

THE CHRISTIAN'S CALL OF DUTY

Ephesians 6:10-20

INTRO: Turn your Bibles, or turn them on, to the New Testament Book of Ephesians. If you are new to church life, Ephesians is the 10th book of the NT. The NT starts with the 4 gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They are followed by Acts, Romans, 1st & 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, and then EPHESIANS. When you find it, turn to the last chapter, chapter 6.

Two weeks ago, I preached on THE CHURCH'S GREAT COMMISSION. Today, I want to preach on THE CHRISTIAN'S CALL OF DUTY.

Today's sermon is about SPIRITUAL WARFARE. Are you aware, that you are presently engaged in a battle with Satan and his demons, his army? Sadly, most Christians today don't know this, or either don't believe it.

ILLUS: According to a study done by George Barna and the Barna Group, just a few years ago, 40% of Christians in the United States strongly agreed that Satan "is NOT a living being but rather is just a symbol of evil." An additional two out of ten Christians (19%) said they "agree somewhat" with that perspective. That means that 60% of Christians in the US don't believe that Satan is real, and that he's really out to get them. Only 26% of the Christians in the USA believe that Satan is real, and that he exists in our world today. The other 14% said they are not sure.

Listen to me closely for just a moment. THE BIBLE, GOD'S HOLY WORD, is the authoritative, infallible, inerrant, and all sufficient Word of truth. And God declares in His Word, in **1 Peter 5:8** that we should *"Be sober, be vigilant; because y(our) adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour."* That's not just hyperbole, or a metaphor, that's a warning from God that you better take seriously. **SATAN IS REAL!**

Before we get into the sermon, let me give you a quick backstory to where we are in scripture. Ephesus was the capital city of Asia Minor. About a half a million people lived there during the days of Paul the Apostle. Paul, first came to Ephesus on his second missionary journey. On this occasion he didn't do much in the way of ministry. But he returned to Ephesus on his third journey and this time spent about three years teaching them the things of God, and sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As he shared with them the truths of God's Word, many came to Christ, and a great Church was established there.

At the end of his third missionary journey, he re-visited Ephesus for the last time. He didn't actually go into Ephesus, instead he met with the elders of the church at Miletus, not very far away. Paul warned them and said, in **Acts 20:29-31** *"I know that after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. 30 Even from your own number, men will rise up and distort the truth to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore be alert and remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears."*

Paul did everything he could to prepare this congregation for the spiritual battles they would face. The Letter to the Ephesians that we are reading from today was written by Paul about 5 years after leaving Ephesus, Paul writes this letter, while imprisoned in Rome. It was hand written by Tychicus as dictated to him by Paul and then taken from Rome to Asia Minor (Ephesus first) by Tychicus and delivered.

Most theologians believe that Ephesians is what's known as, an Encyclical, or circular letter, not meant just for the church at Ephesus but for all the churches in Asia Minor. It probably got its name, Ephesians, because it was sent there first, and because Ephesus was the chief city of that area. Because this letter has been given a honored place in scripture, we know that its message has application for us even in our day.

John Stott, writes that...“The letter to the Ephesians is a marvelously concise, yet comprehensive summary of the Christian good news and its implications. Nobody can read it without being moved to wonder and worship, and challenged to consistency of life.”

So let us look now to verses 10-18, of the 6th chapter of this great book!

Ephesians 6:10-18 *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can make your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this world's darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

13 Therefore take up the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you will be able to stand your ground, and having done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness arrayed, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

18 Pray in the Spirit at all times, with every kind of prayer and petition. To this end, stay alert with all perseverance in your prayers for all the saints.”

What a potent Word! Make no mistake, we are in a spiritual battle. It was so in Paul's day, it is equally so, or maybe more so, in ours. And God desire for us, is to be prepared, and trained, and conscious to the fact that a war is taking place. So let's look at this. Notice...

I) WHAT TO EXPECT: **vv 10-12** *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can make your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this world's darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”*

A) An Impossible Fight: **v 10** *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power.”* Paul is making it clear to us that this battle is beyond our ability. All of us, at sometime or another, think that we are stronger than what we really are. God knows this about us! It's our human nature to think we are the strongest, the baddest, the most capable. But we're not. It was Jesus that said in **John 15:5**, *“...apart from Me, you can do nothing.”* That includes this spiritual battle that we fight everyday. **WITHOUT GOD, THIS IS AN IMPOSSIBLE FIGHT**, but if we are in the Lord, and He is in us, He makes us **STRONG** with His **MIGHTY POWER!**

The beloved KJV reads *“Finally, my brethren”*, those two words, *my brethren*, are not found in the majority of Greek manuscripts that we have today, nevertheless, the point is a good one -- Paul is not just calling on the pastors or elders of the church to be strong in the battle, but for every believer to be strong in the Lord. Spiritual warfare is an inevitable consequence of living your life for God. **WE ALL** need to find our strength in the Lord!

