

Stand Your Post

This has been a week of crisis for several of our families and for the world. We've had several people in the hospital, critically ill, fighting for their life. Two men died within 24 hours of each other. We have multiple funerals scheduled for this coming week. We all witnessed the devastating explosion in Beirut, Lebanon. How will that city recover? 600 deaths now in Oklahoma from Covid19, the agonizing decisions for parents and teachers about opening schools, all the division, trying to figure out how to navigate through all of this. I've never seen such a strange time where everything, including the response to the pandemic, has been politicized. I'll be honest with you, preparing sermons I am constantly thinking, "I can't say that because someone will misinterpret that, they'll think I'm supporting that or resisting this, or endorsing that conspiracy theory." It's paralyzing, exhausting and overwhelming. Jesus, help us!

I worked on a sermon Thursday and Friday morning realized that wasn't what the Lord wanted for this morning. I'm going to share what the Lord put in my heart. Not much of a sermon, but I believe it is a word from the Lord for us. Turn to Ephesians 6. Yesterday morning when we got the word about Fred Esch, Sarah said, "I believe we are under some kind of attack." We've been saying that the last few days. We are in a battle. That's what the bible says.

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." I titled this message Stand Your Post. In the military when you have guard duty, you are to stand your post. Take up your position and be on guard. We have a responsibility as believers to stand our post against the devil's schemes the bible says. We are going to have to pray as never before and stand our post. We need intercessors to stand their post. **"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breast plate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit**

on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.” Ephesians 6:10-18

There is a battle going on. The real battle isn't about masks or vaccines or Bill Gates or Dr. Fauci or Joe Biden or Donald Trump, the real battle is about whether Jesus and his word and his kingdom will rule and reign in our heart and life or will someone or something else. The real battle is whether we are going to keep living like Jesus and acting like him and treating people like Jesus wants us to treat them and maintain the priorities of the Kingdom or are we going to act like the devil and embrace the values of this world? Our struggle is not with flesh and blood but there is a spiritual battle to be fought. It's about the kingdom, it's about eternity, it's about the souls of men and women and their eternal destiny. Don't lose sight of what we are ultimately fighting for! Don't lost sight of what matters, of what is eternal, of what is truly important.

One of the ways we are going to battle, one of the keys to overcoming is going to be prayer. Paul says to pray and keep on praying. Be alert and keep on praying. Take your sword, the word of God, stand your post and pray and keep on praying! I want to show you something:

Turn to Nehemiah. This is the story of the Jewish exiles. They've been allowed to return from Babylon to Jerusalem but years later the walls are still not rebuilt. Nehemiah comes to lead the people to rebuild the walls and when he does, opposition begins. Every good work faces opposition. All of us will face it. You can't make a decision without facing some opposition.

In Nehemiah 4 the opposition comes in the form of Sanballat and Tobiah, critics of Nehemiah and the Jews. **“When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria he said, ‘What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble burned as they are?’ Tobiah, the Ammonite who was at his side said, ‘What they are building – if even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!’” Nehemiah 4:1-3**

Opposition comes to all of us, and often just like this, it comes in the form of ridicule and doubt. **Doubt your decisions.** “What are those feeble Jews doing?” It may come in the form of self-doubt. “What am I doing? How is this going to work? What was I thinking? We can't pull this off.” So many decisions being made during this season and it's all unknown. We haven't been this way before. Give yourself and everyone else some grace. Grace over all, remember?

Doubt your ability. “Will they restore their wall?” Can we do this? Can we figure this out? Doubt is rampant. “You can’t overcome this. You can’t bear up under this. You can’t teach under these conditions. You can’t pastor in these conditions. You can’t build with these materials.

Doubt your destiny. “Will they offer sacrifice?” Look at what they are building, how feeble. It’s not the same. We may be back but it’s not the same. Look how frail. Look how different. Where is God in all of this? How is this going to turn out?

Doubt brings discouragement. Nehemiah tells us, **“Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, ‘The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall.’” Nehemiah 4:10** Their strength began to give out. Exhausted. Discouraged. Tired of the doubts, second guessing every decision and their actions and motives being questioned and suspected by others. So much rubble, so much trouble. And then verse 11 tells us their enemies began to threaten them and made plans to infiltrate the lines and kill them in a sneak attack. It was too much. So what do we do?

Nehemiah said, **“They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.” Nehemiah 4:8-9**

Nehemiah did what he knew to do. He prayed and posted a guard. He prayed and called on the Lord for help, intervention, mercy. “Hear us O our God, for we are despised.” Hear us because we’re in trouble. Hear us because we don’t know the way forward. We need your help. We are depending on you. They prayed to their God!

Nehemiah prayed and posted a guard. He records, **“Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows.” Nehemiah 4:13** (Remember the armor of God we read about in Ephesians. The sword of the Spirit is the word of God. Nehemiah called the people to stand their post. Take your weapons, the word of God and stand your post and pray.)

After he looked to see that everyone was in their place, Nehemiah said, **“Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.” Nehemiah 4:14**

From that day on, half of the people worked while the other half were on guard, standing their post. They prayed, they worked, they supported one another. They worked shoulder to

shoulder, family by family working for a common cause, to rebuild the walls and the gates so the city and its inhabitants and the temple of God would be safe from the enemy. They had each others' back. "You watch and I'll work. You watch and I'll pray."

We need to take up the word of God, our sword, stand our post, and pray and intercede. Nehemiah 6:15 tells us the wall was rebuilt in 52 days! When their enemies heard that it was completed, all the surrounding nations lost their self-confidence because they realized the work had been done with the help of God.

I don't know what it's going to look like on the other side of this. I'm not trying to predict. I don't have to. I know how we are going to get through this – by prayer, by putting on the whole armor of God, by praying some more, by holding on to his truth, his word, by praying for each other and building each other up instead of attacking one another and opposing one another. Whatever it looks like on the other side of this, I know Jesus is going to still be with us! And I believe the enemies of God and God's people will have to look and say, God did this! They came through this with the help of their God!

Doubting your decisions? Ask God, he gives wisdom and discernment. Doubting your ability? You can do all things through Christ who gives you the strength. Doubting your destiny? He will cause all these things to work together for good because you love him and are called according to his purpose. Exhausted? "He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak." Isaiah 40:29 Pray and keep on praying that you won't faint Jesus said.

We are going through this together. You aren't alone. So we are going to stand our post and pray for one another. We are going to "Remember the Lord who is great and awesome" and we are going to pray for and fight for our brothers and sisters and for God's will to be done!

I want to ask you to pray. I felt a few weeks ago we were supposed to do this but I was just waiting for the right time. We are going to surround these walls, making a statement that we are going to stand our post and we are going to pray for our church, for our families, for our city, our nation, our world, for the hurting, the sick, the dying and grieving. Pray that God would have mercy on us and hear our cry and help us.