

Ephesians 6:13

Whenever we think about the devil as we did last week

It is important to remember that he is limited in all of his attributes

There are two opposing forces – one good and one evil

But they are not equal

Satan is not present everywhere and he does not have unlimited power

The devil is not an evil counterpart of God

He can only tempt one person in one place at one time

He has to operate through those legions of angels

Who fell with him whom we now call demons

Satan does not know the future

But he can make shrewd guesses based on experience

Satan does not know your thoughts

But he can observe you and knows your actions

The devil is limited in knowledge presence and power

But he is still a dangerous foe

He is not omnipotent omniscient nor omnipresent

But he is powerful wicked and sly

He is so powerful that according to Jude

Even Michael the archangel when he disputed with Satan over the body of Moses did not dare bring an accusation against him but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”

He is so wicked that he is described as a “murderer from the beginning”

He is so sly that he is called the father of lies

And we are in constant danger of being tripped up by his wiles

Paul wrote to Timothy that even elders need to be careful

So they don't fall into the devil's trap

If we were to face the devil in our own power we would fail

Satan is much smarter than us and has greater knowledge than we do

He uses his knowledge of us to tempt us into fleshly sin

And Scriptural deviation

Satan is not all powerful but he is certainly much more powerful than we

We cannot face him on our own but we have supernatural help

If we are to resist the devil's influence

It must be by the power and provision of God

We have an unseen army

Our battle against spiritual forces reminds me of Elisha at Dothan

The northern kingdom was under attack by the Assyrians

Israel would have been conquered by the Assyrians

But God was revealing the plans of Syria to Elisha

Every time they set a trap for Israel – Elisha would tell the king

And the trap would be avoided

The king of Assyria thought he had a traitor among his officers

So he called them together and demanded to know who it was

They said – it isn't us, **Elisha the prophet, who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom**

So the king decided that to defeat Israel

He was first going to have to deal with Elisha

He found that Elisha was residing in Dothan

So he sent his army and surrounded the city by night

Here is the picture – all the armies of Syria sent to capture one unarmed man

And they sneak in at night to do it

But Elisha was no ordinary man – He was a servant of the Living God

In the morning Elisha's servant goes out to draw water from the city well

I kind of picture a young man probably still sleepy performing his morning duties

Anticipating a normal day – He looks out and sees

Thousands of soldiers horses and chariots circling the city

He runs back into the house and says – **Alas, what shall we do?**

In what certainly is one of the greatest statements of faith in all Scripture

Elisha says: **Don't be afraid – those who are with us are more than those who are**

with them

Then Elisha prayed and God opened the eyes of the young man

And he saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire surrounding the army that was surrounding them

Now Elisha's statement gives us a principle

On the one hand the enemy we face is much greater than the enemy we see

In Elisha's case the seen enemy was the army of the Assyrians

But Elisha said - more are with us than with them

The "with them" means that the army was accompanied by heavenly help

The spiritual forces of wickedness were accompanying and supporting the Syrians

The truth of life is

A plot against God's children will always be accompanied and supported by the spiritual forces of darkness

The "us" is Elisha and his servant – two unarmed men

But on Elisha's side and there to fight the battle for him

Not with him but for him

Was a huge army of angelic beings

From a human perspective Elisha didn't stand a chance

But when the heavenlies were included God's servants were stronger

That is the way it is in your life also

When you consider the strength you have in heaven

You are always stronger than the enemy

How does Elisha fight this battle – he prays

He confronts the physical with the spiritual

The seen with the unseen

King Jehoshaphat was about to face an enormous army

After Elisha's story we know that this enormous army

Was accompanied by the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenlies

Jehoshaphat knew that he could not possibly defeat the army against him

So he prayed and got this response

Do not be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but

God's

Had the king had his eyes been opened just like Elisha's servant
He would have seen that there were more with him than with them
The enemy seemed to vastly outnumber his army
But he was with the superior force
The principle we can take away from these OT events is simple
We may seem outnumbered
We may even feel like we are alone

