

This September, our nation will mark one full decade since **jihad** became a household word in America. For it was on 9/11/2001 that most Americans felt (first hand) the effects of this Arabic word meaning "holy war". Jihad is the teaching of Islam which leads its followers towards suicidal destruction for the sake of the spread of their religion....

The Quran teaches that showing these **signs of destruction** is the way to prove to the world that the Quran itself is **true**....

This morning... we are going to learn about (if you will) a type of Christian.....Holy War.....

It is a war waged entirely in the spiritual realm..... and one where God equips us to **DEFEND the functional reality of the gospel**... in our hearts.....

against the continual onslaught of an enemy who hates Christ... and the fact that He would save a people out of darkness for Himself.

It is one that each of you..... who actually take up your cross and follow Jesus on the road to **holiness**.... face **everyday**.

Thankfully!... it is a war that God has already **DECIVELY** won.... through Christ's death on the cross.....

And until Jesus returns..... it is a war that God uses.... to demonstrate how **JESUS' victory** .... in the resurrection.....is realized by Christians.....through the personal struggle of **faith** within our hearts.

God wants to urge you..... Christian... this morning.... to Prepare for War.

This section from Ephesians 6... (from which we will read)...is really the **CAPSTONE** of the book.....

Up until now.... Paul has shown us the beauty and tranquility of the truth of the gospel.... how... through Jesus and in Jesus we have been given EVERY spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.....

How we have peace with God.... and how He has made us **one** with Himself and with everyone else who is in Christ .....

How we have the rock solid assurance that God has chosen to **set His love** upon us... individually.... from before the foundation of the world....

And how His love for us is **so** wide... so high... so deep..... that we are only now tasting the very edge of it....

He has shown us how to **live out of** the **GOODNESS** of this eternal inheritance and these promises NOW.....

And how these truths must shape and transform the way we relate to others in our family.... in our church... and in the workplace...

You might say..... these gospel truths are kind of like the **RESCUE ship** which we have boarded in Jesus Christ.....

They are PLEASANT and good..... **comforting**.....

We feel SAFE ...here.....in Jesus....

But **now**... God is calling us to prepare for the **stormy GALE** called everyday life in a sin cursed world..... through which we must pass on His ship.....in order to reach our heavenly destination....

The STORM of evil which continually assaults the PEACE of Christ's presence within our hearts....

That is the WAR we are talking about.....

I wonder..... if some of you would be humble enough to admit.... this morning.....

"I sure know what **THAT** feels like..... I have experienced SOME degree of what Scripture calls the onslaught of the wicked..... just this past week...??

My circumstances and struggles have been so **hell** like..... it is unbelievable....

If are following Christ.... **you will** experience that....

This WAR is real and it is the WAR which we have been enlisted by God as soldiers...to fight in....

So that no matter **HOW hard** the Satanic winds blow against your life..... your anchor in Christ Jesus... **will** hold firm.....

And the flag of the gospel.... will still be flying.... even if it means...losing everything else you used to try to find security in.....

So as Solomon wisely commands us....

**Proverbs 3:25**

"Do not be afraid of sudden fear nor of the **onslaught** of the wicked **when** it comes;"

Rather.... Prepare Now... for the WAR. Here is how He says it...

**Ephesians 6:10-12**

" **Finally**, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."

Battle combat training is the means by which the U.S. Army seeks to transform civilians into soldiers....

**This passage** ...is the means by which God intends to transform **US**...into men and women of God who are prepared to STAND FIRM against the darkness in which we live...

**Prepare for War**

1<sup>st</sup> truth you need to understand....as you do...

**1. Make God Your Strength.**

Not sure if you watched the Super Bowl.... but if you did you probably noticed that the Green Bay Packers were well aware of what their main offensive strength would be against a team like the Steelers. His name is Aaron Rodgers.

As you are preparing to fight against spiritual foes..... you need to know WHO your only strength is..... His Name is the LORD.

Don't make the mistake of trying to rely on your upstanding morals.....you're your personality... or your capability in planning.... or your intellect.....

All those might be gifts from God.... but they can not be your STRENGTH in **this** fight..

You are preparing for spiritual WAR.... God **alone** is sufficient to empower you to be victorious....

