

# Do Everything to Stand

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## SPEAKERS

Kevin Schwamb

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10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. 19 Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. Probably many of you know today is Super Sunday. Now I realized when I say that if you come to this church, you're like, every Sunday, Super Sunday, so what's that mean? But if you didn't know that's a label for Super Bowl. Sunday. And so it is estimated this year that Super Bowl 54 will attract over 100 million viewers. Now, probably some of those people will just tune into the game because they want to see the commercials, which go for about five and a half million dollars for a 32nd time slot. But there'll be others who will watch the game, and they are

certain one team is going to win, and one team is going to lose. Because that's how it is and athletic competition. There are those who will triumph and no matter how we like to put it there will those who will be defeated. Well, as we continue our study in Ephesians, we come to Paul sort of saying, you know what, that's also true, not just of athletic competition, but a contest that all of us are in if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, and so open your Bibles to Ephesians chapter six where we come to probably one of the most familiar portions in Ephesians. And that is Paul's discussion about spiritual warfare and the armor of God. But what we're going to look at this morning is just the first three verses verses 10 through 13. And what we're going to do is look at three concepts or elements that come out of those three verses. And they all can be summarized in one word, each opposition, provision, and responsibility. So opposition, provision, and responsibility. And so notice how Paul begins this section, and let's pick up in verses 11 and 12. And then we'll come back through verse 10. But he says, Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil schemes, for our struggle is not against flesh and blood against the rulers against the authorities against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Paul identifies for us first our opposition. As a Christian, what are you going to face now? And this will be true throughout your life in Christ, you have now an opponent, and Paul says there is a spiritual opposition that you will encounter throughout your Christian life. And notice how important it is you need to know who you're up against. The Bible does not pull or hide any punches from us. The Puritan William Gurnall, all in his three volumes set the Christian and complete armor simply says Paul at this point, lays it all out for us. He just puts everything all his cards on the table and says, here's the opponent that you are facing. believer in Christ. Because notice he says there in verse 12, our struggle. So this is a letter to a church. So you could say, in one sense, Paul's using this corporately. This is our struggle as a church, we will face this. But he also is saying, as individual members of Christ, this is true for you. This is your struggle. And it's my struggle, and it's our struggle as the body of Christ. It's interesting that he would choose the word struggle, because we know Paul does like athletic imagery. he'll speak of the Christian life as a race. He'll use other metaphor speaks of boxing, to talk about discipline in the Christian life. But when he's coming to speak of this contest, this opposition, he chooses the word or noun here wrestling, which literally is struggling, wrestling, it's a picture of not just a sport that we know can be traced back to ancient times. But but one it was something that Roman soldiers did receive training in. Because often combat brought you into hand to hand, close encounters with the enemy. So in two ways, wrestling is the perfect word to use here, this is your wrestling, who you wrestling against your encounter on a daily basis is going to be with a very wise and intelligent adversary. So you notice he speaks of our struggle, but it might give us deeper appreciation of this when you think of the context of the city of Ephesus. So sort of way this like why would this be a particular need for the believers in emphasis for Paul to talk about the spiritual powers and forces that are opposition in