But in the heavenly places there are always more with us than with them

Remember the Lord is our strength

READ EPHESIANS 6:10-13

Paul is not referring to Elisha's servant of course

But the theology of victory is the same

Notice how often Paul mentions the Lord in this short passage

Vs 10 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes

Vs 11 Put on the full armor of God so that when the day of evil comes, you will be able to stand your ground

Vs 13 Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power

There is no coincidence here

It is only by the strength of God

That we are able to stand against the heavenly forces that are against us

Remember that when the Bible depicts our relationship to the Lord

One of the terms it uses for us is – **we are bondservants or slaves of Christ**

Jesus is our Savior our Brother our Friend

And He is our Lord and our Master

It is based upon the Lordship of Christ that we have power in the heavenlies

Our power comes from our relationship and subservience to Jesus

You are not able to muster enough strength on your own for victory

You can and will muster just enough strength to fall and fall hard

You will succeed just long enough to become discouraged when you fail

Let me put it another way –

You cannot live the Christian life in your own strength

And expect that you will be able to thwart the attacks of demonic forces

You must live your life under the Lordship of Jesus Christ

No one in the world can help God out – and that includes you

When you try to do God's work in your strength – you fail

When you try work out God's purposes without God's power – you fail

No matter how well meaning you are in your efforts

There's a program on the History Channel called – “hell the devil's domain”

But they have it all wrong

Not even hell belongs to the devil

Hell is not his domain it is the place that the devil will be confined

This is God's universe not the devil's – and He is God of all of it

And God is present in all of His universe all of the time

David wrote – Where can I go from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, You are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there Your hand will guide me, Your right hand will hold me fast.

Satan is a finite being he can only be in one place at one time

And tempt one person at a time

Probably nobody in this building has been directly tempted by Satan

But don't get too comfortable

Almost everybody here has in some way encountered demonic activity

Satan and his gang is a powerful enemy

Just think about the condition of Adam and Eve before the fall

They were sinless – innocent in every way you can be innocent

They were in direct contact with and had a relationship to God

And yet Satan showed up and they both sinned

We are much more foolish then they were

Compared to Adam and Eve we are spiritually insensitive

And at times we are far from God

Satan and his forces are a formidable foe

You are being foolish if you believe you can resist Satan without God's help

But praise be to God – all that you need is given you by the very power of God

For victory you must place yourself under the Lordship of Christ

And rest in His power

In the Book of Jonah when a terrible storm hits the boat

We read that the sailors became afraid

That makes sense they are in danger of being shipwrecked

But then when they learn that the Hebrew God is behind the storm

Scripture tells us that they became terrified

The Hebrew God is a terrifying God – He is a consuming fire

He is powerful beyond any of our considerations

Any person who understands God's power is working against them

Should be terrified

And that same God is the same God who is the source of your power

So although you can never stand up to the forces of Satan alone

You can successfully stand against enemy forces and defeat them

In the power of God

Even with the power of God on our side victory is not automatic

You must avail yourself of the provisions God has given you for the battle

To win the battle in the heavenlies you must put on the armor of God

Where do you think Paul got the idea for this section on the armor of God

Most sermons I have heard state that it was because he was a prisoner

And as he studied the soldiers guarding him

He used their armor as his inspiration for the Christian's armor

I believe that Paul got his idea from Scripture

Paul was a Pharisee which means he was an Old Testament scholar

And he would have known the passage in Isaiah

Where there is a picture of God putting on His own armor

Isa 59:17 – He put on righteousness as His breastplate, and the helmet of salvation

on His head

That is precisely what Paul quotes in Ephesians

That is important you see

For when Paul speaks of the armor of God

He is not just thinking of it as armor that God supplies

As the emperor supplies armor to his soldiers

But rather we are to put on God's own armor

That which God Himself wears

What do we need in our fight against Satan

We need truth – God's own truth which we find in Scripture

We need righteousness but not just some righteousness

We are supplied with God's righteousness

We need salvation and we are supplied with God's salvation

God has armed and protected us with Himself

When you put it on you will find that it fits perfectly

When you put it on you will find it is all that you need for the battle

Are you armed with God's armor

When David went out to fight Goliath Saul offered him his armor

But it didn't fit

So David went out against an armored giant carrying only a sling

But he was wearing the armor of God

God's armor?

