

EPHESIANS

LIVING (THE) GOSPEL

Sermon 12 – Ephesians 6:10-24 “Put-on”

1. A war!

- a. Did you know we are in such a war? What do you make of it?
- b. From the sermon: “in a **modern technological world**, belief in such **supernatural evil beings** is almost **impossible**.” Discuss.
- c. What difference does *knowing* about the battle, make?

[It's important to note that Jesus won a decisive victory over the evil one at the cross. See for example Colossians 2:13-16. However, before that victory is seen in its fullness, the evil one is still engaged in a battle already lost.]

2. How does this play out?

- a. The main field of war or battleground is our mind and thought-life. Sometimes we react so quickly that we don't even stop to think what we're doing... how can we slow down the processing?
- b. Share with the group (if you feel able!) what you consider might be the evil forces' most easy weapon in your life? (i.e. what is the temptation you most commonly fall for?)
- c. Doubting God's goodness or his love or his ability to act, or whether he really cares or is even there, is another tactic. When have you been tempted to doubt God's goodness?

3. The armour

- a. Paul exhorts us to be strong and then us what God has given us to ensure we can be strong. There are six items: briefly discuss the significance of each:
 - a. Belt of truth
 - b. Breastplate of righteousness
 - c. Feet fitted with the readiness (or fixedness) that comes from the gospel of peace
 - d. Shield of faith
 - e. Helmet of salvation
 - f. Sword of the spirit
- b. What did Mark/Chris suggest sums up what this armour is about and how do we use it? [Clue from the sermon: *When we grasp hold of the gospel and are grasped by it – when we grasp hold of Jesus and are grasped by him, we will stand.*]
- c. *EXTRA*: Paul says this is the armour of God, and in the Old Testament – we see where God (or Messiah) uses it: see Isaiah 59:15-17 and Isaiah 11:3-5.

4. A life of prayer

- a. To tempt us not to pray, must be an area of huge effectiveness for the forces of evil. He wants to keep us from praying; to convince us we are self-sufficient, to sow seeds of doubt about the reality or efficacy of prayer. So how can we develop prayer as is described in v18?
- b. “The hardest thing for me in prayer is....?”

How will you endeavour to stay strong in God's mighty power as a result of this passage?

Review the outline of the whole series. What has been most helpful for you from this series?

Date: 24 June 2018
Services: 730, 930, Tewantin and Peregian
Series: Ephesians: Living (the) Gospel
Passage: Ephesians 6:10-24
Title: Slaves-masters

INTRODUCTION

- I suspect that for **most** of the **time**, most of us think of our lives as **extraordinarily, ordinary**; filled up **unbelievably mundane things**.
 - Cast your minds back over how you've spent this **weekend**: there was no doubt a fair amount of **sleep** where you did precisely **not much**; there was time spent in the **bathroom**; perhaps you did some **chores** around the house; perhaps you had to go into **work**, or perhaps more boringly, you had to do some **housework** or an **assignment**; perhaps you went out **last night**; but all in all it was hardly something that would be **worth writing up**.
 - In fact **nothing** you **did**, really **mattered** in the **grand scheme** of **things**.
 - I suspect that is how we **usually think**.
 - And **mostly** - that's **right** isn't it?
 - You are **one person** among around **7 billion** on the **planet**. Your **arrival** sparked no particular large **celebrations**, and your **departure** will not leave the world significantly **depleted**.
 - We are basically **very little people** in a **very very big world**.
 - **That's just the way things are**.
 - And **because** of this, I might as well get about my **business**, and make the **best** of things... acquire all the **necessities** and the odd **luxury** that I can afford; **accumulate** all the **experiences** and **sometimes extravagances**... that I am able. /
 - To love a **reasonable circle** of **family** and **friends** and be **loved by them**. ///
 - I want to suggest to you today, that this approach to life is **dangerous**. **Very** dangerous. //
 - It is to completely to **mistake** the **nature** of life this side of **eternity**.
 - Your life may **seem insignificant**, and rather **mundane** at times... but don't be **fooled** -
 - ...you are in the middle of
1. A **WAR**...
- Have a look with me at 6:10 *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armour 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.*
 - From the **cradle** to the **grave**, life is **war**. And all of us here this **morning** - both **corporately** and **individually** - are in the **middle** of it.
 - It's not a **picnic** for you to **relax in**, it's not a **competition** for you to **beat** other people in, it's not a **soap opera** for you to be **entertained** by; it's a **WAR**.
 - Your **soul**, your **mind**, your **family**, your **studies**, your **career**, **every aspect** of your life is a **field of conflict** until **Satan** is finally thrown into the **lake of fire**! //
 - But notice that our war is not against enemies of **blood** and **flesh**.
 - Our struggle is against "**supernatural evil powers**."
 - [In other words what he is saying is, if you **THINK** the battles you are **fighting** are against- say your **boss** who's giving you a lot of **grief**, or your **friend** you has **hurt** you so that you are no

longer **friends**, or just against someone that you frankly **dislike**, then you have **already lost**. Because you are fighting the **wrong battle**.