**Ephesians 6:10**

" Finally, **be strong** in the Lord and in the strength of **his** might.

The CAPSTONE of my instruction..... Finally.....is this...

“Be empowered to stand in God’s supernatural strength”....

This is a COMMAND.... not a suggestion....

When preparing for WAR..... suggestions don’t cut it..... these are directives from our Commander.... that are necessary for our survival....

The command Paul gives to “be strong” is most literally rendered...”have strength **poured into you**.....

Curtis Vaughan points out that it is the same word used in.....

### **Philippians 4:13**

"I can do **all** things through him who **strengthens** me."

“who empowers me...” “who pours HIS strength into me!”

This is not second hand strength..... Christ Himself (through His Spirit)... is being poured into you as you trust Him...

Think about WHO it is that is offering you His own strength..... the One who was tempted in ALL things and yet without sin.....

The One who faced the most powerful temptation to give up the fight ...anyone will ever face.....

So intense was **that FIGHT** that the blood vessels in His forehead burst as He was agonizing in prayer.... asking God for grace to drink the cup of wrath ..... that should have been poured out on you.....

After He died on the cross.... with the same strength which He offers to POUR into you.... GOD raised Jesus from the dead!

Remember how Paul prayed for this very thing back in.....

### **Ephesians 3:16**

"that according to the riches of his glory he may **grant you to be strengthened** with power through his Spirit in your inner being,"

By His Spirit.... He now wants to pour His Living **River of Water** into your dry soul.....

So that He can turn the gears of your faith.... and you can experience the STEADFASTNESS of His **MIGHT**....in your innermost being.!

So you can say with Paul.....I can do **ALL** things through him who strengthens me!

because..... apart from Him you can do..... **NOTHING**.

You are fighting a Battle that doesn't belong to you.....

so... GOD will supply you with every ounce of **HIS strength** in order to sustain you... because it is His war.... and you are His soldier.

**ASK** Him...to **help** you believe His Word.... ... ask Him to strengthen your hands for the fight.

**Psalm 59:9**

"O my Strength, I will watch for you, for you, O God, are my fortress."

God is your Strength.....he is a stronghold in time of trouble...

2<sup>nd</sup> application.....

**Prepare for War**

2. Don't Underestimate Your Enemy

Paul spent much of Eph. 4 dealing with the enemy **within us**.... He taught us how critical it is to be engaged in this putting **off**... of sin.... and putting **on** the Lord Jesus Christ.....

In chapter 5...he taught us how to walk wisely among other sinners caught up in evil.... He told us how to stay away from the sons of disobedience....and to not **toy** with sexual immorality.... or other vices.....

But here....Paul says...our enemy is WORSE than all of that put together.... and they must not be underestimated.....

**Ephesians 6:11**

"Put on the whole armor of God, **that** you may **be able to stand** against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against **flesh and blood**, but against the **rulers**, against the **authorities**, against the **cosmic powers** over **this present darkness**, against the **spiritual forces of evil** in the heavenly places."

The imagery here is of a **Roman soldier** preparing for battle..... knowing that spears and swords will be thrust at him from every side..... in the confusion of war...

He dare not go into battle with just **PART** of his armor.... He needs EVERY piece....

So do you. Because of the **heinous** nature of your enemy.... you need each and every **MEANS** of spiritual protection God has provided for you....

Because you are up against the devil himself.....and you live in **his territory**.

I wonder at what level.... do you actually believe Satan and his demonic army function in and around you or at least in the world in which you do life everyday?

Kent Hughes - " The prevailing materialistic, mechanistic thinking of our age leaves **no** room for the supernatural, or indeed **anything** without a physical cause. Sadly, many Christians are so influenced by this thinking that even though they give conscious voice to their belief in Satan and spiritual warfare, their lives show no evidence of this reality. They actually live in an **unconscious disbelief**. For such persons, this passage provides a much needed antidote."

We need to know enough about our enemy to be able to adequately defend against his schemes.....

- The Devil is not omnipresent..... He can only be one place at one time....

Yet Jesus calls him **the ruler of this world**.....

Satan has a hierarchy of fallen angels (demons) whom he has stationed in various provinces all over the world....

These rulers / authorities...(v. 12b) .these multilayered COSMIC powers... preside over this present darkness....

Essentially only TWO Kingdoms..... in existence.....

