**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

 **Living The Victorious Life with God**

 Ephesians 6:10-24

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(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted – New American Standard Bible)

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Here we are, at the end of Paul’s letter to his dear friends in Ephesus, as he writes to them while he is under house arrest in Rome (ca. 61-62 A.D.) awaiting his trial by Caesar (to whom he had appealed as a Roman citizen).

In this letter, they are given details of how to live the life God has planned for them. Obviously, they live in a fallen world that offers a constant barrage of moral choices. We have this environment today. Things have not changed. This is why reading and knowing God’s Word directly applies to our lives today. Fallen human nature has not changed nor has God’s Word. Therefore, Paul writes to them to **put on the full amor of God in order to resist the schemes of the devil.** Paul refers to the prophet Isaiah when he writes.

**Isaiah 11:5** Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins,

And faithfulness the belt about His waist.

**Isaiah 59:17** He put on righteousness like a breastplate,

And a helmet of salvation on His head;

And He put on garments of vengeance for clothing

And wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle.

**Isaiah 52:7** How lovely on the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news,

Who announces peace And brings good news of happiness,

Who announces salvation, And says to Zion, **"Your God reigns!"**

**Ephesians 6:10 - 24**

**10 Finally,**

be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

11 Put on the **full armor of God,**

so that you will be able to **stand firm**

**against the schemes of the devil.**

 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood,

but against the rulers,

against the powers,

against the world forces of this darkness,

against the spiritual forces of wickedness **in** the heavenly places.

13 Therefore,

take up the **full armor of God,**

so that you will be able to resist in the evil day,

and having done everything, to stand firm.

14 Stand firm therefore,

HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, (Isaiah 11:5)

and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, (Isaiah 59:17)

15 and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; (Isaiah 52:7)

16 in addition to all,

taking up the shield of faith

with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

17 And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, (Isaiah 59:17)

and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit,

and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

 In closing, Paul humbles himself and appeals to his friends to pray for his preaching and teaching.

19 and pray on my behalf,

that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth,

to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,

20 for which I am an ambassador in chains;

that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

 We can see here that Paul is going to give his letter to Tychicus to be delivered to the Ephesians. With this letter, Tychicus will tell the congregation in Ephesus about Paul’s condition in Rome. We see Tychicus is a trusted worker in the Lord with Paul. Tychicus is noted in Acts 20:4; Colossians. 4:7; 2 Timothy 4:12; Titus 3:12 as a close companion to Paul who is entrusted in delivering letters that are to be circulated throughout the Church.

21 But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing,

Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord,

will make everything known to you.

 22 I have sent him to you for this very purpose,

so that you may know about us,

and that he may comfort your hearts.

23 Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith,

from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

24 Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love.

**Believers are Sealed in God’s Eternal Promise of Salvation**

**With This Sealing, Believers are Eligible to Put on God’s Armor**

Paul has poured-out his life and soul to them. God spoke through Paul to deliver an eternal message to them. A message of knowing that they are sealed in the promise of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:11- 13), because they believed.

11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, 12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. 13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,

 But remember, the word “belief” is an active verb, denoting not just an agreement statement with God, for the demons also believe in God (James 2:19) but they do not surrender themselves to God or actively pursue the existence He had planned for them from the beginning. When we actively pursue God’s plan for our lives, we seek to equip ourselves with not only the knowledge of God’s Truth but also the spiritual tools needed to live the victorious life to which God has called us in the midst of this fallen world.

Ephesians 1 also states that due to the Ephesian Believers regenerated status with God, they became *predestined* to live the life God had planned for them. Do not be confused with the word “*predestined*”. Predestination is only applied to Believers who have gained God’s approval by faith in exercising their free-will-choice to surrender to God and be reborn of spirit. Believers are people who have chosen to become *predestined* - for God to work in their life. Once a person enters into God’s approval then they access His *predestined* plan. God does not make a person surrender to Him. Non-Believers are not predestined to the same future as Believers. Free-will-choice was demonstrated when God gave Adam a choice not to eat from the forbidden tree (Genesis 2:15-17).

**Only Believers Can Put on the Full Armor of God**

The claim of being a person who Believes in God can be easily made. However, it is my observation in life that when events challenge us. . . that is, “hit the fan” . . . our *real* character shows itself.

We often hear questions made about athletes coming from college and entering the professional ranks concerning the application of their abilities at the professional level. The question is. . . can the athlete who has all the physical attributes, that are visible, still perform under the pressure a professional level brings? The answer to that question is only answered on/in the field of play.

The same question can be asked of Christians, Believers in God. What do professing Christians do when it “hits the fan”? When this fallen world delivers catastrophe and/or bad news? This is why I often qualify the definition of a Believer as someone who has surrendered to God. . . have they surrendered their heart, their soul, to God? If so, then when life challenges come, they can address them the way God has planned. This is when we see the choice to not participate in evil and to pursue forgiveness and not bitter hate, . . . to pray for our enemies, . . . to pursue peace and restoration.

**Believers Can Overcome Challenges Because They Can Put on the Full Armor of God.**

Unfortunately, those who have not surrendered to God cannot put on His armor and they are at constant risk of falling under the schemes of the Devil. . . in fact, they do. We see these “at risk” people all around us pursuing evil. They are powerless to stop themselves. We see this in political leaders and those that vote for them. This is why we have so much evil operating on a national level right in front of us.

Fallen people, who oppose God, do not like the word “evil” as used in the Bible. I see that they do not like the One (God) who classifies good and evil. Fallen people want to classify good and evil for themselves. Evil simply means all things that oppose God and His plan for our lives. Last week, we quoted the prophet Isaiah in detailing those in the fallen world who reclassify good and evil.

**Isaiah 5:20** Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!

Remember, God hates seven things. These seven things can be the headers under which all evil falls.

**Proverbs 6:16-19**

16 There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: 17 Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood, 18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil, 19 A false witness who utters lies, And one who spreads strife among brothers.

 So, we see that if a person wants to know the difference between good and evil, they need to read the Bible. Most things are obvious that are evil, like hatred, unforgiveness, greed and selfish pride. . . all lead to crimes against persons and the illegal taking of property.

**How Does a Person Prevent Evil from Operating in Them?**

 Remember, Deuteronomy 30:6-8 states that God wants a person’s heart to be circumcised then they can follow His commands. The prophet Ezekiel writes that God will give a person a new heart enabling them to walk in His ways only if they will ask Him (Ezekiel 36). A person has to humble themselves to God in order to ask Him to give them a new heart.

Nicodemus comes to Jesus in John 3 inquiring how can He do the things He does. Jesus tells Nicodemus that he has to change.

**John 3:1** Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews;

 2 this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

 3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

 4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

 6 "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

 7 "Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

The change that Jesus is referencing is a total transformation of a person that requires a change in their inner spiritual being. . . in their heart. Jesus tells Nicodemus he has to be reborn of spirit. This is the same as “circumcision of the heart” God speaks to about in Deuteronomy 30:6-8. We see this again in Acts 2:37. . . *Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart (circumcised).* At that point, those Jews became saved and then were able to repent (turn) from their fallen practices in life. They were no longer estranged from God. They became eligible to have God’s Holy Spirit at work in them. They became heirs of the work of Christ on the Cross and received an inheritance to eternal life. They became predestined according to God’s purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will. They were then able to put on the full armor of God to protect them from the schemes of the Devil. **AMEN**