



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

The Invisible War Must Not Remain Invisible



Invisible War: Winning Against Evil | Part 10
Benjamin Hatton | August 30, 2015 | Ephesians 6:18–20

It's a delight to be here this morning. We've connected with some of you in previous visits so it's really nice to see some people we recognize. We enjoy the feeling of being part of a group that loves the Lord Jesus Christ, that's dedicated to the Word, and has such a meaningful relationship with us as missionaries. Like Tim said, we're missionaries with New Tribes Mission in Papua New Guinea. We're on home assignment (furlough) right now. We're taking a break. Home assignment for missionaries means reunion with family members we haven't seen in a while. We've been on the mission field for almost three years so we've missed a few weddings, some births and some other major events so it's always good to come back and reconnect with our family and dear friends. We had a whole day of nothing except fellowship and catching up with Tim and Amanda yesterday afternoon. I'll tell you what: it does the soul good to reconnect with people.

All of that is relative to this one thing: if you want to understand missionaries and home assignment more practically, it's all connected to longevity. It's connected to enabling us to finish the race that we've started. Why? Because we are at war. It is real and it is significant. You guys have had the privilege of going through this series on spiritual warfare: The Invisible War, Winning Against Evil. As I've looked at some of the content you've been going through, I've been thinking of the privilege you have had to be under the Word of God in such a way as to instruct and build you up, first of all in your position in Christ. The Epistle to the Ephesians has been building you up in your identity in the Lord Jesus Christ and who you are as a believer. This is not just so that you can live happy lives but for a purpose: to equip you in this spiritual fight in which we live. We recognize that God has given provisions for this fight by way of the armor of God—you were under that teaching just last week when you learned more about the armor of God. So it is a real privilege for us to be able to come, to enjoy time with you and specifically to join in this series and speak about this invisible war.

The main focus of this message—and I believe it is also Paul's focus as he finishes up the epistle—is that maybe this teaching won't be applied. This is the hard part, the nuts and bolts, of any study of the Word of God. It's the difficult work of personal application—putting it right inside my skin, down into my shoes and seeing it go to work in my life as I interact with other people. So the concern that we all need to feel and the question that we need to be asking ourselves is this: Can we indeed see this spiritual war? Is it a reality or are we just going to listen to these things and let them wash over us, feeling good about the fact that we are hearing nourishing preaching? Will we then walk out of church and nothing else changes in our day to day life?

If we don't see it and don't recognize the reality of spiritual warfare, how then can we engage in the war? How can we be effective in this war? We won't be if we don't see it and we're not recognizing it. We're not going to be able to engage. We're not going to be effective. May it not be said of us that the Word of God and the teaching we have received, the spiritual food that we've been able to eat and be encouraged by, did not take root in our lives and affect our walk with Him and our struggle in this war.

1. See the War

Battle Amdu

I want to look at three different battles to try and make this spiritual fight more tangible for us. We're going to start with the first battle, which is Battle Amdu, because that's our fight. That's our conflict. That's where we're living and I want to share our experience with you a little bit. I put together a little video and as we watch it, I want you to start thinking about the scheme of the devil. What could Satan's scheme be in the life of the Hattons and the Allens as they live in Amdu and are fighting their battle?

For centuries the Amdu people have lived their lives in isolation, deep in the mountain jungles of Papua New Guinea. Even today their way of life remains virtually unchanged. They still build their houses, prepare their food and grow their gardens as they have for generations. Each generation has taken from the last what is most important: celebrating the same values and fighting to defend what they hold most dear. When they get old or sick, they die. As they mourn the inevitability of death, they are haunted by the same frightening questions that plagued their people for so long; without hope, without the gospel.

In October 2012 we received permission from the Amdu people to come and begin building homes for our families to live in. They worked tirelessly with us to get everything ready for the day we would come to live permanently in Amdu. Our friends were very excited for us to begin learning their language. For the past two years we have dedicated all our time to becoming a part of Amdu life so that one day we can clearly preach the gospel to them.