Domain of DARKNESS – consisting of those ignorant of God and trapped in UNBELIEF.... it is devoid of the Light of God's good rule.... therefore people stumble and are held captive by Satan to do his will.....

Satan rules over the corrupted, twisted present creation presided over by men who have told God to take a hike.....

That is how John can say... that the whole world lies in the control of the evil one....

We see how Satan could say this to Jesus...in the temptation...

#### **Luke 4:6**

"and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, **for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will.**"

the OTHER Kingdom.... is the Kingdom of God's Beloved Son... JESUS.... which He came to announce...through the gospel....

And which will be consummated after this present heavens and earth is destroyed by fire.....

- Satan is not omniscient..... but he does know his doom is sure...
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- And since he has been in this business of deceiving men for at least 4000 years..... he has learned how to observe all our weaknesses...and capitalize on them through lies...

Scripture says he prowls about like a roaring lion seeking someone to DEVOUR...

Satan wants nothing less than the DESTRUCTION of your faith..... and his hope is with that... the destruction of your soul....

- He SCHEMES to try to get you to **DOUBT** God's goodness...
- to DOUBT that God's promises really apply to **you**
- to make you DOUBT that God could possibly love someone like you...

That is why he is called the Accuser of the Brethren....

Satan wants to cause your foot to slip on the grease of **worldly wisdom**.....and human philosophy....

He wants you to feel secure in your **sandcastle** of **moralism**.....

He wants to suck you into a vacuum of **DESPAIR** and depression.... where he hopes you will stop fixing your eyes on Jesus as your only hope... and begin to believe there is none....

Then, he wants you to look to secular psychology for some OTHER answer to your woes.....

The book of Job shows us just how ESPECIALLY eager Satan is to destroy God's people..... and he WILL do so... to whatever degree God will permit him to.....

**NOTE** – to any of you who are not yet **IN** Christ Jesus..... Do you realize that you are walking through a world that has been given into the hands of a Deceiver.....

Who has hordes of demonic hosts ...all strategically placed to capture you and destroy you?

If you are not trusting in Jesus... and are not confident that His blood covers your sin.... that His resurrection is PROOF that God has counted you as righteous as you trust Him.....

- That is like walking through the heart of a nuclear power plant in your bathing suit.....

You are completely **UNPROTECTED**....from this Accuser ... this Archenemy of God and man.

To put it another way..... you are **TOAST** my friend... unless you repent and believe the gospel.

Two of my kids went on a field trip this past week to the Holocaust museum.

You could tell it rocked their world..... to get a glimpse of just how evil man is capable of being....when filled with Satanic purposes...

They told me that it took a while for the Nazi propaganda to **wear down** the conscience of the German leaders.... but by the end of the war.... some have even testified that they actually believed they were doing something GOOD...in taking Jews to the concentration camps....

Unlike Nazi's.....Satan has **no conscience** to be worn down. No **scruples** to hold him back....The evil out of which he operates is entirely without restraint...because he is the author if evil itself.

Next week we will look at each piece of God's armor... how to be protected by it.... just know right now..... (because of who Satan is.....) you need it **ALL!**

Because....this WAR you are preparing for... not done **online**.... or at a distance.....

Paul says "we WRESTLE"..... b/c this fight gets **up close** and personal!.....

You sometimes come out of it.....with the stench of evil on your garments....

Don't Underestimate Your Enemy.... Paul goes on to say...."we do not wrestle against flesh and blood.....

Flesh and Blood = People

In your struggle to **STAND** in the gospel..... it is not PEOPLE who are your enemy...

Some of you right now.... are blaming MOST or ALL of your spiritual struggles on **other PEOPLE**.....

Much of your emotional and mental energy is spent wrestling with things they have done to you..... or how you can get one up on them the next time.....

This is the most successful scheme... or design of Satan in the church today.....to **occupy us fighting with people**..... holding grudges against people.....

so that we become oblivious to what demonic activity is behind it all.....

Think of this like a chess match....

... People **are** OFTEN pawns in Satan's hands... being deceived by Him.. they can be used to cause us great harm.....

But while we are busy trying to capture and control all the **pawns**.....

The Kings, Queen and Knights of the Satanic team.....have wide open doors to undo us completely...

