

Part Two – Armed in Readiness

Billy Graham Story About Sir Konrad Adenauer

Sir Konrad Adenauer was the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany from 1949 – 1963.

He led the country's effort to denazify after World War II, and then led the country to become a prosperous and productive nation with close ties to the United States, France and Germany.

Billy Graham met with Konrad Adenauer in his office in Cologne, Germany. During the meeting, Konrad Adenauer asked Billy Graham if he really believed Jesus Christ really rose from the dead. Billy Graham said, "Mr. Chancellor, if I did not really believe that Jesus rose from the dead, I would have no gospel to preach." And Billy Graham said Konrad Adenauer looked at him and said, "Mr. Graham, outside of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, I know of no other hope for mankind."

Summary from last Sunday as to what the battlefield for the Christian looks like.

2 Timothy 3:1-5 says: But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of Godliness, although they have denied its power; avoid such men as these."

We have been called to be ambassadors for Christ in a culture that is dominated by the spirit of antichrist.

There is no such thing as standing still in your spiritual journey. We need a heightened sense of urgency and understand that "perpetual change" is permanent. In the environment Paul sets forth in 2 Timothy 3, there is always higher ground so walk the worthy walk of faith.

1. People are not our enemy. 1 John 5:19 says, “We know we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” The Devil and his demons are our enemies – not people.

- As Christians, we have entirely different views of the world. Things can get better for a time, but the world is always lying under the power of the evil one.
- Remember that Jesus is building His church on enemy occupied territory. As I said last week we are under hellish attack all the time, and therefore we can never say we are surprised when things go wrong. Although Jesus has promised to protect us – ultimately – we have to engage the enemy by putting our armor on, realizing that everyday we are engaged in spiritual conflict.
- The point is that we need to have a world view where we’re not ignorant of the evil one’s schemes. God’s enemies are warring against the church and will war against the church until Jesus returns.
- Romans 16:20: And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

2. Hebrews 10:23-25 says, “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”

The Devil doesn’t want us to gather together – so that we won’t be able to encourage one another to love and good deeds. (Virus in U.S.; persecution in other parts of the world.)

Have you been missing worship? Many of you perhaps are unable to come because of the risk of exposure to the virus, but if you would like a visit from one of our staff members or your deacon, please contact us so that we can come and visit with you, and pray with you.

3. We are engaged in a cultural battlefield where most people are blinded to the truth and can't comprehend the truth of the gospel – so we need to always be praying for those we encounter everyday who are in our mission field.

- The elders had several prayer requests this week for the lost. Thank you!

4. The Devil is always looking for an opportunity to divide and conquer in your life and in the life of the church.

And one of his key tactics for believers is to promote an unforgiving spirit.

Jesus placed a higher priority on forgiveness than He did on worship. Did anyone resolve any relationship issues this week?

5. The Devil and his demons are flinging ideas into your head to get you to sin, to get you to walk away from the faith and to neglect the spiritual disciplines that make spiritual growth possible.

Remember the bumper sticker: Don't believe everything you think.

We have to take up our cause and die daily to self.

As Detrick Bonhoffer said, "When Jesus calls a man, he bids him come and die." We have to commit daily self-murder so that Jesus can be seen. Remember it's when a seed dies that it bears fruit, and so we need to die daily to self so that we are broken, and so that Jesus shines through and men and women who are dead in trespasses and sins come to faith.

None of this is new. These have been the schemes of the evil one for multiple millennia. Let's just look briefly at 55 A.D. in the city of Corinth where Paul had to write a letter to address a host of issues, including:

OVERVIEW OF 1 CORINTHIANS

Divisions, quarrels and disunity – 1:10-13

Jealousy and strife – 3:1-3 (intimidation)

Arrogance and pride – 4:14-21 (false ambition)

Immaturity abounded and adultery – 5:1

Lawsuits against one another – 6:1-2 (murmuring and complaining)

Harlotry and fornication -6:12-20

Marital issues and divorce – 7:1-40

Causing younger brothers and sisters to stumble – 8:1-13

Warnings concerning disunity and grumbling against leaders – 10:1-33

Abusing the Lord's supper and one another – 11:1-34

Jealousy over giftedness and roles within the church – 12-14

All of the above destroy the atmosphere of the grace of God, and then then Satan is given an opportunity.

Five Imperatives to the Corinthian Church

After spending 15 chapters instructing the church in Corinth, in 16:13-14, Paul gives 5 military style commands to the Corinthian church. They are to:

Be on the alert.

Stand firm in the faith.

Act like men.

Be strengthened (strong).

Let all that you do be done in love.

