

**Ephesians 6: 12; “Wrestling with the Devil”, Sermon # 5 in the series –
“The Whole Armor of God”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on September 9th, 2012, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

This afternoon I would like to speak to you of the kind of spiritual warfare we as Christians are engaged in. The reason that we are going through this series of sermons is because I would like you to see that the forward progress of the gospel in our hearts, in the life of this church, in our communities, in our nation, and in the world, cannot take place without our winning spiritual battles in our warfare with the Devil and his forces of darkness. We do indeed have the ultimate victory over the Devil through our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, as He was moving toward the cross, “Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.” (John 12: 31) The Devil was indeed cast out of his position of trying to take the place which rightfully belonged to Christ. Christ indeed will draw all of His Elect people unto Himself. The question then becomes – If he is a defeated and destroyed enemy, then why do we have to fight with him? The Bible declares that we have to fight him because the Lord would have each Christian to personally wrestle and to overcome the evil one whom He overcame at the cross. He ordains this in the life of every true Christian in order that they might know the reality of His victory which He died to purchase for them. I have 3 observations to give to you this afternoon, on this wrestling with the Devil.

First of all – We fight because Christ fought and won the battle for our Salvation.

Let’s try to understand the basis of our fighting and winning spiritual battles against the Devil. It is that our Lord Jesus Christ took the power of death away from the Devil at the cross. He redeemed all of the children given to Him by the Father when He suffered the punishment due to their sins. And now in the progress of history, which is actually “His Story”, God is applying the benefits of that great victory to all who will believe in Him. Listen to Hebrews 2, verse 8. “For in that He put all in subjection under Him, He left nothing that is not put under him.” “But now we do not yet see all things put under him.” “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.” When we believe in Jesus we are released from the captivity of sin. And we are also freed from that bondage that we were in, to the Devil, due to the fact that the fear of death was always before us. It was Satan who deceived Eve in the beginning and persuaded her to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She then gave some to her husband Adam. Genesis 3: 17 says that Adam “heeded the voice of his wife”, and thus directly disobeyed God’s commandment not to eat of it, lest he die. Eve was deceived, but Adam was not deceived. He simply heeded the wrong word to him. God’s word must be the truth that we live our lives by, regardless of what our closest relative says to us, which may contradict it. When Adam sinned, we all died

spiritually in him, and thus physical and spiritual death are passed on to all men because of that one man's sin.

This is why Satan is able to terrify the consciences of those outside of Christ. People who have any understanding of God's justice sense, they have a sense of the reality of what death will mean for them, and they rightly fear it. Jesus says in Matthew 10: 25 – "It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master." "If they have called the head of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!" "Therefore do not fear them." "For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known." "Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops." "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." "But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." So, even though it says in 1 John 5: 19 – "The whole world lies in the power of the Evil One; nevertheless we are not to fear the Devil. We are to fear God rather than him. Let us apply this to ourselves. The removal of this fear of Satan, death, and judgment comes only by exercising our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ fought the battle with Satan and overcame him at the cross, out of love to you, O believing saint. You were once considered a sinner in God's sight, but because of Christ's loving sacrifice, your sins were all taken away, and you have been set free from the bondage of fear. You have been transferred by God the Father from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of His dear Son. The love of God has been poured out in your heart by the Holy Spirit who was given to you. God so loved you that He sent His Son to save you and to rescue you from the clutches of the Evil One. In 1 John 5: 16 it says this. "And we have known and believed the love that God has for us." "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him." "Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world." This is why you must learn to fight the Devil. It is not because Christ has not triumphed over the Devil at the cross. He did do that. But you fight because He would have you become like Him; an overcomer.

