

Sermon for September 7, 2008

Boscobel & Mt. Zion UMCs

Text: Ephesians 6:10-24

Title: "Get Ready..."

Introduction: Not long ago we were talking about the 5 Love Languages that people have. One of those languages is "Words of Affirmation". For many of us if someone we care about (or don't care about for that matter) gives us a compliment; it can carry us right through the day. We become invincible. We can do anything. Why? Because we received that boost of confidence from someone else that builds our self-confidence. Get it?

When we encourage the ones we love and care about, we make them better people. I know that it's much easier to find someone else's faults and tell them about how they've been a failure, but that really doesn't do much for them... Encouragement is how we make each other better!

Can you imagine if we remembered that in the ways that we work together as a church? Paul says to the people of the Ephesian Church that they need to become "ONE" if they are going to live up to their potential according to God. What a great way to help us become "ONE" ... encourage each other!

When I was in college, I played on the tennis team and we had a really smart coach. Coach Tom Harper understood how young men (and most people) worked. His assignment for us one season was to, if we were not already dating someone, to ask a girl out ... more than one if we could.

Let me tell you, when Sarah came to my tennis matches, I seldom lost. Seeing her there, cheering me on ... I could do anything! I could hit shots that I could never hit when she wasn't there. Why? She was an encouragement to me. I knew that she cared about me and that she thought I could beat my opponent. If she thought I could do it, I COULD DO IT!

Today we are wrapping up our series on the Book of Ephesians. Paul has challenged us to become ONE as a church ... as the Body of Christ. Paul has showed us the Kingdom we have inherited. Paul has told us how to live up to that inheritance ... if we are daughters and sons of the King; we need to act like it! Mom = "Stan, you know how to act." "Don't be obnoxious (Well, that didn't work)!"

Well, all that talk about how to live for Christ – how to conduct ourselves like children of God – has a purpose. It is training. So, now, as he wraps up his letter, he warns them of the ongoing battle that they have entered into. Just by accepting Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, like it or not, those people of that church walked onto the battlefield. And we do too...

At this time I invite you to take the insert out of your program. On one side of it you will find our Scripture for today and on the other side you will find an outline of how we are going to look at today's Scripture; complete with fill-in-the-blanks. My hope is that you will hear something today that will help you be a Christ-like part of this church or whatever church you are a part of. Grab a pen and listen as Paul wraps up his Letter to the Ephesians that he writes from a prison in Rome...

READ EPHESIANS 6:10-24 NOW AND PRAY!

As a coach you like to have some scouting done on your next opponent. If you are going to war, it's best to have some intelligence outfit find out everything they can about your enemy. You want to know how big they are, how smart they are, what tactics have they used in the past, how many there are, what weaponry is at their disposal, who are their allies, etc. In order to be smart as we go into battle, we have to know our enemy and be as prepared as possible to face that enemy.

Paul tells the people in Ephesus, I know the enemy and the enemy you are going to face is tough and powerful. So, be prepared. By the way, Paul, again, is talking to us as well. We also are in the middle of the battlefield. We just sometimes don't see it!

So, there are four things we need to be fully aware of before we head into battle:

- I. The Enemy (6:10-12)
 - A. Simply put, as followers of Jesus Christ, our enemy is the Devil, also called, Satan.
 1. Devil means "accuser" ... The enemy is always accusing us of wrongdoing in front of God. This is an attempt to make us enemies of God instead of sons and daughters.
 2. Satan means "adversary" ... Satan is the enemy of God. Satan hates God and will do anything to split up God's family!
 - B. Many wonder where Satan came from. It is believed that Satan was "Lucifer" who was one of the most beautiful angels.
 1. Lucifer thought he was more beautiful than God and because of his pride wanted to take over God's throne.
 2. God therefore threw Lucifer out of the Kingdom.
 - C. Here are a couple of things that we need to remember:
 1. Don't *underestimate* the power of evil.
 2. Don't *overestimate* the power of evil.
 - a. Remember that Lucifer was created, so he is not eternal. He has limited knowledge.
 - b. He is not like God in that he is all-knowing, all-powerful, or everywhere-present. So, why does it seem like evil is everywhere?
 - D. Satan's helpers ... Paul calls them "wicked spirits" in verse 12. This suggests that Satan has a whole army of spirits to help in the attacks against Christians.
 1. The apostle John suggested that 1/3 of all God's angels fell with Lucifer when he rebelled against God.
 2. Daniel wrote that Satan's angels struggle against God's angels.
 - E. We have to remember that the real battle is not against other people, but against spiritual forces. This will change how we fight!
 1. Just as God uses people to carry out His will, Satan attempts to use people to destroy God's will.
 2. We are part of the battle; like it or not. And we face Satan daily in ourselves and in other people!