Implications for You and the Westwood Faith Family

1. We are called to be on the alert. (Like the men of Issachar) (6 years before World War II started, the Versailles Treaty was being violated.)
 - To watch – to have an acute understanding of what’s going on.
 - To be awake
 - Spiritually awake and alert vs. indifferent and listless. We are to live alert, balanced lives and Godly lives under the control of the Word of God.
 - The Corinthians were not living balanced, Godly lives and they were guilty of division and jealousy, worldliness, indifference to the welfare of others – you name it – they failed. What Corinth needed and what you need to be is a warrior for the Gospel of Christ. The Body of Christ doesn’t need boys trapped in men’s bodies or little girls trapped in women’s bodies.
 - The church at Corinth was living in the weeds of mediocrity as nominal Christians.
 - John MacArthur tells us in his commentary that the New Testament tells us 6 things to be on the alert for (4 negative and 2 positive):
 - Satan – 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 2:16; 2 Corinthians 2:11
 - Temptation – Mark 14:38
 - Indifference – sins of the Laodicean church – Revelation 4:14-17.
 - False teachers – 2 Timothy 4:3-5
 - Prayer – Ephesians 6:18
 - Lord’s return – Matthew 24:42

2. Be firm in the faith.

- This faith refers to the faith of truth or the content of the Gospel – Philippians 1:27 says “only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel.”
- The Greek for standing firm means a soldier at his post. The Greek for striving together means a team struggling for victory against a common foe.
- The Greek word for “firm” is stèko. Boom! Drive a stake in it.
- Satan can’t rob us of our faith, but he can cause us to think wrong, believe wrong and engage in wrong behavior because we don’t interpret scripture correctly.
- We must look at everything and judge everything by God’s truth and standards.
- Colossians 4:12 says: “Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bond slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.”
- The church at Corinth did not stand firm in the faith or hold to the Word of God. Satan wants to rob us of truth, so fight to hold onto truth brothers and sisters.
- The U.S. church has made, and is making, a material difference in world missions, but I fear we are not living up to the challenges we face in our own culture:
 - 98% of Christians never share their faith.
 - According to George Barna, one out of every 16 adults in the U.S. (6%) has a Biblical world view. George Barna defines the Biblical world view as someone who believes the absolute moral truth exists, and that

such truth is defined by the Bible as well as a firm belief in five specific religious views including:

- God is the all-powerful and all-knowing creator of the universe and He still rules today;
 - Salvation is a gift from God and cannot be earned;
 - Satan is real;
 - A Christian has a responsibility to share their faith in Christ with other people;
 - The Bible is accurate in all of its teachings
- 61% of American millennials (20 somethings to age 36) consider themselves Christians, but just 2% have a Biblical worldview.
 - Only an estimated 9% of adults 75 and older and those adults 56 to 74 hold a Biblical worldview, and among generation X (37 to 55 years of age), the percentage of subscribers to a Biblical worldview drops to 5%.
 - I spoke to George Barna last December about these statistics. He believes the significant drop in worldview among the generations is due to a lack of church leaders to teach the Bible systematically. The data, Mr. Barna suggested reveals a nation that is at war with itself to adopt new values, lifestyles and a new identity. There is a war for worldview dominance, and as we know a house divided against itself cannot stand. Pretty sobering.
- What do I mean when I use the phrase “systematic theology”? Wayne Grudem defines it as any study that answers the question: “What does the whole Bible teach us today?” about any given topic. John Frame offers this definition: “Theology is the application of scripture to every area of life.” Why, then, do we need theology in addition to scripture? The only answer, I believe, is “because we need to apply scripture to life.”

- It's clear the church in America and this faith family at Westwood needs to develop spiritual muscle, which is why Dave Teruel and the rest of us teach scripture systematically. We teach doctrine, and doctrine plays the role of that that a Velcro strip plays, in that it helps us to hold on to truth – deep truth. We don't give generally "how to live" messages. We teach the riches of Christian doctrine, because doctrine transforms experience.
- But we need to step up and even be more intentional about teaching systematically:
 - Only 4 out of every 10 people (41%) believe the Bible is the Word of God.
 - Those who believe that God doesn't exist in the U.S. population – often called "nons" – has mushroomed from 8% to 32% since 1991 – a 300% increase.
 - A new survey conducted by Lifeway Research and released by Ligonier Ministries reveals that 52% of Americans – and get this – 30% of evangelicals say they believe that Jesus was a "good teacher but He was not God."
 - Slightly over half of Christian respondents in an Arizona Christian university survey performed by George Barna said that someone can obtain salvation by "being or doing good".
 - 58% of Americans believe that no absolute moral truth exists.
 - 59% of Americans said that they believe that the Bible is not God's authoritative Word.
- These statistics are stunning and our failure to penetrate the culture with our saltiness has contributed to a culture that is in a moral nosedive. (J.I. Packer – 1973). What do I mean by culture? The Church, family, business, arts and entertainment, education, government and media. These influences of culture are dominated by the antichrist world view.