God has enabled us to gain enough proficiency in the language of the Amdu people to begin developing a literacy program to teach them how to read and write. When we return to Amdu we will work to finish learning the Amdu language so that we can begin to translate and prepare to share the gospel with them. Our dear coworkers, Bart and Emily Allen and their four boys, are on the ground in Amdu right now, moving the work forward. Our prayer is that this battle for the Amdu people will not remain invisible, but that many of our brothers and sisters from Village Bible Church will battle with us in prayer until gospel day and beyond.

That's our battle. That's where we're living. What are some of the things you think might be part of the enemy's scheme that would keep us from the battle? What would render us useless or inactive? Did you get a sense of isolation as you saw some of those planes flying over the jungle? The nearest place for us to go is only in that airplane or it's on these two feet, which would take days and days and days. I tell my kids all the time, "Look, you need to be wise. If you fall and break your head open I can't do anything for you. I can't take you anywhere quickly." These are some of the things that we're dealing with daily. The battle for us in Amdu is in our faces all of the time.

Discouragement. The enemy would have us waking up in the morning discouraged and deflated. "What are we doing out here? Why did we ever do this? What in the world were we thinking? Did we think that we would be able to learn this language, ever?" These are some of the thoughts and feelings we're dealing with on a continual basis. Walking about, going down the trail, connecting with these folks, we're just begging the Lord, "Please God, encourage our hearts. Build us up so that we can do this. Loosen our tongues so that we can speak this language."

We hear the Amdu people talk about spirits all the time. We're seeing the way they view their reality and it is messed up. They are afraid. They are in such incredible need of the gospel. The battle is in our faces. It's undeniable.

But that's not where you're living. That is not your battle. That's not where you are. You're here. Let's take a look at the war that's going on here.

Battle Cosmos

Let's take a look at Battle Cosmos. *Cosmos* is the Greek word for the world. First John 2:16 says, "*For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.*" This *cosmos*, the battle that you and I are living in here in America, is different. It is not in-our-face. It is more subtle.

The scheme of the enemy would be to cripple us in Amdu and just take us out. Sometimes I feel like he's coming at us with one of those big knives. He just wants to take our legs right out from under us and render us useless. Those are the things that we're feeling and dealing with daily.

It seems to me that the battle for us here in our western civilization is far more subtle. The enemy wants the same goal: he wants to render us useless relative to this battle, but he's doing it with a lot more subtlety. I think you and I can agree about this pervasive battle here in the U.S. It's not necessarily blaring in our faces but it's real. As my family moves from Amdu back into our own home country, the contrast is so evident to us. I thank God for this contrast.

The devil would have us living just like it's saying here, according to the passions of our desires. He wants us to be thinking and feeling that our comforts and our physical desires are the most important things. Living in Amdu has created such a contrast in my life that I recognize I am easily given over to these western values because it's the culture in which I've been raised. I desperately need the Word of God to create that sharp contrast in my mind, and living in Amdu allows me to do that.

How many of you like your Serta Plus or your Tempur-Pedic bed? How many of you look at that bed and think, "If I don't get my eight and a half hours, I am just not going to be able to make it through tomorrow!" It didn't take long for me to abandon that thinking. As I spend nights with my Amdu friends I recognize, "I don't think there's an Amdu person who sleeps eight hours ever in his whole life. Not back to back at least." Their value system and challenges are different. But the devil and his scheming would have us buy into the fact that our comforts are essential and that investing in them is wise.

Let's take that to its full extent and run it out all the way to the end. What happens if we're giving ourselves over to comforts on every front? Not all passions are of the Lord, and if we follow our passions we are going to either disqualify ourselves or we're going to incapacitate ourselves.

This is a little secret into the perks of missionary life: in Amdu I don't have to do anything except live there and guess what happens? I will lose thirty pounds with no effort. It just evaporates. It goes away. I don't have to do any work. I just have to live in Amdu and do what I'm there to do and it just goes.

