

Streetsville United Church
Sunday, September 20, 2009
Rev. John Tapscott

"STAND, THEREFORE... - Part 2 of 2"

Ephesians 6:10-20

My 2 part sermon series is based on Ephesians 6:10-20. Recall that the apostle Paul was in a Roman prison when he wrote this letter. And that helps us understand the imagery he used. Paul writes in 6:10, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power." And Paul tells us why we must be strong in the Lord. It's so we can stand. Verse 11: "Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand..." Verse 13 "...take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm." Verse 14, "Stand therefore."

Last week I said that we can apply this exhortation in five ways. Stand out; stand on; stand against; stand for, and stand with. Last week we spoke of the first two. "Stand therefore Christians, stand out. In the strength and the power of the Lord stand out as Christ-followers in this secular culture." And secondly, "Stand therefore, Christians, stand on. In the strength and power of the Lord stand on the firm foundation of faith that God has given us."

Now here's the third application. **"Stand therefore Christians, stand against. In the strength and the power of the Lord, stand against."** There are powers we must resist and stand against, not in our own strength, but in the strength and the power of the Lord.

Some years ago Japanese soldiers were found hiding out in the jungles of Burma, years after World War 2 ended. They didn't know the war was over. Some people today don't know there's a war on. And if you don't then you're going to lose it. Paul reminds us that we're in a spiritual battle. "Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against the enemies of flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of the present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore..."

You see, we are not standing against people, though the power of evil can and does use people for its ends. We are standing against the power of evil which

gets into people and even into us, sometimes.

One theologian suggests that the Devil's craftiest move has been to persuade us that he does not exist. Yes, we can throw out the Halloween image of the Devil with horns and hooves and a fork, but we must still consider him a tremendous reality. Jesus did. He spoke often of Satan and knew the full power of his attacks. Peter writes in his 1st letter, "Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." The evil one is intelligent, unscrupulous and crafty. He is the father of lies, often appearing as an angel of light, but distorting God's truth ever so slightly. Beyond question there is a power of evil in the world seeking to undermine God's purposes and plans.

Stand therefore, Christians, stand against the power of the evil one. In the strength and power of the Lord stand against that which is against God; stand against that which destroys life and undermines what is good. Stand against rampant secularism - that view that life is possible, perhaps even better, without God or faith. Stand against the political correctness which considers truth relative, and refuses to make distinctions between good and bad, right and wrong.

Two things are in our favour as we stand. One is the victory of Christ. The evil one did his very worst to Christ, working through, listen, not evil men, but through good and well-intentioned people, to nail Jesus to the Cross. When Jesus's body was sealed in the tomb, the devil celebrated. But then the Father raised his Son to be alive forevermore. Christ is the Victor. The power of evil, though a real and present force, will not ultimately prevail. The love of God in Jesus Christ will prevail. God's purposes may be slowed but cannot be stopped. To stand with Christ is to stand on the victory side.

And secondly God has given us armour so that we can stand against. Paul says, "Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

A firefighter named Ron says that firefighters remind one another constantly to wear all their protective gear. They won't let one another go to a fire without it. One night, even though it was a minor fire, they told each other to put on all their equipment. Things seemed under control as they sprayed water and foam over a burning car. But then the car exploded. Flaming debris flew in the men's faces, and no one was hurt, because they were wearing all their protective gear. Ron is a Christian as well as a firefighter. And he says that just as a firefighter needs the full gear, we need the whole armour of God to stand against the evil one. Look, when we come to worship, it's not just for entertainment. This is getting ready time. This is when we put on the armour for the coming week. Paul

was very close to the soldier guarding him in jail. So he compared the soldier's armour to that which God gives us to put on. First, there is "belt of truth." Then there is the "breastplate of righteousness." Truth and right living are critical to standing against the evil one. There are "shoes for your feet", signifying our readiness to share the Gospel. There is "the shield of faith" and the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. Here in worship we put on the full armour of God. And this armour is held in place by daily Bible reading and prayer. "Stand therefore, Christians, stand against...in the power and strength of the Lord stand against the power of evil that distorts and destroys."