People are made in the image of God.....what we owe them **is LOVE**.... no matter how evil they have been towards us....

You must see them..... with a sort of **pity**.... knowing that they are fellow sinners in need of redemption....

Satan (on the other hand).... should be hated with your utmost hatred.....

Nothing about him or his hordes will ever be redeemed. They are forever condemned to the lake of fire.... knowing their time is short...he exercises great **wrath** against those made in the image of God.

If you don't believe that... take a look at the Mexican drug war..... Sure those lords are evil, greedy, bloodthirsty people....

But can you not see the demonic powers and principalities having a hey day in all that confusion?

Don't Underestimate your enemy...he is out (Rev. tells us) to particularly make war on the church... we do not want to be ignorant of his schemes.

Prepare for War

### 3. Your Goal: Remain Standing

Many of you know Martin Luther's famous line which comprised the whole of His answer at the Diet of Worms in 1517

That is where the RCC asked him to recant his teaching that we are saved by grace through faith alone... not through any mechanistic works....(which the church at that time was prescribing)... and in Scripture as the **sole** authority for the Christian faith....

When the Officials demanded that he **RECA**NT.... He cried....

"Here (i.e. on these truths) I stand, I can do no other..... God help me. Amen."

Luther was fighting the same battle you fight right now.....(just in a different **degree**)... He was part of the same war....you now fight in your heart... over whether you are going to **STAND** firm on the truths of the gospel....put forth and explained in this book.....

Or whether you are going to be swept away with the current and tide of the world and her satanic ways.....

The goal: Stand Firm upon the Rock ->....Jesus is LORD....and I live for Him.

#### **Ephesians 6:13**

"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 firm**."

Next week... we will see.... that our main OFFENSIVE weapon in this war is the preparation of the GOSPEL of peace....which we walk around sharing....

The main thrust of our strategy is simply to **WITHSTAND** Satan's deceptive attacks.... and not **give up any ground**....

We are not going out hunting for demons to exercise.....

They will find us (don't worry)

Our job is To **STAND FIRM**.... on the rock from which we have been hewn....

To **STAND FIRM** on the truth that we do not have to live in dread of Satan and all his demonic hordes .....

Because JESUS has triumphed over them on the cross!

**Colossians 2:15**

"He **disarmed** the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him."

STAND FIRM on the ultimate reality that no matter how powerful Satan seems right now....

No matter how much sway he seems to have in our culture.... in our community... maybe even in some members of your family....

His destiny is sealed....and he is already a defeated foe....

**Revelation 20:10**

"and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

For the time being.... however..... still lots of his insurgents roaming around..... we need to PREPARE to fight.....

Because we are soldiers in God's Army... and He wants to glorify the POWER of His gospel... as we trust Him in the midst of all hell breaking loose against us.....

And He WILL.... for the glory of His Son.

**Psalm 121:3**

"He will not **let your foot be moved**; he who keeps you will not slumber.

**Deuteronomy 3:22**

"You shall not fear them, for it is the LORD your God who fights for you."

**Zechariah 10:5**

"They shall be like mighty men in battle, trampling the foe in the mud of the streets; they shall **fight** because **the LORD is with them**, and they shall put to shame the riders on horses."

**2 Chronicles 20:13-15**

"Meanwhile all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. And the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. And he said, "Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the LORD to you, '**Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God's.**'"

**Deuteronomy 20:3-4**

"and shall say to them, 'Hear, O Israel, today you are drawing near for battle against your enemies: let not your heart faint. **Do not fear** or panic or be in dread of them, for the LORD your God is he who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory.'"

**Jeremiah 32:27**

"Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?"

**Revelation 12:9**

"And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him."

**Revelation 12:17**

"Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea."

**Nehemiah 6:9**

"For they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, "Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done." But now, O God, **strengthen my hands.**"

Christ Sovereign over Satan and demons because they have been created for His Divine use:

**Colossians 1:16-17**

"For by him all things were created, **in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities**—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

**Revelation 3:11-12**

"I am coming soon. **Hold fast what you have**, so that no one may seize your crown. The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name."

**Ephesians 6:12**

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the **spiritual forces of evil** in the heavenly places."

**2 Corinthians 10:4-5**

"For the weapons of our warfare are **not of the flesh** but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,"

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