You are just like Christ was; tempted, tried and tested in this world of woe, where the forces of darkness are strongly set against you, round about. You say, "But I am afraid of the Devil and the forces of darkness." "This is all so very creepy to me." Well, let's read on. Verse 18 - "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment." "But he who fears has not been made perfect in love." "We love Him because He first loved us." I am called, as a believer, to fight with Christ's arch-enemy and mine, because He first fought the major battle to save my soul. God does not want my Christianity to be hypothetical. He wants you and me to know the reality of Christ's victory. And the best way that we can come to know this is to learn to fight the Devil ourselves. Perfect love for Christ casts out fear, seeing as Christ died to deliver us from all of our fears. And seeing that Christ Himself is with me, even in my heart, giving me holy confidence and boldness, I do not have to fear. Listen to 1 John 4: 4. "You are of God, little children, and have

overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” John is referring to the false teachers, animated by the spirit of Satan, who do not teach that Christ is the Son of God, or who teach salvation is something that we can attain to without Christ’s death and resurrection, or His mighty grace being applied to us by indwelling work of the Spirit in our hearts. This is how we begin to do battle with the Devil. We confess that Christ is the only way of salvation, the only way that our sinful hearts can be changed, and the only way that we can be brought out of the Devil’s kingdom of darkness. And we must have Christ help us to begin to do battle with the Devil, and to overcome him. Fight the good fight of faith, it says in 1 Timothy 6: 12, and part of that fight is learning to fight the Devil with Christ within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me, and with Christ at my side. Jesus’ fighting and overcoming the Devil at the cross, His casting him out of his spiritual position of power and rulership over my life in my conversion, then sets the stage for his helping me to overcome Satan’s strategies against me, as I go about to live my Christian life. Let me ask you if you are willing to join in this great battle to go forth against the foe? Either you will come to the battle, or the battle will come to you. This is the reason that you must gird the armor on. Casting out fear of the Devil, and learning to do battle with him, is done out of love to Christ; not any inherent strength in ourselves. And girding the armor on means that we intend to do battle for our Christ. Out of love for Him we will go forth against the foe.

2ndly – This battle that we fight against the Devil is more particularly called “wrestling” in this verse.

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities...” When a person comes to the Lord Jesus, and they are walking in the truth and walking in the light, they must have their wits about them. When they were converted, that was the time when they came to their senses by divine grace. They escaped the snare of the Devil who had taken them captive to do his will. But now that this has become a reality, it is Satan’s schemes which we as believers must take our stand against. His schemes relate to his hope that he can thwart our making progress in relation to our salvation; to our becoming holy, and to our growing in grace. The object of our growth in grace is conformity to the image of Jesus Christ. This is God’s goal for the Christian. This is what Satan assails. It is when the Christian is becoming more Christ-like in his character and in his graces (that is, his ability to be more loving, kind, joyful, patience, gentle, and at the same time faithful and obedient to God’s word); that is when Satan puts forth his greatest attempts to hinder that growth. It is when the whole church is faithfully praying for one another and preaching the gospel and the truth of the Word of God, that the battle rages most fiercely. So the battle must be fought on two levels. I myself, as a believer, must fight the Devil on the personal level. And we, together, as a local church, must fight the Devil. On both of these levels, it will mean wrestling with issues of truth and righteousness.

This warfare is here described as a wrestling. We are going to be putting armor on, we will see in verse 13 of our text. It may seem strange that we would be called to wrestle with armor on. But as you think about it, think of it this way. This wrestling match with the Devil is not altogether like a college wrestling match, so much as it is like gladiators in the arena in hand-to-hand combat. It does involve hand-to-hand combat. It is up close and personal; but it involves weapons as well. Not our bare hands only, but also weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left will come into play. These weapons are given to us. They are not weapons made by ourselves. We will study these in later sermons. But this is the kind of wrestling that we, the saints and soldiers of Christ are engaged in. The object in our wrestling is to stand in what is right and true, and not to fall into any sin or deception; it is to exert ourselves to wrestle spiritually against false doctrines that the Devil would propagate through false teachers. It is to resist and to withstand the Devil's working, both upon and in ourselves and others, to break his hold over us and others; to cast him down, and destroy his lies. It is a fight which takes place in the mind and heart; to preach and defend the gospel, and to propagate the truth of the Word of God. This wrestling is both offensive and defensive. It is attacking his kingdom of falsehood and darkness, and it contributes to help prevent his execution of the power of death in keeping unbelieving men in a deceived state. We are in the kingdom of light. We are fighting and wrestling against the Devil's kingdom of darkness. Only God has the final power of physical and spiritual life and death, but this passage is saying that our wrestling is with the Devil, to pray and to work against him and his schemes. God uses these efforts to deliver souls from death. Satan would see men's souls and bodies destroyed if he can. But we can wrestle with him so that other people around us might see the light. It further contributes to the progress of truth and righteousness when we hold fast the truth of the Word of God and we live that truth out, in righteousness, in our lives.

