The War

*Ephesians 6:10-24*

*Sang W. Sur*

*Lord’s Day, August 14, 2011*

***Praise the Lord!***

*The Armor of God*

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take 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 dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from 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 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

18 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. 19 Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

*Final Greetings*

21 Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. 22 I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.

23 Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.

Today, we come to the conclusion of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. It was a wonderful journey through this letter together, as God has been building up our starting ministry. I believe everything that God desires us to seek after are right in this letter – and this was why God had us read this first. It’s about God, it’s about His grace, His selection, His love toward us. We only have gratefulness to return, and out of that thankfulness, we respond by loving our neighbors and no longer living for ourselves.

The letter of Ephesians ends with staying strong in the Lord. What does it mean to stand strong? And why should we stand strong? This is what I want to talk to you about today.

**Pray**

In the NIV, Scripture reads this way:

Ephesians 6:10-12 (NIV)

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take 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 dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Again, I want to emphasize that this is a letter Paul wrote for Christians. If we claim that we have the mighty God on our side, why is he telling the Christians to stand strong? It is because we are in a middle of a war –

Let me ask you – in verse 12, it says “our struggle” – from what do we struggle?

(OOHHH – do you struggle? Note that for non-Christians, there is no struggle, because they, by default, already side with Satan. But for Christians, we are turning from our own ways and heading toward Jesus – that is, we no longer seek our selfish pursuits, but rather live for God and others. However, we still have our flesh, our desire to still be independent and be for ourselves (not “to one another!”) – That’s why v. 11 tells us that we are to struggle against the devil’s schemes. The devil wants us to fall away from God, just as he has fallen away from God.

So, do you struggle? Is there a battle you face on a daily basis? I sure hope so.

Let me ask you – in your life, how do you struggle?

I’m going to show you a video from UFC Championship May 2011. Do you picture the struggle to be like this?

[UFC 130 (Rampage Jackson vs Matt Hamill)]

Or do you picture struggle like this?

[Two Towers (Lord of the Rings)]

In our modern society, we see struggles as an individual thing. We fight on our own and its for us – for my glory!

But spiritual battle is something that occurs in a larger scale. It’s like a gang of ten guys coming against you with strong weapons to take you down. Like the Jackie Chan movies we see, we want to take them all down by ourselves, right? But it’s not realistic.

Paul is writing to the ***Christians*** that they will have struggles – if it was easy win every time, Paul would not even write this – no Christian would be concerned about spiritual battles, but it is a difficulty!

Consider a war, individuals fight, individuals fall, individuals conquer – but in the end, it is the group that conquers together. In view of community, it is like that – it is better for the team to support each other and encourage one another so that they all stand together, instead of each man for themselves.

As mentioned last week, we are conditioned to be independent individuals – doing good, looking good, and feeling good on our own – but as God has been teaching us through Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, that we are to come to unity and work together.

However, even within the group, we ought to develop our individual selves so that we may be a benefit to the team. Imagine us being ready to go out to war in a week – What should you do?

* Train, right? But what if some people decided to drink and party? They will not be supportive to the war
* Sadly, this is the state of Christians in our modern day. There aren’t many! Many people fill out surveys saying they are “Christians” but do any of them know or understand spiritual battles? Do they know how to fight?
* So, for the team, we need to train individually – not to win on your own, but to support one another so we may, together, win our daily battles.

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*11. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.*

This battle is not for us – it belongs to the Lord. It’s a 100% chance losing probability without this armor. But we are able to stand and overcome Satan and his devils when we walk with God and put on this armor.

*12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

It tells us why right here – our struggle is not a physical battle – it is a spiritual one!

Do you know how to fight against spirits? Neither do I!

[it’s like fighting while blind -- can you do that?]

That is why we have this heavenly armor available for us. Satan attacks the believers, and believers have the ability to fend him off.

So are you fighting an unbeatable foe on your own? Or are you allowing God to protect you?

[the question is, “are you an idiot or not?]

*13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*

Only with this armor, are you able to stand in this battlefield. Many people just stay down.

[picture of everyone lying down ###]

We have to change our mindset –

* Instead of “Christians are people who just go to church”
* Christians are people who walk in mighty power of God – they can do mighty things!

14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist

Belt of truth – honesty before the Lord – come as you are and be bare before Him. This is an act of humility – giving Him full control (but we tend to not do that). Only when we are 0, can God be infinite?