Christ? Well, you may recall when we started this study we talked about Ephesus being a major city, a population of probably in the first century 250,000 quarter million people. But it was known for its huge temple to Artemis or Diana, a pagan goddess. So here's this city who had this temple, which came to be renowned as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, give you an idea of just how impressive this temple was. It had columns that were over 200 feet high, and it covered 93,000 square feet. So if you think of the average home maybe being 20 503,000 square feet, that gives you the idea of the magnitude, in a sense, the presence that just this false religion had among the people, but then we also know when x 19 when Paul visits emphasis That there is a strong presence of the occult and practice of sorcery there. Because in Acts 19, as some are coming to Christ, he speaks of them taking their books, filled with all these spells and incantations, and burning them. So now you start to put some of these pieces together. Emphasis is seeing people come to Christ. Many of these people are coming out of pagan, sorcery, occult, like background. And they may be coming into this new faith now, in a sense, extremely fearful of the spirit world that they left behind. And so Paul wants to address and put that in its proper context for them, that in Christ, they have nothing to fear. And so he reminds them of their opposition. But it's not enough to just speak of identifying your opponent we know something about our opponent So you notice in verse 11, towards the end of the verse, we're told something about our adversary. It says, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. So the title for devil means accuser, slander. So that gives you an indication of, of sort of one of Satan's tactics that he seeks to use. But then he says the devil schemes. Now the word schemes can be translated his craftiness, his deceptiveness, but it's a word that sounds an awful lot like our word methodical. In other words, he's a calculating opponent. So I don't really follow football per se. I probably will not tune into the Super Bowl. But something caught my attention in an article I saw this week about the 40, Niners and it was talking about their Just ingenuity in terms of their plays and how they confuse people even before they, they hike the ball. In other words, they have a methodology, a very thought out specific game plan that might to the person watching kind of wonder what are they doing, but they know exactly what they're doing. And so we must not lose sight of the fact that not only do we have an opponent who is powerful, but again, not all powerful, but powerful, but one who is extremely intelligent and methodical in his approach. As on the one hand, you could look at this and say, well, looking through from Genesis all the way through the Bible, same strategy doesn't really seem to change. But the reason is, does need to change because it's effective. It's methodical. So we have the identity identity of our opponent. Now clearly laid out for us. But now we need to identify and thinking of our opposition, the battlefield, like like, Where is this enemy? As you may recall, a few years back when the US was going into Iran, Iraq, to deal with the issue of terrorism initially, we encountered a serious problem. The rules of warfare were extremely different against terrorists. They're not necessarily just right out there, their ability to hide, to escape and to not be able to discern where are they becomes a

problem. And so Paul says, Now in the spiritual side of things, where is this battlefield? Where is this realm that this is all taking place? And so you notice in verse 12, very specifically, you have four words that all are preceded by definite article and they're all plural. Sorry mentions rulers, authorities, powers, and spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. And I don't believe Paul is necessarily here dictating to us that these are specific hierarchies, or levels within the demonic world. But I think he's saying to us, these are the realms that this covers, you should the areas and these areas ultimately, you could say are beyond us because our struggle is not against flesh and blood. But the reality is we also encounter these battles in daily life. But there are forces behind this, but we encounter it. As Christians, we deal with temptation. We deal with spiritual struggles. That may shake our sense of trusting in God's word, when it doesn't seem like that is even happening. Spurgeon talking about being aware of the spiritual battles we face, told this congregation on one occasion, never leave the house without your armor of God on because you'll never can tell where you might meet Satan. And I think he's picking up on this fact this is a real battle. And it's all around us. It's not just out in our world and ideological things, like different philosophies. But what we encounter it in so many different ways. What a relevant message to deliver to the believers in emphasis, who would only to look and see this huge temple that would say to them, we know what you're talking about Paul. Do you know where we live? But that raises a question, simply is Paul also describing our world? Is he describing the world that we find around us here in the 21st century And I don't think I should take as long to say he definitely is. Maybe some examples we have people today who will say they are spiritual, but not religious. They believe in some existence of other forces at work, but but not maybe a personal God, and certainly for many they nothing to do with Christianity. Then you also have the growing opposite strategy of Satan. A growing thought of just appealing to naturalism. In other words, that there's no absolute truth. Anything that happens in this world we can explain through science and through other means. So in other words, we don't need a God because we can explain why things happen. And what happens when a subtle and deceptive lie. That now we are rejecting, short of a lens through which we see the world from a biblical worldview. view in perspective. And now it's all what we can interpret. And we can explain was the German philosopher, philosopher Nietzsche, who was recognized by Time magazine back in the 60s as man of the year because of him teaching God is dead. If you read his writings, he goes on to say, not only is God dead, but we have killed him. In other words, we've proven we don't need him. There's a little twist on that if you've seen in some Christian merchandising, where you see his famous words, God is dead. And then underneath the Christian slogan is Nietzsche is dead. You know, the reality is, that was a lie. And it's proven by the fact that yes, he died. And he will give an account for that. So Paul pulls us into this spiritual opposition. He identifies it for us, not just in his world, but also in our world. So we often find in Paul's letters is certain things he's mentioned in passing earlier in the letter, he expands on later in the letter. So for example, look at

