

Introduction:

Good Morning! My family has been away, we had a chance to head to BC to visit my Dad and stepmom. And it was such a great time for us to spend together, and also, it was Toby's first big road trip! We had a ton of stuff to pull together and Andrea was so awesome in making it all come to fruition. It was a very big milestone for us, and we praise God for the opportunity.

On the drive back, I was listening to Paul's message from last Sunday service. And I noticed that he shared a song and sang, which was such a great touch. He raised the bar. So this week, I know it's not a competition, but to try to keep up, I've decided to share the entire message today in song format. And it starts when I was in high school. "*Once upon a time...*" *jk!*

ME:

- I almost started a fight once. The worst part was that I was after the wrong person!
- I was really mad. This guy was touching my girlfriend and making her uncomfortable. I was a young Christian and got fired up. So I went looking!
- But if I had fought that fight, I would've been punching the wrong target.
- I should have been fighting on my knees
- The Bible says we need to love our enemies.
- Yes, stopping the behaviour through appropriate channels is important, and at the same time we should be seeking justice and consequences, we should be praying for the redemption of the person.

The person in front of you is not your enemy—they're the prize. The real enemy is behind them. If you shoot them, you've lost both the battle and the prize.

WE:

- We do this all the time. We pick fights with...
 - politics, teachers, coworkers, bad drivers, family.
- We try to fight sin by attacking sinners.
- We think: "If I can just fix them, I'll win the battle."
- Its frustrating because we can never win the war against sin. For every sinner we put in their place, another person sins in their place.
- But what if we've got the wrong target in our sights?
- What if we're misfiring and hitting allies instead of enemies?
- Ephesians 6 says—we've been trying to fight on the wrong battlefield.

If we don't adjust our aim, we'll keep winning arguments but losing people.

Turn to Ephesians chapter 6:10-20

GOD:

Ephesians 6:10-20

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. 14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. 16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; 17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, 18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, 19 and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

- Notice the battle is not against flesh & blood: Not your boss, not your spouse, kids, one another in the church, or a politician
- Remember, God is building the church. He's brought two people together (Jews & Gentiles), he wants us to abandon sin, and embrace love for one another in mutual submission. He gives three examples of common relationships where we are prone to fight, and how they should submit to one another. Then he says - our battle is not against flesh and blood.
- People are not the enemy - evil is.
- Paul is not saying that there's never conflict with people, rather he is saying don't mistake a person for the true enemy.
- So, first you need to adjust your aim. Stop aiming at people, and aim at the true enemy.

How do we adjust our aim?

1. Know your weapons (truth, righteousness, gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the scriptures and prayer)
2. Know your allies (the church – don't shoot at your team!)
3. Know your enemy (Not people, but evil)
4. Stand firm (Your aim is more steady when you are firmly planted)

Of course we have to zoom in on the armor here – not the armor metaphor, but how it fits within Paul's overall message of unity in the church under Christ.

Truth — Eph 4:25

“Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor.” Lies tear the church apart. Truth builds it together. We aim for truth, not rumors.

Righteousness — Eph 4:24

“Put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”

Righteousness isn't you trying harder, it's Jesus remaking you. The new self that you put on is the likeness of Christ

Gospel of Peace — Eph 2:14

“For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.” The gospel doesn't just give peace, it is peace. When Jesus is breaking down walls, why are we building them up again?

Faith — Eph 3:16–17

“That according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power... so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” Every flaming arrow is a lie – it's fear. Faith doesn't dodge them, it puts them out.

Salvation — Eph 2:8–9

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.” Salvation is not earned—it's received. The enemy can't steal it and it leads us to show grace to one another.

Scripture — Eph 1:13 “In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.” The Word isn't just information, it revelation that arms you and cuts lies wide open.

Prayer — Eph 3:16

“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit...” Prayer is not small talk -it's powerful access to the God who can do more than we can ask or imagine! When the church prays, the Holy spirit strengthens and darkness breaks.

Our fight is against cosmic powers over this present darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

You will never win a spiritual war with earthly weapons. So stop swinging at people and start standing against darkness!

YOU:

WE:

- We are not done with this passage yet.
- **There is a battle to be fought. Matt 16:18**

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

- Gates are defensive, which means the church is ultimately on the offensive.
- And for those of us who don't like fighting, pacifism is not the same as apathy. Pacifism can be about standing up for justice and righteousness, but not using physical violence.
- **One of the great shames of the North American Church is our apathy.**
- **We are all talk and not action. But imagine, if just us, just our little church family, continued to really strive for this (vision statement on the wall)
I don't want to be a bystander while God does cool things around me, I want to participate!**
- Imagine if we treated each other with love grace and dignity and avoided trying to tear one another down – especially as the church!
- **And instead, we acted in a way that took ground away from Satan and brought more of God's kingdom to earth.**

The great news is that we already see this happening here. So share them!

How have you seen God at work lately?

Gospel Call:

- Gospel – Without this armor, you are not defenseless, you are defeated. If you don't know Jesus as your savior, and you want to, it's very simple:
 - you were created for a life and relationship with God. To be loved by him, to belong in his family, and to live your purpose.
 - you have separated yourself from God because your sin. Sin is your rebellion against God. The result is a death that cuts you off from God. As lawbreakers, justice has to be done, and we can't die and live to talk about it.
 - However, God doesn't leave us, he rescued us by sending Jesus to the cross. He died in our place.
 - So that by acknowledging him as our savior, turning from our sin to instead follow Jesus and

his ways, we can be made alive through Jesus!
Forgiven, equipped, empowered, and secured.

- If you've been fighting the battles of life on your own, you must be tired. You don't have armor and you are exposed. You can stop and trust Jesus today.

Let's pray.

Benediction

Truth. Righteousness. Peace. Faith. Salvation. The Word. Prayer. Paul's not giving us new tricks—he is sharing with us everything he has already declared in the letter: You are chosen, you are saved, you are one in Christ.

Aim these at darkness, not at each other, and the church will stand.

Ephesians 3:20

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.