If ever a man was clothed in God's truth righteousness salvation peace and faith

It was David on that day

Had David gone out in Saul's armor he would have lost

He would have been killed in the battle

The armor of the world doesn't fit us

And it doesn't work in the battle against the enemies of God

But God's armor fits us perfectly

Now God hasn't tailored His armor to fit us

God has made us to fit in His armor

It is not armor from God - it is God's very own armor

And in God's armor we are prepared for victory in every spiritual battle

Four great battles

Dr. John Gerstner told of four great battles that have occurred

The first battle was that of Satan against God – when Satan fell and God won

The second battle was that of Satan against man – when Adam fell and Satan won

The third battle was that of Satan against the God-man – and Jesus won

The fourth battle Dr. Gerstner mentioned and the one most relevant today

Is that of Satan against Peter who was joined to the God-man – Peter fell and Satan lost

His main focus was the battle against Adam versus the battle against Peter

Adam seemed to have everything he needed to prevail

He was created without a sin nature

And had every inclination to goodness

He had a very personal and you could say

He had a special relationship with God – yet he fell

At his very best Adam was no match for Satan

He wasn't as smart nor was he as powerful

But his biggest issue was – and I think we have to assume this

Adam lost because he did not avail himself of the strength of the Son of God

Which certainly would have been available to him

In the second battle against man – Peter seemed to have nothing

He was sinful weak proud boasting

He had the arrogance to tell Jesus - **Even if all fall away, I will not**

And – Lord, I am ready to go to prison with you and even death

He didn't have a clue how weak he really was

Peter was an easy target and he failed – he denied the Lord three times

If that was the end of the story – it would be a sad one

As Paul Harvey might say – and now the rest of the story

Jesus told Peter that Satan had demanded to sift him like wheat

And that he would fall

And then He added - When you have turned back, strengthen your brothers

Jesus said – Peter you are weak in yourself.

Left to your own power you will certainly fall

You are no more permanent than chaff when the wind blows upon it

But I am on your side

You are united to Me by saving faith

I have prayed for you and because of my prayer you will not be destroyed

But will instead be strengthened by your own collapse

You will fall but you will not fall away

You will be turned aside but you will also be turned back

And when you have turned back

You will become a pillar of strength for your brothers

Peter fell to Satan's attack but got a second chance

Falling to Satan was not the end of Peter

In effect it was the end of the beginning

You can almost picture Satan laughing as Peter denies the Lord

And you can also picture his despair as Peter is restored

And restored stronger than he was before

When Peter fell and was restored

He learned that only as we are united in Christ and rely on His strength

Are we able to defeat Satan and live victorious lives

I quote Martin Luther one more time

Did we in our own strength abide – our fighting would be losing

Adam had it all and he couldn't win the battle on his own

Peter thought he had it all and he fell

But in the falling learned something about Himself and God

He was strengthened by the fall

But Peter also learned this

You may give up on yourself – you may be discouraged

Your friends and family may give up on you

But God will never give up on you

Peter bragged – he fell and he fell hard

And in the fall he not only learned that Christ forgives he also learned

That Jesus is there forgiving restoring and commissioning

Let me finish with two points

Point number one

Adam was sinless – Peter was false and full of sin

We are much more like Peter than Adam

But Adam in all his pristine glory

Made in the spotless image of God

Righteous knowledgeable with a special relationship to God

Could not withstand a satanic attack and was brought low by sin

That alone proves that on our own we are incapable living righteously

That is an easily discoverable truth

And every one of us here knows it

Now listen – here is the good news

No matter how weak your faith

How meager your discipleship

No matter how much you shame the name of Christ

No matter how often you have to repent and turn towards home again

No matter how many times you fail and how bad it is when you do it

You are united with Christ and He will never let you go

Jesus Christ will never leave you nor will He ever forsake you

Point number two

When you are united with Christ by faith in love

When you clothe yourself in God's armor

Satan with all his craft and power cannot stand against you

And you can conquer him

Even in your best spiritual condition you cannot stand on the field with Satan

But in your weakened and debilitated state
Sinning far more than you live virtuously
You are able to confront and conquer because
Christ has given you the victory – go claim it