That brings us to the next point. **"Stand therefore Christians, stand for...in the strength and power of the Lord stand for."**

It's never enough to stand against. Politicians have this problem, especially those in opposition. It's fairly easy to criticize and stand against, but eventually they have to say what they stand for.

Last week, I spoke about the things that we stand on, and they are also the things we stand for, the faith once delivered to the saints and passed on to us through the church. We stand on the solid foundation of received Christian faith, grounded in Scripture and summarized in the historic creeds. This is what we stand on and stand for - faith in God the Holy Trinity - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We stand on and for the authority of Scripture. We stand for the necessity of the church. We stand for what is right and good in God's sight. We stand for the values of God's Kingdom which Jesus outlined in his Sermon of the Mount. This is dynamite that turns our lives and the world upside down. This is what the Kingdom of God is like, the Kingdom that is coming in its fullness and breaks into the world even now. This is what we Christians are becoming now by God's grace and what we will be in God's Kingdom. "Stand therefore, Christians, stand for. In the strength and power of the Lord stand for the values of God's Kingdom."

And let's be sure we are willing to pay the cost of what we stand for. Willingness to pay the cost shows that we really stand for what we say we stand for. We say, "We stand against rampant secularism and we stand for the church and for faith in God and in Christ." Well, great, and that means that you put your time, your resources, your money, your efforts behind making the church and its mission strong in the community. You work and give so that the Gospel of Christ is proclaimed and spread here and around the world. We say, "We believe in a fairer distribution of God's bounty for all God's children." Great, and that means we are willing to give of our resources and our energy to make it happen. We say, "We stand for the authority of God's word." Great, and that means you are willing to take time to read the Bible and study it with others and obey it." "Stand therefore, Christians, stand for what God stands for." And the Lord gives us the

strength and the power to do just that.

Finally this, **“Stand therefore, Christians, stand with. In the strength and power of the Lord, stand with one another in the church.”**

Paul was in prison, separated from his churches. Now he wasn't completely separated from Christians since he worked to convert his guards and make them friends. Even in prison he had Christian fellowship! But Paul asked the church to "... persevere in supplication for all the saints. Pray also for me... so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains."

In other words, Paul was saying, "Stand with me and stand with one another in the church. In the strength and the power of the Lord, stand with one another." Christians have a personal faith, but it is not a solitary faith. Our common faith gives us fellowship with one another. We pray for one another; we support one another in the church; when one of our members or groups organizes some activity, we try if we can, to support it. We join with one another in small groups for Christian study and service. We don't always agree with one another on every issue, but we support and help one another in good times and bad. You and I are members of the Body of Christ, because God has put us here. People seem to quit the Body of Christ so easily - because they didn't get their way on some decision, or because they didn't like the colour of the choir's new gowns, or because the minister preached a challenging sermon from God's word, or because someone wasn't friendly to them one day or failed to say thank you. How trivial these excuses will sound when we stand before the King of Glory and give an account of ourselves. Look, the church isn't perfect and neither are you, but you need the church and the church needs you. "Stand therefore, Christians, stand with one another. The Lord is strengthening us to stand with one another."

Why do we stand with one another? It's because God gives us strength and power to stand. But it's also because the Lord stands with us. Despite our sin and the fact that we're a long way from what we shall be, Jesus has made a promise to all who profess faith in Him. "I will never fail you or forsake you," he says. Jesus loves you. He gave himself for you and for me. Jesus stands with his people and with his church. In times of triumph and joy, in times of struggle and opposition, Jesus stands with us. And on that final day when you stand before God and all of your works are nothing but filthy rags, He will stand with you. Jesus will say to his Father, "This man, this woman, is with me." The Father will look at his Son, see his pierced hands, then look back at you, see you clothed by faith with his Son's righteousness, and say to you, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of Your Master." "Stand therefore, Christians, in the strength and power of the Lord stand with one another, because the Lord stands with you."