I) WHAT TO EXPECT: vv 10-12

A) An Impossible Fight: v 10

B) An Invisible Foe: vv 11-12 **ILLUS:** A boxer had fought 7 hard rounds. He was beaten and bleeding. His eyes were swollen almost shut. Between the 7th and 8th rounds, his trainer, hoping to encourage his young fighter said, you're doing great, keep moving to your left, he's having trouble keeping up with you, he's hardly laid a glove on you. To which the young boxer replied, Then keep your eye on the ref, cause someone's beating me to death out there!

Have you ever felt like you were being beaten down, that you were taking blows from someone or some thing, but you couldn't tell who or what it was? I dare say, that everyone in this room has been in that place at sometime or another. Listen, we have an invisible foe, an enemy, whose sole desire is to KILL, STEAL, and DESTROY. He hates you and wants to harm you everyday. And but for God, he would do that.

Paul tells us in vv 11-12, "Put on the full armor of God, so that you can make your stand against the devil's schemes. (This is who we are fighting, the Devil! And he controls a host of other entities that he uses against us) 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, (Get that through your head! When someone lies about you or attacks you, and all you were trying to do was give good council, or honor God with your life, remember, it's not those people, it's Satan working through them.) but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this world's darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." This is a spiritual battle we are in. And the people attacking us may have flesh and bones, but the evil behind their attacks is invisible. It comes from a different place, a different world. NO WONDER, we must find our strength in the Lord.

I have to hurry. Okay, we've briefly covered WHAT TO EXPECT. Notice...

II) WAYS TO EQUIP: vv 13-17 v 13 "Therefore take up the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you will be able to stand your ground, and having done everything, to stand.

"Therefore" Because of the fact, that we are in this IMPOSSIBLE FIGHT, fighting an INVISIBLE FOE, you MUST TAKE UP ARMS! "take up the full armor of God," "SO THAT" When evil comes knocking at your door, and it will, "you will be able to stand your ground"

God is telling us everything we need to know to be victorious in this battle that's being waged against us. He says, "take up the full armor of God..." The two words, "full armor" is translated from a single Greek word, panoplia (pan-o-plee'-ah), which means, full, complete, or ALL! The meaning here is, that we take everything that is available to us, because we are going to need it ALL.

ILLUS: I titled this sermon, THE CHRISTIAN'S CALL OF DUTY. I used the phrase, CALL OF DUTY, intentionally. I know some of you listening to me are gamers. Teens, gamers, listen up. When you play a war game on your device or computer, you have a choice of weapons and armor. You choose those things you hope will be the most advantageous. You either choose correctly or not, and move on or start over. THAT'S NOT THE CASE IN THIS WAR, in the spiritual battle we fight as Christians. THIS IS NO GAME! Someone is really trying to harm us. So, we don't just choose a ting or two here and there, God said TAKE UP the FULL ARMOR!

I) WHAT TO EXPECT: vv 10-12

A) An Impossible Fight: v 10

B) An Invisible Foe: vv 11-12

II) WAYS TO EQUIP: vv 13-17 CONTINUED Alright, now Paul list off the armor that has been given to us by God to fight the battle successfully...

vv 14-17 *“Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness arrayed, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”*

The first thing he says is, “STAND FIRM”. That the Greek word, *Histemi*, (His'-tay-me). It means to maintain a specified position or posture. In context it conveys the idea of digging in (Roman soldiers sandals had spikes for this purpose).

From a practical standpoint, one stands firm by living an obedient, Scripture-dominated, Spirit-empowered life. Again Paul like a military general barks out a command to the troops to stand firm. The word is in the aorist imperative, which conveys a sense of urgency. Do it now! Don't delay! It's also in the active voice which means that we must make the choice to stand firm. God gives us the enablement, he has given us the armament, but then we must take a stand!

1 Peter 5: 8-9 *“Be sober-minded and alert. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in your faith and in the knowledge that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering.”*

1 Timothy 6:12 *“Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”*

This is as far as I can go today, we'll pick up here next Sunday and talk about our armor, and how God expects us to fight the good fight. Today, we have seen WHAT TO EXPECT in our spiritual battles, and we just got started in the WAYS TO EQUIP. Next week we'll finish up here, then look at our third point, WHERE TO ENGAGE.

CONCLUSION: Can I ask you something before we go? Are you in a battle right now? Maybe you're going through some hard things. And because of the stress of it all, you've been less than your best. Actually, truth is, you feel like a failure. God understands your feelings. He loves you! He wants to help. Would you just get out of your seat and come talk to Him about what you're going through?

Maybe, you are not a Christian. You have never put your trust in God. You probably aren't aware of this, but Jesus said in **Matthew 12:30** *“Whoever is not with me is against me...”* You might say, I don't want to be against Christ. Well then, will you come today and let us share with you how you can be on the Lord's side?

III) WHERE TO ENGAGE: v 18 (NEXT WEEK)