have joined with others with whom we can celebrate having the same Spirit, with the same future, with the same belief, the same repentance, the same power living in us all.
- That God has given us leadership who bring direction and teaching into our lives so that we aren't constantly changing our minds, living without true reality and truth.
- That we have been called to a greater calling of living our lives full of love for each other – encouraging each other, submitting to one another, obeying God together, and living our lives with intention for God and his expectations of us.

We have been called to a life so full and meaningful in our Christian walk, but Paul doesn't want to end his letter without speaking about one more reality in life - that when it comes to life, we have an enemy who is working overtime to get your eyes off of God's design and blessing. How many of us can agree this morning that there are times when we feel like we are fighting against a force that is greater than another human being? We pick up Paul's words this morning in **Ephesians 6:10-13**:

10 A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. 12 For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.*

We live in a world full of distorted perspectives, twisted motives and untested hopes. When it comes to the Bible we learn the truth. Reality is set before us in Scripture – it reveals God's plan, it reveals man's stubbornness, it reveals the condition of hearts, it shows us the results of obedience, and it shows us a greater force at work. But one of the tendencies of mankind is that we tend to take our experiences and our thoughts, use those as truth and then we go to the Scripture to try to prove our point. One of the most

ridiculed points however in scripture that people don't want to talk about is in the issue of an enemy (Satan, the Devil). Maybe because if Satan is real, then hell is real as well.

Paul's viewpoint of life is painted clear in this portion of scriptures and can be summed up in one word – "Struggle". He tells us that life is a conflict, a continual wrestling. It is so funny to see people in our areas strive so much for personal harmony, balance, a sense of peace, or sense of well-being, and yet in their romantic idealism, they try to ignore or avoid the reality that life will always be a struggle. That is just reality.

But we are never to take the stance as one who can be defeated, but as one who is victorious. Remember that the reality of our lives can and has been altered by a conquering, victorious, all-powerful, all-knowing God who has already won the battle, and who calls us to join him in victory. **Instead of getting wrapped up and consumed with the idea of an enemy, be consumed with the incredible God that we serve, and how he wants us to be aware of someone who is trying to trip us up in life.**

Paul tells us to be ready because life is a battlefield. When you really think about it, since God has already won the war, it should give us that much more confidence to follow him and to do as he directs. In fact, he gives us the secret strategies of the enemy so that we will can be sure to avoid his tactics and traps. Look at what Paul says in **verse 10**:

Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

The term strong here has the idea of a continuous attitude and mindset of confidence and boldness in God and his ability that has been proven and shown in scripture and even in our own lives. Paul even wrote to Timothy in **2 Timothy 2:1**:

I Timothy, my dear son, be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus.

When I think of what God has done for me, I am able to stand strong in his ability. But, think about your life as well, when you have blown it, when you have made the wrong choices, when it seemed everything was lost, and how God stepped in and took a mess and turned it into something that is workable, something this is in process and yet has purpose. Paul knew about this one as well, when he felt that he wasn't on top of his game he wrote in **2 Corinthians 12:9-10**:

9 Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. 10 That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

True strength will never be found in yourself. We will all blow it, we all have our shortcomings, we all have our weaknesses, and we definitely don't have all the answers. But when it comes to God – what I have experienced, what I have read in how he has

worked in other people's lives, what I have seen in scripture, these are the things that I need to look toward. **The only strength, confidence and boldness that I can possess is what I get from a full picture of God.** David wrote in **Psalm 71:5**:

*5 For you have been my hope, O Sovereign LORD, my confidence since my youth.
(NIV)*

God wants us to stand firm and strong in life. He wants us to succeed in life and not find ourselves tripped up by a very crafty and sly enemy. Paul writes in **verse 11**:

Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all the strategies and tricks of the Devil.