If we're sold out to our comforts and if we're not careful, we'll buy into the devil's schemes. We will sell ourselves out to comforts and passions. That is the world's systems. That is Battle Cosmos and it's subtle and pervasive. It will sink down into your thinking and all of a sudden you won't even recognize it. You are trapped. You are shackled to your comforts.

First John 2:16 also talks about the pride of life and achievements. This manifests itself by being so connected to our possessions and the things that we have achieved that we're taking pride in them as if they are of ultimate value. They drag us down into the temporal where the only way we can determine if it's good or bad is through the eyes and the senses. This is not from the Father. It is not reality. It is Battle Cosmos. Can we see the war or are we just going to listen to a good series and be comforted by the fact that we attend a good church and move on with our comfortable lives? May it not be said of us that that is our reality! If we haven't achieved things and we don't have a long list of bragging rights, what are we devoting ourselves to? We've devoted ourselves to achieving those things that we can brag on here and now. That is Battle Cosmos.

I am very thankful—and I know that my wife would echo this sentiment—that we have the privilege of living in two places. We have the privilege of living in the middle of the jungle that challenges the emptiness, the smoke and the mirrors of Battle Cosmos and confronts us with Battle Amdu. I'm thankful that my children are growing up in Battle Amdu because they get an opportunity to see the plastic web that the devil is spinning in other areas of the globe.

Think of the master strokes of this strategy. If the devil can pull this off and can convince the soldiers of the opposing side to just quit, he doesn't even have to go into battle. That is what is at the heart of Battle Cosmos. We have to ask ourselves: are we falling prey to it or are we seeing things the way they really are? Are we able to value things according to God's value system? Are we thinking eternally or are we thinking temporally? Are we thinking in the scope of eternity past, present and future? Are we thinking about God's plan that He has revealed to us in Scripture, or are we thinking down inside the details of our daily dramas? Are we trapped inside this temporal thinking? If we get down inside we are ducks sitting in a pond and the enemy can take shots at us all day long. Are we seeing the war? That's Battle Cosmos.

Battle Nero

Let's look at one more battle to allow the Holy Spirit to remind us that there is a war and it is paramount that we see it. If we don't see it we cannot engage in it, and if we're not engaged in it there's just no point. Why exist? Let's look at one more battle—Battle Nero—in Ephesians 6:18–20:

[P]rayer at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Battle Nero. This is one of Paul's Prison Epistles, written while in chains. He has been shackled physically to a soldier. He is in prison. He has been impeded. This is what I believe the devil's scheme is in Paul's life: to impede him, to trap him, to prevent him from moving, to keep him isolated because he is a soldier who is too incredibly effective at what he does. So here's Paul. His

battle is his imprisonment. He's in chains. He's sitting there in the cell. Battle Nero. Think about it. He's just an old man now but he's one of the apostles and he has a choice to make.

As you relate to Battle Cosmos maybe you're feeling, "Good grief! Am being taken for a sucker? Am I on some wild ride? Am I making any of the right choices?" If the Spirit of God is working in your heart because of this series, do not be disheartened because that's exactly where Paul is right here in this Epistle. I believe that he is being incredibly vulnerable with us. I believe that he is saying, "Here I am and this is my battle. I'm chained to these Roman guards and I'm in this cell. Me! The apostle! I'm the one who's been given the visions. The Lord Jesus Christ showed up to me. He's the One Who said, 'You're My worker and I'm going to achieve great things through you, but you're going to suffer great things for Me.' He's the One Who pricked away at my heart. He pricked and pricked and pricked, and I kicked and kicked and kicked. Then I finally saw the truth that yes indeed, God is Who He says He is. Jesus of Nazareth is Who He says He is. He is the Messiah."

Many incredibly important things happened in Paul's experience and now here he is in chains. Here he is in a prison cell and it was not like the prison cells that we have here today. Here he is in this cold prison cell with all of his freedoms taken away. Imagine the work that the enemy is doing on this man. Imagine the questions that he is firing at Paul in rapid fire succession every single day: "Really, Paul? You, the Apostle? Worthless?"

