

Monthly Prayer Letter - September 2026

Dear E-Free Church Family,

I don't remember when I was introduced to the concept of spiritual warfare. My guess is that it was in high school, when I first started to read the Bible on my own. At some point, someone—likely one of my youth leaders—pointed me to Ephesians 6 where Paul speaks about putting on “the full armor of God” (Eph. 6:11).

As with any biblical illustration, it's easy to press Paul's metaphor beyond its intended purpose. There is value in considering the symbolism behind each component of the armor of God. Yet, Paul's main point is rather simple. Just as a soldier wouldn't think about going into battle without first suiting up, neither should we neglect to

“put on the full armor of God, so that [we] can take [our] stand against the devil's schemes” (6:11).

Our enemy is a schemey one alright. He has been scheming from the beginning (see Gen. 3). Rather than engage us in an obvious full-frontal assault, the devil often utilizes the tactic of deception to accomplish his purposes. He searches for our weakness and exploits it to his own advantage—the same strategy he employed when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness (see Matt. 4:1-11).

I'm convinced that one of the devil's schemiest schemes is getting us to think he's not really much of a threat.

C. S. Lewis begins his book, *The Screwtape Letters* by saying,

“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. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.”

A week or so ago, our home security camera caught sight of an early morning visitor to our yard—a black bear. For a few days after that, our guard was up. We were reluctant to let our dog out into the yard. We walked a little faster at night between the garage and the house. We made sure that our garbage can was stowed away so that it wasn't too enticing. But by the end of the week, we were back to our normal routines. We were convinced that he had moved on to another neighborhood. Nothing more to worry about.

I'm not suggesting that the devil is someone we should live in constant fear of. We shouldn't (see James 4:7). But not living in fear of the devil is not the same thing as naively thinking his attention is focused elsewhere. Peter reminds us to

"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8).

This is why God fully equips us for the fight by supplying us with his armor:

"the belt of truth,...the breastplate of righteousness,...the shield of faith, ...the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:14-17).

But wait, there's more! In the very next verse Paul reminds his readers,

"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people" (6:18).

As we enter this fall season of ministry, with ministries and programs restarting, and with the possibility of an interim pastor on the horizon, I am both optimistically hopeful and prayerfully on high alert.

I am optimistically hopeful because I know that Jesus' promise still holds true:

"I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Matt 16:18b).

I am prayerfully on high alert because this doesn't mean that the devil won't stop trying to bring the church down (see Matt. 16:23).

Church family, would you join me (as I know many of you already are) in praying for E-Free Bemidji? We're not just doing church; we're engaged in a spiritual struggle

"against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph 6:12).

Therefore, let's "pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests." And together, as we pray, standing firm together in the full armor of God, may we "be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people" (Eph. 6:18).

In Him,

Pastor Eric

P.S. Oh, and if you don't mind, as Paul said, "Pray also for me" (6:19). I sure appreciate it!