God has given us truth and tools with which we can use defend ourselves. We will be looking at these tools and truths over the next number of weeks, but I want us to see something here – **the armor of God has to be on in order for it to work. In fact, what Paul is implying here is that the armor is to be put on and left on.** You never know when you can fall prey to the enemies tricks and strategies. I think a classic example of this is found in the life of Peter.

At a critical time in the life of Christ, after Jesus had just explained to the disciples the events of his death, instead of seeing the bigger picture and seeing the eternal value, Peter speaks up in **Matthew 16:22-23**:

22 But Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things. "Heaven forbid, Lord," he said. "This will never happen to you!"
23 Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Get away from me, Satan! You are a dangerous trap to me. You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's."*

We need to understand that not long before this took place, Jesus had just finish telling Peter that he was blessed because God had revealed to him that Jesus was the Christ, the son of the living God. It is a classic example of how, **if we aren't on guard we can find ourselves in the influence of our enemy.**

(Now, just a side note, I do not believe that a Christian can be demon possessed, but I do believe and know that Satan can influence us and cause us to do things and say things that fit his plan and not God's)

If we do not put on the armor of God, we can be influenced, we can be used, we can fall prey to the tactics of the enemy, and I know that is not what we want to do. But on the flip side, I think we all agree that when we walk through life, one cannot deny the reality of the enemies influence and manipulation in our society and our world. The enemy is alive and well. We are constantly bombarded with "so-called" truths in our world that lead no where put to an eternity without God.

So life is a war – you can see it in the world, and sometimes you can see it within yourself. **Verse 12** tells us:

12 For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.*

As we look our life in a superficial way, we are tempted to say that our problems in life are due to other people. But Paul tells us that you must look further, you must look deeper than that. The problem is not against flesh and blood. Rather, there is against the whole human race certain rulers, authorities, powers and evil spirits. You can see the demonic influence in our world, you can hear the deception that people buy into, you can see the lies that that lead people into trouble. **2 Corinthians 4:4** puts it this way:

4 Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

Sounds a lot like the day that we live in doesn't it? Jesus said of Satan in **John 8:44**:

4 For you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Satan's character is to destroy and deceive – that is who he is and what he does.

And that is the explanation of our society, of our world, as you look at history, and the lives of men. The world listens to him and yet he doesn't tell the truth or reality in its truest form. Whom the devil cannot deceive he tries to destroy, and whom he cannot destroy he attempts to deceive. Then we read in verse 13 of our text:

13 Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.

The battle we fight is not against anything flesh or blood and therefore our armor consists of things that tap into the spiritual realm as well – things like truth, peace, faith, salvation, scriptural truth, and prayer. All of these things have been given to us by God. It is only through the work of Jesus Christ that we can find release and victory from our enemy. **Colossians 2:13-15**:

12 For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead. 13 You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. 14 He canceled the record of the charges against us and took

it away by nailing it to the cross. 15 In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.*

Although we have an enemy, it should never overshadow the incredible work of Jesus Christ. We can experience victory, we can make it through our struggle, we can avoid being used as a pawn of destruction of deception only if we stand firm in the armor that God sets out for us to wear.

We need to stand guard and be ready because Satan will throw at us whatever he can to discourage us, to take our eyes off of God, to distract us and to destroy what God is trying to build. But as scripture says, “Greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world.” And in the words of Paul “I am more than a conqueror”

“Be strong in the Lord’s mighty power” Let’s Pray!

Prayer:

Thank you Lord for the truth that you have shown us, that has awaken us, that has given us the true reality of life. Thank you that you have called us out of complacency and mere existence, to a life of purpose and effort.

Lord, I pray that you would make us aware of our enemies lies and tactics and that we would make us people who are not so easily swayed, but who find our confidence and courage in You.

Lord, we pray against the enemy this morning who has numerous times tried to destroy your work. I pray that you would build us up and equip us to do battle, and that we would see you break through and show people your truth. Lord, your word says unless you build the Church then our efforts are meaningless, so make us people who look to you for help, for strength, for boldness and defense.

Do all of these things in Jesus name, Amen