# Matthew 10:1 February 11, 2018

*The Invisible Battle, Final*

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Today we come to the conclusion of our sermon series *The Invisible Battle*, looking at encounters that Jesus had with Satan and his demons so that we might learn from his response to those encounters. One of the important teaching roles that the church has, meaning in this case, your pastor and your small group leaders, is to bring us all to maturity in the faith. Ephesians 4:14-15 declares, *“Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.”* Mature believers know that there is an invisible world around us that is as real as the visible world around us. We know this because the Bible clearly tells us this, but as we mature in our faith we also know it by experience. I’ve had the privilege of listening to many of you tell me stories of your very real, life-changing encounters with angels – not angels who looked like what we think about with the white gown and wings – but angels who came for a particular purpose whose presence changed us. I had such an encounter one time standing by the bedside of a friend who was dying. I will never forget what happened in that room.

 The Bible is very clear about the invisible world around us including the existence of angels and the existence of Satan and his demons. Though we’d prefer there to be only holy and good beings in the invisible world, it’s not what the Bible teaches us. Let me remind you what C.S. Lewis wrote, *“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.”* I’m glad we’ve had this teaching together as we start a new year, but I’m also glad the series was only 5 weeks. We believe, we learn, we raise our awareness, and we move on more prepared to live in victory every day.

 Read with me our foundational text for the series from from Ephesians 6:10-12, “***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.”*

 In week two of the series I focused on the deceptive, manipulative tactics the devil uses against us as we looked at Jesus’ encounter with him in the wilderness. We were reminded how the devil takes a truth and twists it just so, in his evil effort to get us to doubt God’s goodness, doubt God’s word, and ultimately doubt God’s existence. I shared with you these words from pastor & author Erwin Lutzer, *“What the devil wants to do in the temptations against Jesus, is to take the fabric of God’s love toward Jesus and tear it. He wants to put daylight between the words of the Father and the experience of Jesus to get Jesus to doubt whether the Father spoke truth.”* A new descriptor arose from my study that week – that Satan is a splitter. A splitter. He wants to split us from God, from one another, and from the church. We have to be on guard, brothers and sisters, because his lying, manipulative tactics just keep coming, and coming, and coming – just like our mice down in the kitchen. We have to be ready and be on the alert to the ways and wiles of the devil.

 In week three we focused on Jesus’ authority over the powers of evil. We looked at the encounter that Jesus had with the man in the synagogue who had been possessed by an evil spirit. Jesus set the man free with a simple command, *“Be silent and come out of him.”* And out he came. We were challenged to think carefully about whose authority we are under – Jesus’ authority or the counterfeit authority that the devil wants to hold over us. If you think that you are under no one’s authority but your own, think again. We are either under the authority of the devil or the authority of Christ. There is no in between, folks. There is no in between. I finished that sermon with Ellen Heckman’s testimony about her victory over a looming season of depression by speaking the truth from Scripture over the manipulative ways of the evil one. The battle is real, folks. We just have to know the way to victory!

 Finally as review, last week, we looked at Jesus’ encounter with Peter when Peter denied what Jesus was telling him about him having to suffer and die in Jerusalem. Do you remember what Peter said to Jesus? *“God, forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.”* To which Jesus replied, *“Get behind me, Satan, for you are a stumbling block to me.”* Peter wanted to protect his Lord from suffering, which we all want to do for ourselves and for others, but in so doing was getting in the way of God’s plan. We are very good at this. We see some suffering ahead if we go the right way and so we justify going a different way to avoid the pain. The example I used last week was a real one. I shared the fact that one day, most likely in the next year or two, Laurie Ruby is going to have to continue her education elsewhere. As much as we might want our plan, having Laurie stay here and maybe even eventually take over when your pastor retires, that’s probably not God’s plan (though he seems so logical, doesn’t it?). We have to make sure we don’t become a stumbling block to God’s will being done in the life of our church and in Laurie’s life because we’ve set our hearts on something that wasn’t from Him. This is why in the Lord’s Prayer we have those words, *“Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”*

 Today as we wrap up this series we are going to look at our authority over the powers of evil. We already looked at Jesus’ authority over Satan and his minions, now today we are going to look at our authority. For that let’s look at Matthew 10:1, *“Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.”* Mark 13:34, *“It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.”* Luke 9:1, *“When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases.”*

By our faith in Jesus Christ as the Savior of our souls and the Lord of our lives, as the one who has been given ALL authority in heaven and on earth, by him we have been given the authority to overcome the “*rulers, the powers, the world forces of this darkness, and the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”* As a believer in Jesus, I have authority over those who want to do nothing in my life but steal, kill, and destroy my faith, my hope, my confidence in Christ, and my eternal joy. I have authority over them all! You have authority over them all in the name of Jesus! In Luke 10:17 after the 72 had been sent out two by two by Jesus to proclaim the Kingdom of God had come near they returned with joy and said, *“Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name!”* In. Your. Name. In Mark 16:17 we read, *“And these signs will accompany those who believe; In my name they will drive out demons…”* Using someone else’s authority is quite an honor. It’s like going to the bank and showing them the paperwork that you’ve been sent by Bill Gates to withdraw a million dollars – and they give it to you! What power that name has in the financial world! What authority you were given to go in his name to get that money!