Don't we fall into the same trap? Don't we fall into faulty thinking that if we do the right things God will do good things for us? Then when bad things happen we immediately start thinking, "What did I do wrong?" Is that the way God relates to His children?" No. But don't we fall into that mentality? I believe that's exactly where Paul is here. He's vulnerable in saying he is faced with the same decision.

Are we going to see the war? Are we going to make the choices that are necessary to engage in the battle? Paul is saying, "I want you to help me. I need you to help me. I am going to choose to continue seeing reality the way God has laid it out in the Word of God. I am going to see it and I am going to walk by faith here, and I want you to help me."

2. Engage the Battle

Paul is saying to us, "Engage in the battle. Engage in *my* battle." I think that's one of the secrets that we're going to learn here. You can engage in Battle Amdu. It is your privilege to engage in Battle Amdu. We can live in Battle Amdu and it is our privilege to engage with you in Battle Cosmos. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Use the issued weapons

Paul is saying to us, "Look, you need to first of all see the war clearly and then you need to engage the battle." How are we to engage the battle? What was Paul asking for from his fellow soldiers? Let's just read the text one more time: "*Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me...*" So what's Paul saying? He wants us to pray. The bottom line is this: regardless of how your heart responds to that idea, pray.

I think that because we are so often suffering the effects of Battle Cosmos—living so temporally minded—that we are giving in to all the arrows that are being shot at us by our enemy. We do not believe that the fight is a spiritual fight and prayer becomes a garnish in our lives. It's something that decorates our existence and is not nearly understood the way Paul wants us to understand it. One of the main points Paul is trying to make is that we need to use the weapons that God has issued and we need to be praying. Paul is pleading, "You need to be praying for me because I need to see the war. If I am going to engage effectively in this war, I need you to be praying for me." So we need to be using the weapons that God has given us.

What is prayer? We don't have time to get into a full discourse on prayer but when we're talking about prayer, aren't we talking about communication with the Creator? There are people groups in this world who have been so trapped in their faulty thinking that when the lights come on, and they are introduced to this idea of The Creator God Who created them, Who is interested in them as individuals, Who wants to have a relationship with them through prayer, it blows their minds. It's a concept they've never even considered. And do you know what they do? They claim it and wear it out.

Remember what prayer is: prayer is our connection to God our Creator. We have direct access to The Creator God, the Being Who created us; God our Father in heaven. We connect with Him and we can speak to Him. The nature of our conversation is couched in our position in His beloved Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only that but because of our frailty, because of what we're not able to achieve in our bodies, we can also speak to God in the enablement and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit Who will

take even our groanings and make them effective (Romans 8:26). This is prayer. This is one of the most important weapons that we have been issued. If we are to engage in the battle, first we must see it. But if we are to engage in the battle Paul is saying, "Don't use any other weapon except the weapon that has been issued." And that weapon that he is calling on the Ephesian believers to use on his behalf and for their own sakes is prayer.

Use them like you mean it

How are we to pray? How are we to use these weapons? We're to use them like we mean it. Don't we have a bunch of faulty forms of how to pray? Don't we pray sometimes with people and then think, "That was a weird prayer." Then we listen to the way other people talk to God and think, "I don't talk to God that way." Or, "I wouldn't talk to Him about that." Don't we have hierarchies in our minds about things that are important and are not important? I think all of those things are worth consideration.

But let's not forget the context in which we are being exhorted to prayer. We are at war. Do you think it ever crossed the mind of the soldiers on Utah Beach on D-Day to talk about anything else over that radio except what was important? War. We were at war and it governed everything that those soldiers did. We're at war now and it needs to govern what we do. We need to use the weapons that are issued—namely prayer—and we need to use them like we mean it. We're at war!

So what are we talking to God about? What are we engaging about in our conversations with the Lord? It needs to be pertinent to what He has done in eternity past, what He says He's going to accomplish in eternity future, and according to the facts of our provision. So many times we're asking for things, but imagine the Father saying, "I've given you that. I've given you that."

