

“BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED . . .”

Ephesians 6:10-17

December 30, 2018

Holiday Island Presbyterian Church

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. ¹²For 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.¹³Therefore 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. ¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

INTRODUCTION:

**While under a relaxed form of custody in Rome,
very much like being under “house arrest” –
Paul wrote a letter to the Church at Ephesus.**

**Paul knew the church was struggling.
There were no guidelines for what churches should do –
- or not do –
There was no such thing as a Book of Order.**

**So, in this portion of his letter,
Paul is giving the church at Ephesus some good advice.**

**In verse 12, Paul says:
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.**

**As we face the New Year together,
let's look at one way
we could apply this passage of scripture to our lives.**

RESOLUTIONS:

**One of the hallmarks of a New Year
is the making of "New Year's Resolutions."**

**According to Webster's Dictionary,
a resolution is a "firm decision to do or not to do something."**

We've all made resolutions at one time or another.

**Well, you know what they say about New Year's resolutions:
They usually go in one year and out the other!**

**I did a little research and discovered the top 5 resolutions:
At number 5, we have taking up a new hobby.
We've all done that, right?**

**A new hobby or skill grabs our attention,
we buy all the equipment, the supplies, the stuff we need
to follow this new hobby.**

**And a few years later,
after failing to find what we were looking for
in that new hobby,
all the stuff we got for that hobby
goes into a garage sale.**

**Resolve number 4 was to make more money.
Most of us are past that point.
Our money-making days are pretty much past us.**

**Residing in the number 3 position
is the resolve to improve relationships.
That one is also the most popular one.**

**We realize we have not been treating our spouse
as we would want to treat him/her.
So, we decided to be a better companion.**

**Perhaps we have drifted away from an old friend
or something is lingering between us and someone
and we resolve to try to fix the relationship.**

**Number 2 is the resolve to quit smoking.
That one may be the hardest resolution to keep.
I stopped smoking almost 40 years ago
and I still miss smoking a pipe.**

**I stopped smoking, drinking, cussing all on the same day.
I don't remember it being very hard –
- but Gail says I was comatose for a week!**

**I am proud to say that I no longer smoke.
We won't talk about the other things.**

**The most popular resolution is no surprise:
to lose weight.**

**Gail caught me standing on the scales one day
and she saw me suck in my belly.**

**She said: "Sucking in your belly won't make you weigh less.
I said: "No, but at least I can see the numbers!"**

Coming up with a list of resolutions is easy.

**We put things on our list that we think we “ought” to do;
and then for a week or two we work at it.**

Then something happens,

- a new hobby turns out not to be boring or not satisfying**
- a relationship we were working on didn't work out**
- we decided to “cut down” on our smoking rather than stop**
- we didn't want the Christmas chocolates to go to waste**

We've all been there.

SPIRITUAL NATURE OF RESOLUTIONS:

**Now, this is not a lecture on New Year's Resolutions;
it is a sermon**

**and therefore there must be a spiritual application
to all of this.**

**The only Oscar that John Wayne ever won
was in 1969 for his movie “True Grit.”**

It just so happens,

that in the first Century,

Paul wrote to the Ephesians about “true grit.”

“True grit” is characterized by

**“firmness of character; an indomitable spirit;”
being totally resolved and not quitting.**

**“Grit is doing what you don't want to do,
to be what you want to be.”**

**Psychologist Angela Duckworth,
after studying people in various challenging situations,
including National Spelling Bee participants,
rookie teachers in tough neighborhoods,
and West Point cadets, found:
“One characteristic emerged as a significant predictor of
success. And it wasn't social intelligence. It wasn't good looks,
physical health, and it wasn't IQ. It was grit.”**

**Paul was trying to encourage the church at Ephesus –
- and by extension, us –
to stand firm in our resolve
and to take advantage of the spiritual tools we have.**

**Paul said that we can expect to be assaulted by
“the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces
of evil.”**

**Then Paul goes on to give us a list of the spiritual tools
available for our use
to overcome temptation and keep our resolve.**

**You have that list in your Bible,
Paul calls these tools, the “whole armor of God.”
They are in our spiritual toolbox for a reason.**

**One way of looking at being resolved is
to recognize there is a difference
between being attacked by evil things
and allowing them to take you over.**

**The tools in the Evil Toolbox include
“anxiety, fear, doubt,**

guilt, depression, discouragement and jealousy.”

