

Text: Ephesians 6:10-20
Theme: Are You Ready?

August 26, 2018

How many minutes a day do you spend getting ready for work or the activities of the day? If you added all those minutes together, how many minutes would you spend each month getting ready? How many hours would you spend in a year? We spend hours every month simply getting ready. But how many minutes a day do we spend getting ready to engage in battle, getting ready to fight against the devil and all his cohorts? As we look at our text, Paul, in essence says, "Are you ready?"

I. Although we are chosen by God, we need to be ready. A. But why do we need to be ready for battle? 1. We need to be ready because the battle is real. Paul says, "For we wrestle against rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." You see, the devil isn't engaging in imaginary battles. He's out to destroy your faith, to drag you off into eternal death. He doesn't care about what's fair or right. His only goal is to win no matter what the cost. As each new day arrives on this side of heaven, the devil is ready to destroy your soul if he's given the chance.

2. We need to be ready because our eternity depends on it. When the Brewers or the Packers lose a game, does it have any effect on where you spend eternity? If you lose the battle against the devil, everything changes in eternity. Suddenly, we will face intense fear and terror because, if the devil wins, hell is our eternal home. Our world may poo, poo the devil and any talk about hell and others may say, "If God is a kind and love God, He wouldn't send anybody to hell," but don't believe any of that for a moment. If you lose the battle, it won't be God sending you to hell, It will be you choosing to step over Christ and the cross to get there.

B. Aware of our need, how do we engage in battle? We engage by acknowledging the existence of the battle. That sounds almost silly, doesn't it? Do we really need someone to tell us that we need to admit that the battle exists? Paul answers the question as he says, "Take up the whole armor of God." If it were obvious, Paul wouldn't tell us. To engage, we need to tell ourselves every day that there's a battle waiting for us outside those doors and our battle isn't on the football field between the Packers and Vikings. It's right in your face and you can't afford to ignore it. Only when we acknowledge the battle will we prepare for that battle.

2. We engage by seeking strength from our God. "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might," Paul writes. Suppose the Brewers were playing the Medford Little League team. What would happen? We rely on the strength God provides because we're on the little league team in the big league game against the devil. If God isn't on our side, we don't have a chance. To be ready for battle, we rely on God, trust in God, lean on our God, and believe with all our heart that God can, that we can't but God can enable us to engage and to win the battle, the ugly battle that seeks to destroy our faith and our promise of eternal life in heaven.

3. We engage by declaring the truth. Paul says, "Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." What cripples the power of the devil most effectively? It's the Word of God. The devil knows he can't stand against God's Word. "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." There's the power to destroy the devil. To that powerful statement we can add many others, "Lo, I am with you always." "Be strong

and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged for I will be with you wherever you go." The truth of God's Word - it leaves the devil with nothing to stand on.

4. We engage by standing watch. Paul speaks of both standing and keeping alert because he knows the value of both. Years ago when I was on vicarage, my intern year at the seminary, I was in Davison, MI, car manufacturing country at that time. I remember someone saying that one guy's job at the plant was to put in the dipsticks and once he had his quota in for the day, he went and took a nap and another guy kept watch until his shift ended and woke him up to go home. That sounds pathetic, but Paul tells us, "Don't be sleeping on the job. Keep watch. Be that watchman in the tower looking for the enemy because he's out there ready to attack!"

5. We engage by clinging to our faith. "In all circumstances, take up the shield of faith." Not once in a while or when we feel like it, but every moment of every day we cling to our faith. Suppose you were hanging onto a rope 50 feet off the ground. What would happen if you held on most of the time? In all circumstances, we must cling, we must hold on for dear life because the devil, who prowls around like a roaring lion, is waiting for us to give up on God, to let go of our faith because God isn't doing what we want Him to do. As we engage, we hold on, we cling to that faith no matter what because we know our life depends on it.

6. We engage by being fervent in prayer. Paul says, "Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication." How often? Accessing whose power? Often our mode of operation is fervent in crises and fickle in the good times. But when is the devil most likely to attack? Fickle prayers open the door for the devil to wreak havoc, to play his little games which aren't little games at all. We can't afford to give the devil even so much as a foothold. Fervent, unwavering, convinced God will answer, determined God will come through - that's prayer, the kind of praying that keeps us connected to our God and disconnected from the grasp of the devil.

7. We engage by continuing to stand. "And having done all, to stand." What's the goal of a boxer? It's not only to put the other guy on the floor. It's to keep yourself on your feet. Paul says, "Continue to stand. Don't sit there and do nothing. Don't be sitting in the grandstands daydreaming about tomorrow, or thinking you've got it all under control because if you're not standing, the devil is already calling the count." Some days, we want to sit, we want to toss in the towel and say, "I give up." But our God keeps saying, "I am with you. I will strengthen you and lift you up. I will empower you. Just don't you quit!"

8. Every month, we spend hours simply getting ready for work or the activities of the day. Yet as we're getting ready and in every other hour of our day, Paul asks the question, "Are you ready, ready to engage in battle?" Amen.