"Lord, set me free from this bondage of sin!"

He's saying, "The chains are on the ground."

"Lord, set me free! Let me get free from this..."

"But the chains are on the ground. What are you asking for? The chains are already on the ground. You're one of My children. The blood of the Lord Jesus Christ has set you free from sin. Don't ask for freedom, walk in freedom." Thank God for freedom. Live in freedom.

So we need to be praying, but what does that look like? What does that look like relative to Battle Amdu? What does that look like relative to Battle Cosmos? Look at what Paul prayed. Look in the Epistles at the prayers Paul prayed for those believers. They're absolutely amazing! They are dripping with sound doctrine. These prayers rightly relate us to the things that are most important, helping us realize that we are fully ready to engage with a heart full of praise and worship. We need to be praying because it's the weapon that we've been issued and we need to be praying like we mean it.

Because we are at war we need to be praying appropriately for the context in which we live. The contrast of our family's experience between Battle Amdu and Battle Cosmos here in America has provided stark realities for us in how we pray and what we're asking for, and how much more important the things are that are eternal, not those things that are temporal. God wants to give you wisdom because you are one of His soldiers and He wants you engaged in this battle of spreading the light—especially spreading the light where it has not shown before or where it is shining dimly.

We are at war. Do you see it? Are you ready to engage in it? Let it not be said of us that we were foolhardy enough to take our own weapons into the fray.

Use them to their full potential

One other thing here: use these weapons to their full potential. We need to use the weapons that God has issued. We need to use them like we mean it. And we need to use them to their full potential. One of the things that gets right in our faces living in Amdu is that we live in a community. It is a village where people come together. They're related to one another. Every decision that they make affects someone else's life. They are constantly in community. Personal space is very small.

How much personal space do we need as westerners? There are those of us who need this entire complex to be emptied. That's just about enough personal space. "For me to be able to get adjusted, centered and ready for my day I need some personal space." Well in Amdu it's just not happening. So we learn things about community.

I think there are going to be portions of Scripture that the Amdu people will get when they just go right over my head. The meaning is not there for me. For example, in Genesis 28, Jacob crossed many miles and met a man he had never met before and

this man treated him like a king. Why? Because that man was his mother's brother. Kinship is essentially important to give us identity and value. In Jacob's culture that was true. It's true in Amdu as well. But here in the U.S. we live individual existences. Let us not fall prey to the scheme of the enemy to divide us, and make sure we use our weapons to their full potential.

Paul is saying, "Make sure that you're praying, but also pray for me, and constantly, with all perseverance, pray for all the saints." Pray for your brothers and sisters. You have been issued a weapon and you have been connected to God in such a way that you can pray in one geographic location and it will significantly impact what is going on in a battle in another geographic location around the world. Do you understand that? Do you understand that your prayers are effective because you are righteous by the righteousness of God? *"The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working"* (James 5:16b). You are righteous because you are clothed in the righteousness of God, not because of things that you have done but by grace through faith. He has given you His own righteousness. Pray! Pray like you mean it. Pray to its full potential and effectiveness.

We need you to pray for us in Amdu. We need you to recognize that Battle Amdu is not just the Hatton family's experience. It's not just for the Allen family. Battle Amdu belongs to every one of us. It is our battle and if you use your weapons effectively you are going to have a powerful effect on what goes on in that little village and how the Word of God goes forward. Will you pray with us? Will you use your weapon to its full potential and pray with us? Pray that we would stay encouraged. Pray that we would be motivated. Pray that we would never put value on earthly thinking. Pray that we would put ourselves last and the needs of our coworkers first. Pray that we would see disunity a mile away and shun it. Pray that we would have wisdom to be able to communicate the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ across the language and culture barriers. Pray that we would see the gospel light ignited in the Amdu people. Pray to its full potential.

