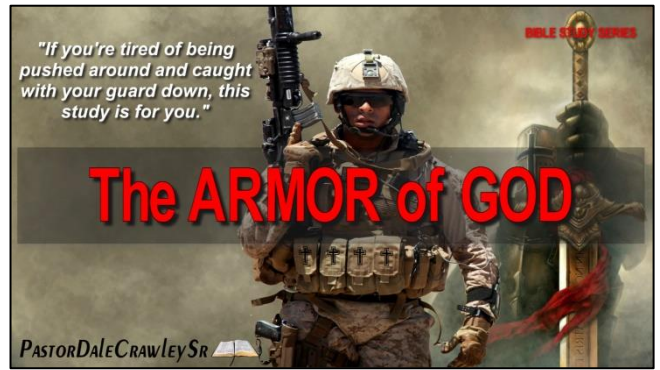


1 “SIZING UP THE ENEMY”

“10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

Ephesians 6:10-12 (NASU)



(Context: READ Ephesians 6:10-20)

Because this is war ... The fight of your life ... A very real enemy has been strategizing and scheming against you, assaulting you, coming after your emotions, your mind, your mate, your child, your career, your future. In fact, he’s doing it right this second. Right where you’re sitting. Right where you are!

But I say his reign of terror stops here, stops now! He might keep coming, but he won’t have victory anymore. Because, starting today, we will be armed and dangerous, prepared to stand firm against his insidious schemes.

And, as we learn about what to wear to ensure victory, we’re simultaneously going to engage in what to do to guarantee it. Each week, we’ll employ the secret weapon that has been divinely authorized by God Himself to stop the devil in his tracks.

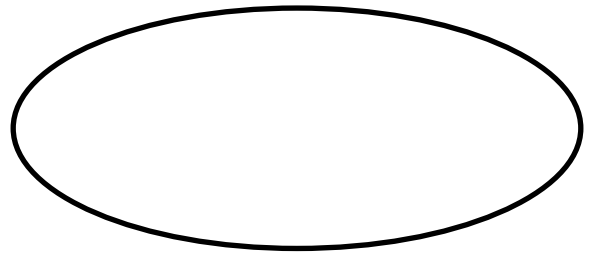
We are going to pray. Not just talk about it. No, we are going to do it! As we gird ourselves in the armor of God, we are going to close each week by giving you an opportunity to develop a prayer strategy to promptly put the enemy in his place.

There’s nothing like writing out Scripture to imprint it on your heart and encourage you to implement it in your actions. We’ll be doing it a lot throughout our study. So turn to Ephesians 6:12, and write it in the space provided below.

Reading back over it, circle what the Bible says you are **not** wrestling against ... then underline the four entities that you **are** wrestling against.

No matter which translation you copied, one word is similar in most: **wrestle**. Some translate it **struggle**. The original wording that the apostle Paul used here — **palē** (pronounced PAL-ay) — it denotes a contest or fight between opponents, waged in close, hand-to-hand combat with the goal of pinning down and defeating one’s rival.

In the circle to the right, write the name of the most difficult person, most pressing problem, and/or most overwhelming circumstance you're facing in your life right now. Mention several if you'd like. Take your time. ***In what ways are you "wrestling" with this person or circumstance?***



Whatever you've written above, whether a person or circumstance—whoever or whatever it is—it is not your real problem. Hear that again: *IT is NOT your REAL problem.*** The most troubling things in your life—things you perceive with your five physical senses—are not your real issue. Though you may be wrestling with them verbally, emotionally, financially, even physically, you are wasting precious time and energy that needs to be reserved for the real culprit—the one who is behind the scenes, striving to direct the details of some of your most acute difficulties. **Everything that occurs in the visible, physical world is directly connected to the wrestling match being waged in the invisible, spiritual world.****

- *(Go back to the oval and write "Not the Real Enemy" on the blank below it.)*

Your real enemy—the devil—wants you to ignore the spiritual reality behind the physical one. Because as long as you're focused on what you can see with your physical eyes, he can continue to run rampant underneath the surface. The more you disregard him, the more damage he is free to do. ***The enemy may be invisible, but he is not fictional.*** He is very real, and very persistent, waging war against us constantly.

The effects of the war going on in the unseen world reveal themselves in our strained, damaged relationships, emotional instability, mental fatigue, physical exhaustion. Many of us feel "pinned down" by anger, un-forgiveness, pride, comparisons, insecurity, discord, fear ... the list goes on and on. **But the overarching, primary nemesis behind all these outcomes is the devil himself!**

In reality, the spiritual armor in Ephesians 6 is merely a repeat—a different way of describing—what Paul had already been explaining to them in the first portion of the letter. How could they "put on" or "take up" things they didn't know they had? ***The first step for them—the first step for us—in utilizing the spiritual resources we've been given is to have our spiritual eyes opened so that we can see them.***

EYE-OPENING

The story of Elisha and his vision-impaired servant in 2 Kings 6 is one of my absolute favorite stories in the Bible. The setting is a battle about to ensue between the enraged king of Aram and the nation of Israel. **Let's look at it together 2 Kings 6:8-20 ...**

Elisha's servant got an eyeful. At first, the only thing he could see was the enemy, which likely left him no other response than fear and anxiety. But then he immediately became tuned in to a game-changing spiritual reality: more was at his disposal and working on his behalf than he could have ever imagined. What his physical eyes could see were no match for what they couldn't see. Elisha's prayer helped make him aware of all the resources and strength on his side fighting against the enemy.

To be confident and victorious, you've got to be able to "see" it. Take inventory of some of the riches given to you in Christ with which you can pin down the enemy. Write key words from each verse below. When you've completed the list, read it out loud.

- Ephesians 1:3 _____
- Ephesians 1:7-8 _____
- Ephesians 1:13 _____
- Ephesians 1:18-19 _____

VISION

These are only the gifts Paul accentuates in just one chapter. There are many, many more, and each one connects specifically with your spiritual armor and weapons. But the first key to understanding how they all fit into your ability to pin down the enemy is vision!

You cannot use them ... if you're not able to fully recognize them, if you're not aware of their availability to you and their importance in successfully waging war against the enemy of this world and your soul.

Victory starts here. It starts today. It starts with this ... A Prayer For Vision!

So join Paul in asking the Lord to open your eyes more fully throughout these next weeks ... so you can not only detect the enemy's activity, but can also be fully aware of what God has given you to disarm and defeat him in your life!