Ephesians five and verse 16. And Ephesians five, verse 16, which we already studied together. Paul writes there, let me back up, maybe include verse 15. Be very careful then how you live, not as unwise, but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. They didn't really explain more. What does he mean by that the days are evil. Now you have a better understanding of where you can say, Now I get it. Why do we need to walk in wisdom because we have a worthy opponent before us. So that's the first key concept or term opposition. But then with that opposition comes provision that you God's provision for those who are in Christ and sort of set this in its context, we have Jesus Christ who comes, dies for our sins, rises again, ascends to the Father, he has defeated the power and guilt of sin. And he has set us free now, because of the victory, that Christ has one that's already been accomplished a definitive act. However, we still engage in a present struggle against sin. But that is a reality of the Christian life. It's part of that tension we experienced between the not yet and the already that already we are forgiven in Christ, but is sin still there? Yes. And will it remain and will it be a, an opponent of foe as long as we live out the Christian In life, absolutely. But now you have God saying, Paul, remind them, these people who came out of a very awareness of the power of Satan, remind them now of my power, which is greater. And I've given them something in that environment that they desperately need. And so let's take a look at verse 10. Verse 10, is where Paul lays out the provision. Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in his mighty power. And finally indicates he's sort of wrapping up and that is true as you look at the letter itself. This is final big section. But more than that, the way you could render that is not just be strong in the Lord, but be made strong. In other words, the tense here is something referred to as a passive tense, where it's the sun jack, who is being acted upon by one outside of the subject. So in other words, God is saying, I will make you strong. So here's an immediate provision that's given to us and the midst of this battle scene, and contest. Realize, remind yourself, that we are to rely upon God's strength, not our own, that this passage is not meant to be a form of a Christian pep talk or halftime speech to get you ready to go back out on the field, is to say to you, you know what, if you're starting to realize you are no match for this battle, then you get it. And your provision is that God will make you strong, you will be made strong. And that's a theme that Paul has already laid out for us throughout this letter. So go back Ephesians chapter one. And notice again how all of these verses come together now, in this one letter, so Ephesians one verses 17 through 21 of Paul's two very articulate prayers for the believers. Verses 17 through 20. He leads them and praying, I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious father may give you the spirit of wisdom, and Revelation, so you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you the riches of His glorious inheritance saints and his incomparably great power. For those who believe that power is like the working of his mighty strength. There he says, one of my prayers in the beginning is that you would have struggle But not that you would be strong in yourself, but you will be strong and the God

who has saved you. And then if you just flip over to chapter three, once again, he prays for the believers. And he repeats this aspect of power that you need the provision that's only in Christ. Notice in chapter three, verse 16, Paul says, I pray that out of his glorious riches, he may strengthen you with power through His Spirit, and your inner being. And you want to make that connection with out of his glorious riches. And then how he begins in chapter six and verse 10, be strong in the Lord be made strong. So you're talking about a provision of something that comes from one whose resources are unlimited. And then as well, he ends up prayer in chapter three verses 20 through 21. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his, what power that is at work within us, to Him the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, throughout all generations forever and ever. I noticed in that benediction. He's not just praying that you individually as a Christian would be victorious in these daily battles, but that the church would be. And I think sometimes we read Ephesians 6:10 through 20, as if it's more just individually related to you being a victorious Christian. It's written for Yes, you to walk in victory, but for the church to be triumphant here in God's presence. But let's go back to Ephesians six. And as Paul lays out, this provision that is ours in Christ you notice for 11 he talks about the full armor. And the purpose of this is that you would stand firm in your faith. So notice verse 11. He says, Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. So he made his point, but then you go on a little further, notice verse 13. He's not just going to repeat that once, he's going to repeat it twice. Therefore, again, bringing it back to conclusion, he repeats what he said, put on the full armor of God. So when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground. And after you have done everything, to stand, and the phrase stand here means to be established, to persevere in the faith. But in order to do that, you need God's full provision, the full armor of God, which is what he was. kind of break down for us and verses 14 through 20. But before you even get to that point, just consider this tremendous provision that has been made to us in Christ Jesus. And this thought of standing is in many ways that a defensive posture you know, we're we will be unmovable in our faith in Christ Jesus, it will be tested. But we will be unshaken as the writer of Hebrews will tell two people who were struggling in their faith. He would tell them that you have an anchor for your soul in Christ Jesus, something that is immovable, that keeps you grounded, even in the midst of difficulties. So we start to see here from Paul's perspective, that the responsibility we have as believers is not to defeat Satan. He is already a defeated and crushed it is that we would resist him that we would stand firm in the faith. This is exactly what Peter talks about. I may read for you first Peter five and verses eight and nine. And I think knowing what we do about Peter's background would say to you, I need to listen to what Peter says here. Because Peter was not always one who stood firm in the faith. There were times that he stumbled, but yet by God's grace was restored. But listen what he says in First Peter five and verses eight and nine, be self controlled, and alert. Your enemy the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. resist him standing firm in the