**Those tools are the best deterrent that Evil has
to keep us from accomplishing our resolutions.**

**Evil doesn't want us to be happy or content,
so Evil will do anything to keep us from finding that
in a new hobby.**

**Happy, content Christians are too difficult to tempt!
Evil works best when we are discontent, unfulfilled.**

**Evil doesn't particularly care whether or not we make more money
as long as we spend it foolishly,
chasing after happiness and contentment.**

**Evil certainly doesn't want us to fix relationships with each other.
Evil constantly sows the seeds of jealousy, envy,
and makes sure we misinterpret most things
as an insult.**

**Evil doesn't want us to improve our lives in any way.
That leads to contentment and happiness.
So Evil invites us to abuse our bodies,
and presents great temptations to distract us.**

**Paul knew all of this;
Paul had experienced all of this in his own life;
Paul saw it happening in the Ephesian Church.**

So, Paul uses the metaphor of armor to make his point.

**Paul said:
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 breastplate 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.

**Notice Paul says: “When the day of evil comes,”
not “if” that day comes.**

**For that day will surely come in our lives –
- and it comes far too often.**

ARMOR OF GOD AND RESOLUTIONS:

**Now, you are well educated, thinking, people –
- for the most part –**

- so I don’t need to explain what the armor of God is.

Paul made it clear enough in his letter to the Ephesians.

**There is a message in this letter,
this passage of scripture,
that goes far beyond the explanation of the armor.**

Paul knew – and tells us -

**God has anticipated that we will be faced with evil
and God has provided effective armor
to protect us from the ravages of that evil.**

But look a little deeper at what Paul is saying.

**Paul is describing a God who loves us enough
that we will not face that evil alone!**

**We just celebrated Christmas –
- Emmanuel –
God with us!**

**The carols and hymns remind us that we do not face
the trials and tribulations of this world
without God at our side!**

**David knew God was at his side when he faced Goliath!
Joshua knew that when he attacked the walls of Jericho!
Job knew that and refused to give up!**

**Joseph knew that when he packed up his family
and fled to Egypt.**

**Jesus certainly knew that
when he “set His face towards Jerusalem”
and His eventual death by Crucifixion.**

**And Paul knew he was not alone when he sat in a prison in Rome
awaiting a certain and eventual death.**

**These folks all had “true grit”
determination born out of a close relationship with God.**

**When the time came,
they were able to rely on that grit
to stand firm in their resolve.**

TRUE GRIT AND HOPE:

**People with “true grit”
people who have put on the whole armor of God
are filled with HOPE.**

**They have found the resolve to stand fast
in the face of adversity
and the faith that God will see them through
and that is the very definition of HOPE.**

**As we make our New Year's resolutions,
and if we could somehow direct ourselves to ask:
"I wonder what exciting thing God is planning for me
in this New Year?"
We would begin the year in hope.**

**Winnie the Pooh once took an evening walk with his friend Piglet.
They walked for a long time in silence, but Piglet finally asked,
"When you wake up in the morning, Pooh, what's the
first thing you say to yourself?"**

**Pooh responds, "What's for breakfast?"
"And what do you say, Piglet?"**

**Piglet answers,
"I say, I wonder what exciting thing is going to happen today."**

**Pooh's first thoughts turn to his tummy,
while Piglet imagines the possibilities that are before him.**

**Standing on the eve of a New Year
gives us the opportunity –
both individually and as a Church –
to move into a future God is preparing for us.**

**Sometime today or tomorrow,
I will take down the 2018 calendar in my office –**

**- the space in our house that Gail refers to as the Dungeon
I'll replace it with a new 2019 calendar.**

**That old calendar – 2018 – has now been rendered useless.
It is no longer accurate, no longer relevant.**

**In its place, I'll hang a new calendar – 2018.
For the moment, every page in that calendar is blank.
Each day waiting to be filled with an activity,
each day holding the promises of new life.**

**If I take Paul's advice and put on the whole armor of God,
I can be sure that whatever God allows to come my way
will not be faced alone.
God will be right there with me.**

The same holds true for each of us.

CONCLUSION:

OK.

Here's a challenge.

**When you hang your new calendar,
I want you to take a permanent marker – or a crayon –
and write the word "HOPE"
across the whole month of January.
Big, bold letters!**

**Then every day when you look at the calendar, remind yourself
that the most important New Year's resolution you can make
is to live each day with hope.**

A man sentenced to death talked his way out of the death penalty

**by assuring the king he would teach his majesty's horse to fly
within the year; on the condition that if he didn't succeed,
he would be put to death at the end of the year.**

Someone pointed out that was a foolish, foolish bargain to make.

**"Within a year," the man explained later,
"the king may die, or I may die, or the horse may die.**

**Furthermore, in a year, who knows?
Maybe the horse will learn to fly."**

Hope.

May your New Year be filled to overflowing with it!

PRAYER:

**Loving God, fill our New Year with the hope only You can offer.
Grant us a peaceful year.**