

Group Resource

## Sermon Notes – Sunday, November 10, 2013

Series: Be Strong in the Lord!

Message: Take Your Stand!

Scripture: Ephesians 6:10-18

- I. Believers are instructed in Romans 12:2 to not be conformed to the pattern of this world but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. One essential area of transformation is to fully understand the believer's position in Christ.
  - a. We absolutely need to grasp what the Apostle Paul taught us in Romans 8:37 that we are MORE than conquerors through Him who loved us.
  - b. We also need to realize that our victory has been secured by Jesus Christ at the Cross of Calvary and that it cannot be detached from Christ's continued presence with us.
  - c. We must be on guard against spiritual narcissism which is the notion that God saves us, cleans us up, and then we walk out the Christian life in our own strength rather than in the strength of the Lord.
  - d. Timothy Keller says: *"It is inaccurate to think the gospel is what saves non-Christians, and then Christians mature by trying hard to live according to biblical principles. It is more accurate to say that we are saved by believing the gospel, and then we are transformed in every part of our minds, hearts, and lives by believing the gospel more and more deeply as life goes on."*
  - e. Every day, our confession of faith is grounded in the realization that we absolutely need God for everything that we do.
- II. All believers have a responsibility to engage in spiritual warfare. Jesus told his disciples in John 16:33: *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*
  - a. Christians are at war with the world, the flesh and the devil. When it comes to spiritual warfare, we cannot be sufficiently strong by ourselves. To have adequate strength for the battles of life, we must fight with the strength of the Lord.
    - i. The world – the corrupt world systems which are hostile to the truth, and desire to replace God with self-existence.
    - ii. The flesh – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.
    - iii. The devil – A fallen angel who opposes the person and purposes of God. Satan is associated with deceit, temptation and testing, through which, he attempts to deflect believers from obeying God.
- III. **How do we properly engage in spiritual warfare?** Believers must recognize their position in Christ and stand strong in the Lord.
- IV. **1 - We are called to be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. (v10)**
  - a. Any understanding of spiritual warfare must start with acceptance of God's absolute power and authority over all of creation. 1 Corinthians reminds us: "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it." That means that there is no power, no authority, or ruler that can usurp God's authority.
  - b. Being strong in the Lord and in his mighty power means that
    - i. **We know the authority of the Lord.** He is omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, infinite, and incomprehensible.
    - ii. **We know the power of the Lord.** The Apostle Paul associates the power of the Lord as "his incomparably great power for us who believe." Ephesians 1:18-22

iii. **We cherish God’s authority and power at work within us.** Ephesians 3:20 - *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.*

V. **2 - We acknowledge our adversary but stand fully persuaded that the greater one lives in us. (v11)**

- a. What perspective should we have regarding our adversary?
  - i. One commentator states that the New Testament focuses on the devil and demons for only *two* purposes, “to say evil and death are defeated, and to warn us not to be enticed by evil. Christians are people who believe Christ has already conquered both.”
  - ii. The proper response to our adversary is to be alert and to have faith
    1. *1 Peter 5:8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*
    2. What are we on alert for? The devils schemes. “Evil rarely looks evil until it accomplishes its goal; it gains entrance by appearing attractive, desirable, and perfectly legitimate. It is a baited and camouflaged trap. As Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 11:14, Satan masquerades as an angel of light.”
  - iii. Overcoming our adversary requires faith
    1. *LUKE 22:31 “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. 32 But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”*

VI. **3 - We have to strategically choose our weapons of warfare (v12)**

- a. People can either be vessels of light or darkness. Fighting against the vessel doesn’t secure the victory. Rather, we wage war against “the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”
- b. *<sup>2</sup>COR 10:3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. <sup>4</sup>The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. <sup>5</sup>We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. <sup>6</sup>And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.*
- c. The world wages war using weapons that gratify the flesh. On the other hand, believers wage war through the power of the Holy Spirit, recognizing that God has a purpose for every battle.

VII. **4 - We have an obligation to always be prepared to engage in spiritual warfare (v13)**

- a. *1 Peter 4:12 – Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. We shouldn’t be astonished when the enemy wages war against us. When the battle comes, just know that God has given us all of the weapons to win: the full armor of God.*
- b. God promises that believers can **stand firm** against Satan if they put on the full armor of God.
  - i. Faith teaches us to not be afraid when the devil’s schemes appear. Instead, we must have faith in God’s ability to sustain us through the battle.
  - ii. The spiritual warfare in which we find ourselves may be frightening, however, “the one who is in you [Jesus], is greater than the one [Satan] who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).
- c. We have been given the full armor of God so that “[we] may be able to stand [our] ground”
  - i. To “stand” connotes strength, stability, and success in a conflict or difficulty.
  - ii. We have to stand our ground against the enemy who is trying to take ownership of what God has already promised and given to us.

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- 1) Share a feat that required a lot of physical strength from you.
- 2) As you reflect back on last weekend's sermon, what one principle or insight stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful or difficult to grasp? Were you challenged in any area of your personal walk with God?
- 3) Any understanding of spiritual warfare must start with acceptance of God's absolute power and authority over all of creation. **Read** Ephesians 1:18-22; Psalms 135:6; 2 Chronicles 20:6; Colossians 1:16. How do the scriptures describe God's absolute power? Do you believe in God's absolute power? If not, share why.
- 4) What is the impact of God's authority and power at work within the lives of believers. How does it differentiate believers from unbelievers?
- 5) Often the enemy will try to convince people that he does not exist, in order to lure people into a false sense of security. What should be the believer's perspective regarding our adversary? How do we balance acknowledgement of his existence without being consumed with him?
- 6) What are the schemes of the devil? How do we recognize when those schemes are in operation? How does knowing the truth enable us to avoid the devil's schemes?
- 7) Pastor Joseph shared that "We have an obligation to always be prepared to engage in spiritual warfare." How prepared are you for spiritual warfare? What promise does God give us in Ephesians 6:10-13 regarding the outcome of spiritual warfare for believers?