face. Because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing this same kind of suffering. In other words, we should not think it's unique, that we face battles, in our attitudes and circumstances how we respond. Peter reminds us this is inherent in the Christian life. But the only way to be victorious on a daily basis is the provision of the full armor of God that is ours in Christ. So we've talked about opposition, we've talked about countering that with provision, but then you can't escape the word responsibility. Because Paul adds to this, what is the responsibility of every believer in Christ knowing what they know? Now based on what he said, well go back to verse 11. Notice the first two words. Put on Verse 13, put on now you're dealing with well if God's provided this than our challenges, what does this mean to put this on? Because we are united together in Christ by faith. That is why we are to consider ourselves dead to sin, and alive to Christ. But Paul likes this phrase put on and and it is the same imagery you might think of. It's the thought of getting dressed, sort of that we should consciously think about this every day, that we're going out and our enemy is there. And he will attack not just outwardly but also seek to to bring doubts to our mind. to question things that maybe God has said promises that God has made to us. That that is the reality for we need to do is counter that By consciously putting on the identity that we are in Jesus Christ, by, as we'll see in the next week, what is the spiritual armor that he paints for us that will help us prepare ourselves better for the onslaught and attacks of the enemy. But I think first of all by saying you need to put this on. It's this consciously keep this before you. Not just the opposition, not just God's provision, but your personal response and obedience to the one who has saved you. I do not doubt that this week, every morning all of us will get up no matter what you have to get done. And at some point, you will look in the mirror, you will do some maybe damage control and then you will decide consciously, I better get dressed. I better put on certain kind of clothes. If you're going to go outside, you probably are thinking I better check temperature first. Because in New Hampshire, it could be 80. Or it could be 20 below. So you consciously think about what will prepare you to leave the house. But we need to get that into our thinking spiritually. How am I prepared myself? And let me begin with thinking about prayer, scripture reading. Even the fact that you're here for worship today is one way you're saying this. I need this to prepare to follow Christ to stand firm in the faith. So you have that thought of to put on would imply something that's a conscious effort. But then I think we could add to that, a very intentional effort and other words throughout Ephesians Paul is also brought up Do not give the devil foothold, do not let unwholesome words come out of your mouth. In other words, reminding us Yes, the full armor of God is ours in Christ. But our response and responsibility is vital to our growth in Christ. To us standing firm in the faith, this will be the only thing that explains why in Romans Paul can say that, that now you are more than conquerors in Christ. And in the list he gives, he presents a whole bunch of situations that possibly Satan could throw our way to say, what about this? What about that? And finally, Paul just says, You know what, not angels, demons, nothing can separate you. Nothing on

Heaven, nothing on Earth. In other words, you kind of closes the loophole, you you can't name anything, because you are grounded in Christ. But all of that again, comes With the reminder of the responsibility, that we don't win that victory, that victory has been won for us already in Christ. But we are to walk in God's grace in his spirit, as we live out our faith, daily, moment to moment. We often think of communion as a celebration and remembrance of Christ's death and resurrection, because it is that death and resurrection that gave us victory over the guilt and power of sin. But at the same time, you may notice that in the Lord's Supper, we take the bread and we eat it, and we drink of the cup. Why? Or why don't we just look at them? If they're symbols, why do we take them in? Well, Jesus did say take any and drink. But it's a reminder to us that that relationship needs to be nourished and fed. As exactly what Paul's saying here in This battle, you have the responsibility to nourish that relationship to feed that relationship so that you will be victorious every day. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father as we acknowledge that the struggle is real. For anyone here who has known Christ, whether it be for a short amount of time, or for many, many years, this battle is on. Thank you for reminding us that victory is already been one. It is certain in Christ. But yet Lord to deal with the presence of sin that we still struggle against. There we better understand what it means to do so intentionally. By putting on the full armor of God, Lord, may You use this time in which we will hold The bread and the cup, a reminder of what Christ has accomplished. Use it to examine us before you that we would leave different people from how we came in. Because we have truly worship God and responded to him in greater obedience. We pray these things in Jesus name. Amen