[0 + infinity = infinity! 1+infinity = 0###]

Analogy – horsepower – avg horse pulling a cart. In grand scale of things, we are “1” humanpower. What kind of power would you rather have in your ride?

with the breastplate of righteousness in place

Righteousness in Scriptures refer to doing the right thing. The OT readers recognized this – Abraham was considered righteous for doing what is right.

This includes caring for the poor, having compassion on the weak, etc., but also your daily activities, such as not doing wrong to your neighbor, parents, friends, etc. Do others consider you “righteous?” --

*15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.*

Readiness from peace –

[### put this up on screen]

This goes along with what I mentioned several weeks ago – no major decisions/actions can occur outside of position of rest. Think about that phenomenon – when was the last time you made any major decisions of life? If it has been a while, you must have been busy! I encourage you to lay down even your busyness and come before the Lord because He wants to give you peace.

Once we have this peace, we can be ready to move, and do what is good.

We all want to do the will of God. We all want to do what is good, what is best! – this is the will of God.

So then, to follow that path, we need to be at rest. At rest more than this world teaches us –

So, let us be at peace . . . if you find that hard, take some time now to pray and let Him know of your busy life, and ask for His peace – He wants to give it to you. Only once we have His peace, will we be ready to go forward.

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.

There will be constant attacks by the evil one, but none of his attacks will work, only if we hold on to faith.

Uses shame to get you back down

1. Regrets (remember that sin you committed 10 years ago, you can’t be forgiven from that!)
2. Falling back into addiction or falling into temptation (look, you’ve sinned – you are not worthy to be a child of God!)
3. Lies (you are sick – he says then that God doesn’t care about you, you can’t have a child, you lose your job – then turns you against God)

[example: Jesus’ temptation – Matthew 4]

*17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

Helmet of Salvation – Unswerving belief that we are saved by what Jesus has done. This passage continues from previous passage – Satan will be attacking – you hold on to your assurance of your faith.

Sword of the Spirit – cite the words of Scripture back (Satan hates that!) – refer back to Jesus’ temptation.

*18 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.*

Pray in the Spirit (relying on Him!) – all kinds of prayers and requests

And pray for one another –

*19. Pray for me*

Paul recognizes that prayer is powerful –

* Many people just do it out of desperation
* Or some may try with weak faith that it is worth a try
* But prayer is the main activity of a Christian to bring about change.
* Scriptures say we are co-laborers with Him. We pray and God hears us, and with our hearts joined with His, He then moves through us. It is powerful!

And this is why Paul asks the people to pray for Him. He recognizes the great power of it. So, do you pray?

Do you pray in all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests? Start doing it – and believe in God’s mighty powers.

And pray for others – start with those here in our group and ask the Lord to give them strength and greater faith to trust and depend on God.

The ending of the letter

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

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

May God’s peace be with you – so that we may be able to listen to God’s voice and do what is best for us in our lives (Remember this is how Paul starts the letter as well – it is important!) – without the peace of God, we can’t make any major decision correctly. So, if you feel your life is rushed, out-of-control, hectic --- ask for this peace. Only then will you be able to make rightful decisions that leads you in the best path for your life.

Grace – gift, not something we deserve – May God pour down His blessings (again, this is not something we deserved), as we love God with an undying love.

Fighting in unity --

Here is a scene in the movie Gladiator. Maximus, a well-trained warrior, has been betrayed and sold as a slave. The emperor wants to see these slaves get killed in the coliseum. They are ill equipped, and the soldiers of the coliseum are equipped with near-impossible to penetrate equipment. What do you do in this kind of situation?

Is this not something similar to our daily battles in life? They seem impossible to get through, they seem tough, and it seems like defeat right from the start.

Anyone here been in the army? = Any of you Christians here? (people respond with, I have been – or I had been)

(there are some of them that probably have been, but on-and-off – they really don’t know what it means to be dependent on Jesus – and of course, there are people that never have been -- so you can see these kind of people go off and not listen to a trainer warrior).

[After the movie]

This is a picture of Christians today. There aren’t too many people who know God and walks with Him. And we all get slaughtered – in the midst of what seems like a loss, will you stand – and will you be the one to direct people to victory?

When non-believers are all around you, will you guide them so that they may be able to stand and win the battle?