If we do this we are going to win. We're going to be winning the fight against evil. If we don't do this then we've listened to a good series and we've gone back to our comfortable Serta Plus and our caffeinated existence. If we don't do this, we will step back into the enemy's play book because we have not applied what God is laying out for us. Let that not be said of us. We need to be defeating Satan's strategy here at home and we need to be doing that through the well-laid-out instruction that we get from the Word of God. We need to recognize when we have fallen prey to some of his schemes. Perhaps there is time for evaluation of my own life. What is it that I am holding dear? What is it that I am valuing? Am I seeing the war? Am I engaged in the battle? We need to be asking these questions.

If you're anything like me, you're fine with self-evaluation if you're at the helm of self-evaluating. I create comfortable space around certain areas and won't go to other areas. When my wife begins to evaluate me then there is a Battle Hatton coming. Usually I am resistant to that because she's usually right. She has some insight into my life because she lives with me and knows where I am being weak or worldly or buying into something that's just not true.

So are you willing to engage with a brother or a sister here in this community where you can be asking yourselves serious questions: Are we failing in Battle Cosmos? Do we really know how to engage in Battle Amdu, Battle Tanzania or Battle Uganda? Do we really know how to engage there or are we kidding ourselves? Are we throwing money at these mission opportunities and thinking that's our only engagement?

What is Paul asking us to do? Paul is asking us to pray like we mean it and pray to its full potential, suited up in the armor of God. That is effectively engaging the battle. Are we praying? Maybe we need to talk about that a little bit more. Maybe we need to engage with each other a little bit more. Maybe we need to be honest and ask, "How comfortable are we living here? Presented with the ideal scenario, could we leave today? Presented with the absolute ideal scenario—every single question has been answered, the only thing we need to say is yes or no—will we commit to this? Will we step into this special ministry opportunity or not? Would we be able to do it? Could we step away from the things that are comfortable? Could we step away from the half-built achievements? Could we step into something else if God were to present it right in front of us?"

That would be a telling conversation to have with your spouse, wouldn't it? Asking the Lord through the power of the Spirit to renew our minds and help us to think in a way that we see clearly the war that we're in and that we live in a way that we can say yes. God is using our lives, our relationships, our resources in winning the fight against evil at home, and even abroad.

Last challenge: I would be remiss if I didn't invite that hungry heart, that missionary spirit that's out there, that person who is tingling with the anticipation where your imagination is just going nuts right now, thinking, *Maybe we could do that*. Allow the Spirit of God to work. Let Him be your full provision. Step out. Maybe you need to take that courageous step and say, "This is what I want to live for. Less for me, less for now, less for comforts. More for Him. Because there are places on this earth where it's dark. North of us, about two week's walk, there's a people group called the "U"—no Gospel. Day to day, building houses,

planting taro, eating food, killing pigs, getting married, having babies, dying—no Gospel. The fight is losing in “U”. Battle “U” is hardly begun because there’s no one out there fighting.

If you go farther—three days—you’re going to leave the country. You’ll leave land and go out into the ocean. There is a small island that is miles directly north of where we live called “W”. The “W” people are living their lives, building their houses, eating their fish, getting married, having babies, dying—and there’s no Gospel there.

Do you want to know one of the reasons that we don’t have missionaries there right now? We don’t have enough support personnel to even get a church planting team into “U,” even if there was one who wanted to go. We don’t have enough people who can do just the practical things of life: to ensure that consultants could come; and groceries could come in a boat to a family who are living on “W” island; learning the language and culture; and lighting the light of the Gospel there. Maybe there is someone here who would be crazy enough to think beyond the temporal and to recognize in eternity God has a plan, and I could step into that right now. That’s just an invitation. And believe me, I am nothing special. Your pastors are nothing special. But the Holy Spirit is. God’s Word is amazing and the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes. Amazing truths. Let us be praying together. Let us see the war. Let us engage in the battle. Let us use those weapons to their full potential. Let it never be said of us that we sat comfortably under a series so powerful as this and just went on with our comfortable lives. Let it never be said of us.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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