- F. As for the Abilities of the enemy ... Paul indicates that Satan is strong.
1. Book of Job teaches us what his power can do to a person's body, belongings and home.
 2. Jesus called Satan a thief who comes to steal and kill and destroy.
 3. When we underestimate the abilities of Satan, we are in trouble!

So, that's the enemy. He is tough, strong and subtle in his ways. Oh, by the way, we know all of the enemy's tactics, all of the enemy's strengths and we have all the protection and firepower you will need to defeat him. You will have everything you need at your disposal. Just ask. Nothing to fear! Here is your battle gear...

II. The Equipment (6:13-17)

First, Paul warns that we cannot leave any of our equipment behind. We are to wear all of our gear ... "use every piece of God's armor..."

A. *1st = Sturdy Belt of TRUTH*

1. Satan is a liar, often called, "the father of all lies". If we are controlled by the truth we will defeat Satan.
2. A person of integrity, with a clear conscience and nothing to hide, can face the enemy without fear!
3. Note that the belt also held the sword (Word of God). Unless we have our belt on, we cannot carry a sword ... we need to live out the truth or we cannot use God's Word of Truth!
4. Check out King David, as long as he was living the lie about Bathsheba, his life was falling apart... ours will too!

B. *2nd = GOOD NEWS Shoes*

1. We will have a peace that is more than our understanding if we know the Good News (Scripture) ... the story of Jesus Christ and the salvation offered to us!
2. Shoes? We will feel great in life if we are willing to take the Good News to people who have not heard it yet!
3. Satan has declared war on humanity to attempt to tear apart God's Kingdom. We carry peace through the Good News of Jesus and into combat!

C. *3rd = Shield of FAITH*

1. Battle Shields in Paul's day were about 4'x2', made of wood and covered in leather. They were built to stop flying arrows or ward off swords. They were made to interlock so that an entire line of soldiers could move like a protective wall out into the open.
2. This reminds us that we are not in battle alone ... we sometimes need to interlock our shield of faith with some others when times get tough.

3. In Paul's day, armies used to dip their arrows in a flammable substance and light them before shooting them at enemies. Paul is telling us to beware of Satan's flammable arrows.
 4. If those arrows get past our shield of faith, our faith will start to break down.
 5. Ephesians 4:27 = "Don't give the Devil a foothold." If Satan can slip one arrow in past our shield (attack us at our weakness/addiction), it doesn't take long to snowball, does it?!?
 6. We never know when the enemy is going to shoot at us, so we have to keep our shield up.
- D. 4th = *The Helmet of SALVATION***
1. The helmet covers the brain or the mind. Satan loves to attack at our thoughts. How many times have you been convinced in your head that you are worthless or someone was talking about your, etc?
 2. If our minds are strong and protected by our knowledge of the SALVATION we are offered by God, we will not be as vulnerable.
 3. Our minds have to know God's Word! If we know God's Word, we will not be easily convinced otherwise ... we'll talk more about his in our next series.
- E. 5th = *The Sword of the SPIRIT***
1. All of the other weapons God gives us are for defense ... the SWORD is for offense. A Roman soldier in Paul's day would have a sharp sword stuck in his belt for close range combat. It was not much work to pierce an enemy with such a weapon.
 2. We believe that God's Word (Sword of the Spirit) also pierces a person's heart.
 3. I believe that each person needs to be pierced with God's Word ... this Sword, unlike a physical sword, is used to bring healing and life.
 4. When we use this Sword against Satan, it cripples him and keeps the enemy from distracting us from God's work!
- F. As we talk about putting on the WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD, we are essentially describing Jesus. This means that when we trust Jesus Christ, we receive His Armor.**

Well, now we have our armor, but sometimes we feel like the shepherd boy, David, who tried on King Saul's armor and couldn't move. We do not, as human beings, have the energy and strength to take all that armor into battle, so what do we do?

