Stowe Church : Sunday August 25th

Ephesians Chapter 6 verses 10 – 20

In this well known passage we read this morning from Ephesians Chapter 6 is Paul is bringing together what he has been saying thus far in his letter. Calling the church to take up the challenge of living for Christ and living in the light as he sets out in chapters 4 and 5.

But let’s have a quick look at the bigger picture Paul is setting out.

In Chapter 1 verses 9 – 10 Paul says :

“ He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to his good pleasure which He purposed in Christ, to put into effect when the times have reached their fulfillment- to bring all things in heaven and earth together under one head even Christ

And in Chapter 2

“ The power which He exerted in Christ when he raised him for the dead and seated Him at his right hand in the heavenly realms far above all rule and authority , power and dominion and every title that can be given not only in the present age but in the age to come “

We are looking here at the ultimate reconciliation and unity in Christ which will happen when Jesus comes again. In one sense this is Genesis 1 -11 in reverse, from the disaster and complete breakdown of human life and relationships as sin and evil entered Gods creation Paul gives a vision of reconciliation and unity when Jesus comes again heralding in God’s new creation. This is only achieved through the death and resurrection of Jesus

But Paul is very clear in this passage that until that ultimate victory we are involved in a spiritual battle. What is this battle?

We first need to answer the question do we actually believe in evil, that there are dark forces at work in the world. Paul says we are fighting against the rulers against the authorities, against the powers that rule the world in this dark time and against the wicked spiritual elements in heavenly places.

This might sound like Star Wars but Paul sees this vision of God’s kingdom in a battle with the kingdom of darkness and it is very real. The Jewish and Gentile Christians he was addressing were surrounded by the worship of gods such a Diana seen as the queen of all heavenly power with all the evil practices and sinful life choices that involved including magic, the stars and the occult

And this struggle against evil continues. We all face our own temptations, large and small as we strive to be faithful followers of Jesus surrounded by this alien world which Paul is describing

So how does Paul help those in Ephesus and us to deal with this battle

Stand your ground

Paul sees we are engaged in a particular battle

In the armour that Paul goes on to talk about he has omitted attack weapons .Paul sees this army as one in a strong battle position

Take you stand verse 11

Stand your groupd verses 13

Stand firm verse 14

The army is standing on high ground and the enemy is desperately trying to remove it. This is where we stand as God’s people and we are called to stand firm Why are we on the high ground ?

Because we are in union with Jesus, key message in Ephesians

Because Jesus is the head of all things, including all principalities and powers

Because we have the resurrection power of Jesus working in the life of the church

The victory has been won but the final and complete end of evil and evil forces is yet to happen so we remain on guard

Key point to remember– we have the victory

So how do we defend ourselves

Paul tells us put on the armour of God

Armour of God

 Paul come up with this visual aid probably from seeing a Roman soldier but also Paul as an OT scholar would know these verses

“ He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked . Righteousness will be His belt and faithfulness a sash around his waist

Isaiah 11

He put righteousness as His breastplate and the helmet of salvation on his head “

Isaiah 59

Isaiah is describing the armour or protection God himself used

The point Paul is making is God gives His church and believers the same protection He uses, the same armour Jesus used on earth

However Paul stresses that whilst God has given us this armour we have to put it on .

So what is the armour Paul describes

Truth

 – to surround ourselves, wrap ourselves in truth

Jesus said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” The great truths of the Bible—the love of God, salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, the Second Coming, forgiveness of sin, grace and power to live for Jesus—these truths set us free from the enemies lies. Satan would have us believe that we are sinful, lost, and without hope. The truth is that God’s love and salvation has set us free from sin and death.

Peace

We are told to put on the shoes of peace. Footwear is crucial to a soldier, to stand firm ready for battle. Paul in his letter to the Philippians says it is the peace of mind which transcends all understanding that will guard our heart and minds as you live for Christ

And Jesus said “the peace I give you is a gift the world cannot give so don’t be troubled of afraid “

Righteousness .

Paul in Romans says :

God has shown us a way to be right with Him without keeping the requirements of the law as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ “ Romans 3 21-22 )

This fundamental status of believers before the Lord is like a breastplate protecting us from frontal attacks

But we also have to live it out in our every day lives

“For the light within you only produces what is good and right and true (“ Ephesians 5 verse 9 )

Faith

Here the idea of a shield protecting us from the fiery arrows of the enemy Satan who love us let our faith be shook by :

* Feelings of doubt
* Despair at our circumstances when we feel defeated
* Temptation that trips us up again and we feel we have let God down yet again

The writer to the Hebrews says we are to fix our eyes on Jesus who is the author and perfector of our faith. Not to be thrown by how we are feeling at any point in time rather fixing our eyes on the one who never changes.

 Salvation

The helmet protects the head , our minds. When we have a sure knowledge of our salvation, we will not be moved by the enemies deceptions. When we are certain that we are in Christ with our sins forgiven, we will have a peace that nothing can disturb.

In Chapter 4 Paul tells us to let the Spirit renew our minds ,our thoughts and attitudes. This is crucial in working out our salvation , becoming more Christ like in what we think and do.

These five hallmarks of our Christian lives, truth,peace,righteousness,faith and salvation, are underpinned and made real by the word of God and prayer.

 Scripture is crucial to standing firm When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness three times by Satan each time Jesus answered by quoting God’s from the OT scriptures.

* Man shall not live by bread alone
* You must not test the Lord your God
* You must worship the Lord and him only

 We now have the NT as well a treasure trove of God’s promises and guidance

So we need to know our Scriptures so when we have feelings of doubt, temptation and defeat the Spirit can bring to mind the truths that will set us free

And finally we need to stay alert and pray persistently at all times. For Jesus prayer was at the heart of His life and ministry. So it must be for us as well. Christians win battles by prayer

So

Stand firm

Put on the armour of God – the armour of light , the hallmarks of our faith

Let the word of God keep you strong

Stay alert and pray

And always remember we have the victory Amen