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Ephesians 6:10-20

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 saints. 19 Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, 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.

First, thank you for the opportunity to visit with you today. As a son of this congregation who was nurtured and loved by this congregation, as a pastor of this denomination, I find it an honor and privilege to be able to bring you the word of God. In sharing God's Word, I also hope to share with you some about the mission work in Alaska. Please pray with me

INTRO - The events of November 5, 2009 shocked our country. An American born Army doctor, Major Nidal Hason, opened fire at Ft. Hood, Texas, killing 13 and wounding 29 others. Two civilian police officers, Sgt. Mark Todd and Sgt. Kimberly Munley, arrived on scene. In less than a minute they confronted the shooter, were fired on themselves, and finally they critically wounded the shooter and stopped further killing of the American soldiers. While you may not go looking for a fight, sometimes the fight is brought to you. That was the case with Sgt. Todd and Sgt. Munley.

I. I know that you have been studying the book of Ephesians and focusing on Peace Making. While today's lesson does point us to the Gospel of peace, the main point in this part of God's Word is that the Christian life is a battle.

A. 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. The Christian life is a battle.

1. It is a battle to have priorities straight, and love God above all things.
2. It is a battle to love people in our lives, even our enemies.
3. Amidst trials, it is a battle to live a holy life that witnesses to God's love and glory.

B. Sometimes, however, we forget who our battle is with for living the Christian life.

1. This is important as you consider your emphasis on peace making.
2. Verse 12 says, 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.
3. Unfortunately, Christians can forget the truth of this verse. But, even when another person does something wrong, opposes the truth of God's Word, hurts another, that other person is still created by our heavenly Father. We are called to love them by God's plan.
4. Our ultimate enemy is Satan, the devil, the deceiver and liar and accuser. He is the one who seeks to lead us away from God grace, away from forgiveness and life, into selfishness, hatred, and fighting.

II. When Major Hasan opened fire on those at Ft. Hood, he had one advantage. He had a weapon, and they did not. He was stronger because of this strategic advantage. In this battle for the Christian life, our enemy is stronger than we are.

A. Think about your struggles to live the Christian life.

1. How difficult is it to keep your priorities in order, to keep Christ as Lord? How often does selfishness take over? Our enemy is strong!
2. You have been talking about peacemaking, Are your words about others always kind, considerate, forgiving? Or is it easier to believe the worst, to pass on gossip, which starts fights? Our enemy is strong!
3. When someone has hurt you, are you likely to hurt back, or forgive?

B. Our Enemy is strong, but We belong to one stronger than our enemy, Jesus.

1. God Himself, Jesus, the son of God and the Son of Mary, experienced all the temptations of this world and the devil, and lived a life of love and righteousness.
2. Jesus who did not need to suffer or die because he did not sin, suffered and died to pay for the sins of the world, and for your sins and my sins.
3. Jesus, not only took the consequences of sin, He defeated sin and death when He rose. And our enemy is defeated. Jesus is victorious.
4. And, for people in a lifelong battle with an enemy we can't win by our strength, Jesus offers us victory through forgiveness.

III. The point of today's reading is that, because the battle is won, even though we live in this world of continuing struggle, we have tools and weapons for the battle to live the Christian faith.

A. Many of these tools are defensive.

1. Paul encourages the people of Ephesus, 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

2. The truth, righteousness, faith, and salvation are all gifts we have because of the victory of Jesus. As we stay in these gifts we are protected from doubts and temptations.

B. However, some of these weapons are offensive.

1, Paul also encourages, 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 saints. 19 Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel,

2. God's word and prayer are offensive weapons. They are ways we can face Satan with Jesus by our side. God's word and prayer are ways we can help others in their faith. As you fight the battle to live a Christian life do you use these weapons? Are you regular in worship? Are you regular in daily devotion and prayers?

C. Part of the reason for this offense was so Paul could fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, that's mission work.

1. In Alaska we are working to take God's call seriously. We want to share Jesus' victory with others.

2. In a state with a large Native American population, in a state with high rates of suicide, substance abuse, and abuse in families, the people need the victory God gives.

3. A couple of years ago a pastor friend was using the offensive tools of God's Word to lead Vacation Bible School in the town of Akiak, out near the Bering Sea. Tragically, a young man took his life while the pastor was there. He helped the village deal with this loss, using the love and forgiveness of Jesus. His group has been invited back.

4. Last year, with our Alaska Mission for Christ staff we not only serve a number of communities on a regular basis, but we provided 400 volunteers for sharing the gospel of peace, and we shared Jesus with over 4000 people.

5. I was here in January as you sent Pastor Mark Eishold to Peru to be a missionary. We can use your prayers, your mission teams, your support.

CONCLUSION - In 1995 I visited the town of Kenai, Alaska, as Circuit Counselor to help a troubled church call a new pastor. I stayed with another Pastor, Jim Pearson and his wife. Jim had also been in a church that had trouble. He got ready for bed and asked me to pray with him. We knelt down together, and read Ephesians 6 for our prayers, 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. Jim had been forced out of a church, but in the battle of faith, he knew the enemy. Do you know what Jim did? He did not fight back against the people, he started a new church. He fought the real enemy by doing mission with the Gospel of peace. May God bless you in your peace-making efforts to fight the real enemy, by sharing God's love and forgiveness in Jesus.