III. The Energy (6:18-20)

- A. Our Energy to fight the spiritual battle comes through PRAYER. Not just any prayer, but we are to pray a certain way if we are to continually fend off Satan.

1. **#1 = Pray ALWAYS**
 - a. I Thes. 5:17 = “Pray without ceasing”.
 - b. Never hang up ... never stop talking to God.
 - c. This is easier for some of us extroverts who are talking whether anyone else is in the room or not, but we all must learn to pray continuously.
 - d. We have to always pray because when we are separate from God, we are vulnerable to Satan’s attacks.
2. **#2 = Pray ALL PRAYERS**
 - a. When praying, don’t just pray for yourself ... “I want this and I want that...”
 - b. When we pray for others, we take our minds where God wants them to go.
 - c. When we pray to thank God for what we have, it’s hard for Satan to use the weapon of the ol’ pity party.
 - d. When we praise God for who God is, we have our full minds on God and “in Him there is no darkness (evil).”
3. **#3 = Pray in the SPIRIT**
 - a. When praying, we can ask the Holy Spirit to guide our prayers ... help me to connect with God around the subjects that God wants to talk about.
 - b. If we don’t pray that way, we tend to become selfish and just tell God how we want our situations to turn out ... and our loved ones situations too.
4. **#4 = Pray with your EYES OPEN**
 - a. “Stay alert” when you pray. When you fall asleep praying, it’s time to change your prayer time.
 - b. Yes, prayer can be the priority of your day. Wow, can we learn a lot from the Muslims ... more on that starting next week!
 - c. When I was a kid, my Dad used to tell me that he used to “watch and pray” because he was sure his sisters were going to sneak food before they ate.
5. **#5 = Pray PERSISTENTLY**
 - a. If we were more persistent in our prayers ... oh microwave people ... I believe that God’s will would be done more often.
 - b. Remember, that our prayers are not about our will getting done in heaven, but God’s will being done here on earth.
 - c. We are to pray for ways that God’s will can be done and we and others can see God move in our lives ... convincing people that they need God!
6. **#6 = Pray for ALL CHRISTIANS EVERYWHERE**

- a. When you sit around the dinner table and pray, do you just focus on yourself? I hope not. I hope you pray for all of your family or your friends sitting there.
- b. We are part of God's family and we are all supposed to pray constantly. We also need to pray for each other ... I don't know about you, but I need it!

IV. The Encouragement (6:21-24)

- A. Then Paul finishes with this ... I am sending my friend Tychicus for one purpose ... to ENCOURAGE YOU!
 - 1. It's a tough battle doing spiritual warfare and we all need encouragement. *We can do anything with encouragement!!*
 - 2. I cannot imagine going into this battle alone. I want that wall of shields! I want someone else to have my spiritual back!
 - 3. See why we have to be ONE?
- B. Then Paul prays God's GRACE on them. And I pray the same for you today ... that God would give us the blessings that we have not earned and certainly don't deserve.
- C. As we wrap up Ephesians, let me remind you that things will go well here when we are ONE under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. If things aren't going well, then we probably are not living as ONE!

We have a lot to do here this year. It will only happen as we come together in communion ... unity ... realizing we are in this together! So, this morning as we have an opportunity to take communion together, remember; we each eat the same bread and drink the same drink remembering the same Jesus Christ and His death-defying love for each of us!

Let's Pray!

Next Week: We start our series on World religions. What to they believe and how does that compare to what Christians believe?