- We discovered in 2:1ff – that in our pre-Christ life, we were **following** the “**ruler of the power of the air...**” until **Christ intervened** and **rescued** us...
- it’s hardly **surprising** then, that that **same power** still **opposes** us... ! //
- Now belief in such **supernatural evil beings** is not very **common** these days... we’re too **sophisticated** to believe in that stuff...
- ...that there are **intentional spiritual forces at work** whose intentions are to **oppose** the **work of God** in **whatever** way they **can** – is not something we give much **thought** to!
- But Jesus from the **outset** battled **against** evil spirits...
- And the apostle Paul says here that they are **powerful** – “**rulers and authorities and powers**” ...
- they are **evil** – they **rule** the **evil forces** in the **heavenly places** – that is, in the **sphere of invisible reality**.
- And they are **cunning**... the translation speaks of the schemes of the devil – they plot against us in ways we do not detect.
- **SO LIFE IS WAR!**
- It is a war against spiritual enemies – not flesh and blood enemies...

2. So - HOW DOES THIS PLAY OUT?

- What does the war look like, on a **day to day basis**?
- I don’t think we meant to start ‘**seeing**’ **demons** sitting out on the **electricity** wires keeping company with the **possums**.
- No – the **warfare** we are talking about is much more **personal** than that.
- CS Lewis’ *Screwtape letters*... are a **marvellous** read on this point... imaginary letters from a senior devil to a junior devil. Underlying the **letters** and **genre** is a very **serious understanding** of the **nature** of **spiritual warfare**.
- The **primary** delivery method of **attack** that the **devil** uses is our thoughts – and - the **intentions** and **motivations** of our **heart** – the suggestions that come to into our minds from **time to time**.
- Sometimes just **crazy** thoughts come to **mind** – that is the work of the **evil one** – the **work of temptation**.
- The **warfare** we are engaged in is **primarily** the warfare of temptation.
- Just think of what we’ve been **challenged** with over the last few weeks... and we’ll see that it’s no **accident** that Paul **finishes** here where he **does**...
- So although we’re told to be completely **humble** and **gentle, patient**, bearing with one another in love so that we might keep the unity of the Spirit – someone does something at church we’re not **happy** with – and instead of gently **talking** about it with them – we’re tempted to **mouth off** about them - to someone **else** – **behind their backs!** And the **evil powers** and **authorities** give each other **high fives**.
- Or has happened in a church I know of around a decade ago - an email exchange between a minister and a parishioner got out of hand – and instead of **someone** pouring a bucket of cold water over it, it escalated to the point of a **libel suit** in the supreme court! **And no matter what the details are and who is at fault** – without a **doubt**, the **unity** of the **Spirit** was **fractured**. **More high fives**.
- Or you find yourself in some **trouble** or **embarrassment** and a brilliant idea for a **cover up** comes to mind... and without even **thinking it through**, you’ve **failed** to speak **truthfully**.

- Or someone in your family has made you **angry** – and there's no way **you're** going to **back down!** - so there is **bitterness, rage and anger....**
- You **wife** has done something to upset you and you raise your voice in **anger...** and so you've **failed** to love her as **Christ** loved the **church...**
- Your son is driving you **crazy** – so you **think** that's easily a good excuse to drive **him** crazy – and – no, you haven't even stopped to **think** about it – you've just **done** it! You've **exasperated** him.
- [you're a teenager living at home and Mum and dad are really being excessively unreasonable – so instead of **obedience** – you've chosen to ignore them – and, no –you didn't even **stop** to **think** – you just got **mad** – and the **spiritual forces** of evil think they've done **a great job!**]
- [You're looking for a new **car** – and you've spent from **morning** tea till **lunch** at www.drive.com.au – on your **boss's time**. Didn't even think about it!]
- **Are you getting the idea? //**
- Or... you **doubt** the **truth** of the Christian life; or you feel crippling **guilt** about **sin** in your life; or you wonder if God can **really love** someone like you... etc etc. Or you are **sick** and you doubt God's ability to get you through... or wonder if he's really paying **attention!** /
- these and a **thousand** other thoughts that well up within in us, constitute the **temptations** - the **attacks** of the **evil one.** //
- **WE ARE IN A WAR.//**
- We've been exhorted to live a **worthy** life. Indeed – to **imitate God**. And the **forces of evil** are working hard to ensure that **doesn't happen!** /