**Jesus distributed his authority to those who believe in him, and by faith,**

**in his name, we continue his mission of destroying the works of the devil**

**on earth, until Jesus comes again and sets everything right again.**

So, here are three very practical truths to help us do our job.

1. **As believers in Christ, we do not fight for victory, we fight from victory**. When we recognize that we are in this invisible battle, and when we realize that we are under attack in a particular way, remember that the battle has already been won for us by Jesus. We don’t need to try to win. We just need to enforce the victory that Jesus has already secured for us. Remember this. We fight from a place of victory. The devil wants us steal this truth from us. Don’t let him.
	1. John 4:4: *“You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.”*
	2. 1 John 5:4-5: *“Whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”*
	3. Revelation 12:11: *“They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.”*
	4. James 4:7: *“Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”*
	5. *Colossians 2:13-15, “You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.”*
	6. *Ephesians 6:16, “…Taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.”*
2. **When we speak against the evil one we must use our own authority in Jesus’ name**.

We don’t pray that God will overcome the demon of temptation or pride or unforgiveness or lying or lust, etc. saying, “Oh God, take this demon away from me, in Jesus’ name.” No! This is exactly what the devil wants us to do – minimizing our own authority! A demon of false pride convinces us that we don’t want to usurp God’s authority; we need to remain humble. Yes! But not in this way! We need to use the authority Jesus himself gave to us and speak directly to the attacker. Jesus gave us this authority not so that we could give it back. He gave us this authority to use it to continue his mission of destroying the works of the devil. *“Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive our impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.”* Mark 13:34, *“It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.”* Luke 9:1, *“When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases.” And so we say, “In Jesus’ name, I command this demon of laziness to leave me.”* We take our authority and we use it for our good and His glory!

1. **Don’t blame the devil for everything that might be going wrong or is hard in your life!** We need to be able to discern what is our willful disobedience vs. what is demonic oppression. If you need help figuring this out, pray! If you need more help, just come see me. We’ll pray it through together!

 We have everything we need to live a victorious life over the ways and wiles of the devil. We have faith in Jesus who has already acquired FULL victory for us, and in his name we have FULL authority to shut down Satan’s evil attempts to get us from trusting the ways and will of our Heavenly Father.

 On Wednesday night we begin the season of Lent – a 40-day period of intentional focus on the sacrifice Jesus made for us on the Cross of Calvary. Our congregation-wide study this year is entitled *The Forgiveness of Jesus.* In our small groups on Sunday mornings and on Wednesday evenings we will view video teaching followed by group reflection, discussion, Bible engagement, and prayer. Sermons will follow along with the weekly themes which include repentance, Jesus’ forgiveness for us, healing, reaching out, second chances, and our forgiveness of others. Why this study? One of the reasons is because I see the emphasis that Satan puts on twisting the truth about forgiveness in our lives. Many of us struggle to truly live as forgiven children of God, therefore many of us struggle to extend that forgiveness to others.

 I challenge you to connect with this study in small groups. 8:30 people, stay for the next 6 Sundays to engage more personally with the people around you. 11:00 people, come early. Someone this week said to me, “I’ve never been a Sunday school person.” So what? I’ve never been an Eagle’s fan until I saw all those men give praise and honor to God before the football game. There’s a first time for everything! Do you think those players and that coach didn’t get pushback from all their talk about Jesus? You know they did! But they did not allow anything to keep them from using the significant platform God gave them for his glory! Take a look at this testimony from Zach Ertz before the game: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTUUovzyJms>

 Did you hear that? Being accountable to others and having the encouragement of others has helped him stay strong in his faith through the craziness of the postseason. This is what our small group ministry is all about: accountability and encouragement so that we can stand strong against the schemes of those who want to pull us away from being and making disciples of Jesus Christ. So, get your yellow sheets out and make the commitment. It’s six weeks folks. Make the commitment and see how God will mature your faith and make you stronger in the battle!

 As we wrap up this series, let’s read again the words from Ephesians 6 that we read as our call to worship:

One: **10**Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power.

**All: 11Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.**

One: **12**For ourstruggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

**All: 13Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.**

One: **14**Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. **15**As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace.

**All: 16With all of these,take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one.**

One: **17**Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and 18pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

**All: 23Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

One: 24Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.

Amen.