This wrestling is done on behalf of both believers and unbelievers. Let's think of believers first. Listen to 1 John 16 – "If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those commit sin not leading to death." And verse 18: "We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him." "We know that the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one." "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ." You can see from this that the whole unbelieving world lies under the sway of the wicked one. When those who are born of God keep themselves, the wicked one does not touch them. Sometimes, however, if another brother is not keeping themselves, we are called to help one another in the fight. The way that we do that is by praying for other believers who fall into sin or error not leading to death, and God will give them life; spiritual light and grace to change if they have been born of God. Let us

wrestle with God in prayer that the Devil's schemes may be defeated. This is true spiritual wrestling.

3rdly – Let us understand that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood.

It is a common mistake amongst Christians to think that our spiritual battle is primarily with men, and against men. But this verse shows us that we must look beyond the wicked men that we see around us, to focus in our fight, against the spirit that now works in these wicked men, who are called, "the sons of disobedience" in Ephesians 2, verse 1. "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we conducted ourselves in the lusts of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others." Men and women and children that do not know Christ are not the enemy. They are flesh and blood. They are flesh and blood under the wrath of God, just as we once were before our conversion. The need to hear the gospel and to see Christ in us. They need to be delivered from Satan and sin. We will not see the gospel conquer the hearts of fallen men, if we see them as God's and our enemies only. They may indeed be enemies of the gospel. They may indeed despise holy things and they may indeed be so wicked that we should not cast our pearls before the swine. But we must remember that it is Satan's deception that is one of the primary reasons that they are held in that state and condition of being vehemently opposed to God.

Turn over with me to 2 Corinthians 4, verse 2. "But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who perishing, whose minds the god of this age (that is Satan) has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them." "For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake." Let us remember that wicked and unbelieving people are blind, and let us pray for their salvation. And how shall they be saved if we only see them as enemies? Turn over to Romans Chapter 10, verse 1. "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved." Now turn over to Romans 10, verse 28 and you will see how Paul viewed the Jews in their unconverted state. "Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers." They were enemies of the gospel, but they were beloved for the sake of the promises made to the fathers that some of them, even many of them when they will be converted as a nation, will come. That is the context; their conversion as a nation which is spoken of in verses 22-28. Now, if this is true of the Jews, it is also how we should view people around us who Satan has blinded as to the truth of the gospel and the Word of God. God no doubt has Elect among them; people whom He is intending to save. And will we not co-operate with God to preach the gospel to every creature? Paul says in 2 Timothy 2: 10, "I endure all things for the sake of the Elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." You do not understand who those Elect are, so why do you not pray for the

salvation of the worst of sinners as well as for the salvation of the “best”? This is truly to wrestle with the Devil.

We do not wrestle with flesh and blood. Christ wrestled with the Devil himself and overcame Him at the cross so that he would be cast out of the lives of all of His Elect. Now you and I, as we take up the armor of God, wrestle with the Devil, not so much personally, but in relation to all of his hosts, all of the spiritual hosts, all of his co-workers in wickedness, the demonic forces of wickedness which are arrayed against Christ’s Church. The Devil and his dark hosts have schemed with all of their fallen wisdom and power to set up great systems of deception which are designed to keep fallen men in darkness. You and I must take to the offense with the gospel. Millions of people in all areas of the world are bound in error and superstition. They are worshiping false gods because Satan’s power working to convince them that what is false is true. Let us remember that Christ has gone before us, and He has enlisted His Church to battle with Him, so that His gospel might conquer among all the nations of the earth. Do not be afraid. Christ shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.” “Those who dwell in the wilderness will bow before Him, and His enemies will lick the dust.” “The kings of Tarshish and of the isles will bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba will offer gifts.” “Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him.” If this is to be so, let us learn to do battle with the Devil.