3. THE ARMOUR

- So Paul tells – *be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.*
- *Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.*
- Here is the exciting reality. He does not leave us **unequipped** to **withstand** the **devil's schemes**.
- And his **firm** conclusion is that you **will** be able to stand against the **schemes** of the **devil!**
- So **if** your aim is to **persevere** in the Christian life and not be **defeated** by the **schemes** of the devil, then you will need to put on the **armour** he **describes**.
- This is how he keeps us **safe** for the day of **salvation**.
- Notice that it is **God's** armour... not just in the sense that he **provides** it – but also in the sense that **he himself** – and the **Messiah** are pictured in **Isaiah** as using some of the **same elements**.
- The images may have come from the **soldiers** guarding him; as he's **writing** or **dictating** – he's looking the soldiers **up** and **down**.
- And they are all the things we need for our **fight**; we can't afford to leave any **off** ...
- and the point is not so much what they do **individually** – but what they do **together**.
- Let's have a **look** and see what we can **make** of the **description**:
- There are **six items**
 1. **Belt of truth** – the fact that the gospel – that **Jesus** is **true** – holds **everything together...**
 2. **Breastplate of righteousness** – being confident that **God** has made us **right** with him... for when Satan tries to tell us we'll never be good enough...
 3. **Feet fitted with the readiness from the gospel of peace** –the word 'readiness' here is better translated '**fixedness**'. Its putting shoes on that **won't slip**. Its taking a **stand** on the **gospel** and standing **firm** in **that**.

4. **Shield of faith** – this is **trusting God**, no matter is difficulties come our way – so that when Satan whispers – “you don’t think God’s interested in **you** do you?”, you trust God is FOR you!
5. **Helmet of salvation** – confidence that we are **saved** by God’s **grace and mercy**... when the **evil one** wants to weigh us down with guilt...
6. **Sword of the spirit** – i.e. the **Word of God** – he has given us his word – his word about Jesus – and we are to be **immersed in it**... that will help us **stand firm** – as it helped Jesus himself stand firm in his battle with the devil in **Matthew 4!** // **Armed** with the **sword** – we’ll know more and more of God’s **will** and our very **hearts** will be transformed so we’ll instantly recognise the devil’s schemes when we see them.

- I think the **best** way of understanding the armour is **confidence** in the **gospel**. For if we are **joyfully confident** in the **gospel**; if we are confident in who Christ **is** and what he has **done**; then we will be a **good position** to **stand firm** against the **devil’s schemes**.
- **And if we’ve convinced** and **confident** that it is **true**; we’ll be all the more committed to living a **worthy life**...
- What Paul is saying is this – you are engaged in a **spiritual battle** in **every part** of your **life** – but he has given us his **armour**, he’s given us the **gospel** and when we grasp the **gospel** and are grasped by the **gospel**, then we will **stand**.
- ...when we grasp hold of **Jesus** and are **grasped by him**, we will **stand**.

4. A LIFE OF PRAYER

- One final **instruction** – the life of **prayer**
- v18 *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.*
- *Pray in the spirit.* That is – the **Holy Spirit** who lives in your **heart**. Pray in **relationship** with **him**. **Depending on Him, calling on him**.
- Notice the **comprehensive** nature of this exhortation: pray on **all** occasions with **all** kinds of **prayers** and **requests**... for **me** says Paul – and **all the saints** – i.e. **all God’s people**.
- Now it seems to me that we pray **some** times, with **some** degree of perseverance for **some** people. Replace those ‘**somes**’ with ‘**all**’ – and you see a whole **different** dimension of **prayer** and **victory** in the spiritual battle.
- Peter O’Brien (commentator): “Prayer is the **atmosphere** we are to **breathe** as we engage in this spiritual struggle. A **life of dependence** on God in **prayer** is **essential** if we are to engage **successfully** with the **powers of darkness**.”
- This is a **very practical** point.. don’t you think that if you lived more **consciously** in the **presence** of **God** – and were **praying**... much more regularly... **constantly in tune** with **God**... then when **temptation** came along – you’d be much more **aware** of it and **ready** for it? Of course! //
- **THERE IS A WAR ON.**
- One of the devil’s schemes is to get you to think there is **not** a war on. Then you’ll be **unprepared**.
- And Paul in this passage wants us to know about the **war** AND know **how to stand** and **stay standing**... **by being clear and confident in the gospel** and **by being a person of prayer**
- Friends – **BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN HIS MIGHTY POWER!**

Post script

Series wrap

- Let me remind you where what we've seen these past weeks as we've worked our way through this marvellous letter...
- Over January – we saw God's great plan in the universe is to bring everything wonderfully unified under the reign of Jesus Christ.
- And then we saw that that in turn means:
 1. That we are to know God
 2. That he has saved by us by grace – through Jesus' death
 3. That by breaking down the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile through Jesus' death, he has made one **new humanity**
 4. That we now have **confident freedom** to approach him
 5. And how Paul longs us to know the limitless nature of **God's love...**
 6. ...and to **grow up** into Christ
 7. ...and to **imitate God...**
 8. And to **live** in the **light**
 9. And for wives and husbands to **love** each other
 10. And for children to **obey** and **parents** to **raise** their **children in relationship with Jesus**
 11. And that in the work place, whether employee or employer, we are to know that our **Master in heaven** is watching us...
 12. And the in the **war** which is the context in which we now live... we are to put on the **armour** God has **provided** and **through** that armour to be **strong** in the Lord and in his **mighty power!!**