- If you're not firm in the faith of the Gospel, you will not be steadfast in the Gospel and focused on the mission we all have from the Lord.

3. Act like men (be mature).

- Just before they were burned at the stake at Oxford in 1555, Hugh Latimer, famously said to Nicholas Ridley, "Play the man, Master Ridley; we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out." (Slide of Oxford Street Marker)
- We are to act mature, with confidence and courage. The Corinthian church was characterized by anything but maturity.
- In 1 Corinthians 14:20, Paul encourages the Corinthians to "be not children in understanding."
- Love is the mark of maturity in 1 Corinthians 13:11. In 1 Corinthians 13:11 Paul says: "When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things."
- Paul encourages the church at Ephesus to "grow into a mature man, to the measure to the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ" . . . and to "grow up in all aspects into him who is the head, even Christ." – Ephesians 4:13, 15
- Mature Christians are courageous: the strength of the church stands in renouncing her own strength and fleeing to God's strength.
 - In addition to just being obedient to what the Holy Spirit has called us to do, this is one of the reasons that Christian Barrett and I are reading scripture publicly. It is stretching our spiritual muscle, and expanding our boldness and confidence in God

- If we will stand courageously and be willing to take risks with what God has promised He will do through us, we will be able to say as Joshua and Caleb did (as two spies that delivered a positive report) that “we should not fear, that our enemies are as “bread to us” for their support has departed from them.” Certainly, the scriptures teach that if God is for us, who can be against us and that we are super colossal conquerors in Christ.
- “The eulogy pronounced on John Knox was short but well-deserved: “there lies he who never fears the face of man.”
- C.H. Spurgeon said there is a stage in the Christian life, in the growth of the Christian, “which is as much above the ordinary Christian as the ordinary Christian is above the worldling.” He was reminding the church that there are higher levels and higher plains in the Christian life. Do you desire this mature life, or are you content to play around the edges with Christianity?

4. Be strong or be strengthened.

- The verb is in the passive voice and literally means “be strengthened.” The passive form means the strength comes from another source. This Greek term “be strong” is frequently used in the New Testament to denote inner, spiritual growth. As I said last week, Ephesians 6:10 says that we are to be “strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might.”
- We can’t be spiritually strong without developing disciplines. Strength in a Christian life comes from employing the means of grace such as Bible study, prayer, meditation, corporate worship and scripture memory.
- The thought life and the inner life need to be strengthened – and guarded, as we saw last week.
 - Remember: Don’t believe everything you think.
- Psalm 46:1 says, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”

- When we wait for the Lord and yield our lives to Him, we become “strengthened with power through His spirit in the inner man.” --- Ephesians 3:16
- When we are strengthened by the spirit, the flesh is overcome. God is glorified and Jesus is properly and accurately represented to the world.

5. Let all that you do be done in love.

- Love is comprehensive. It helps all of the above commands to be done in a beautiful and compassionate way. We live the first four commands in an attitude of love. Rzim: Love is the ultimate apologetic.
- Peter told the church to keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins – 1 Peter 4:8. As John MacArthur says in his study Bible “The word fervent in the Greek means “to be stretched, “to be strained.” It is used of a runner who is moving at maximum output with muscle straining and stretching to the limit. This kind of love requires the Christian to put other’s spiritual good ahead of his own desires in spite of being treated unkindly, ungraciously, or even with hostility.”
- 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 where Paul describes love as patient, kind, not jealous, not arrogant, not seeking its own, not being easily provoked, not keeping track of wrongs suffered, not rejoicing in unrighteousness and bears, believes, hopes and endures all things. Love also does not fail.

Our Response

Nurture Spiritually Strengthening Habits

This week, by the grace of God, and the strength he provides, I will: _____

If you are asleep spiritually, wake up.

If you are not asleep, you need to persevere and fight, because you are living every day in enemy occupied territory.

There will never be peace on this earth. We have to continually make war against our opponents: the world, our flesh, our pride, and the evil one who is continually trying to trip us up to adopt his agenda -- to squeeze us into the world's mold. Romans 12:2 says and be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Prayer and the Word should be embedded in your day. They are your weapons. The Word – so that we can battle the thoughts and temptations of the world; prayer – so we can call for help from the one who is our strength in time of need. The church today has turned prayer into a means to our ends rather than teaching the ultimate purpose of prayer which is that Jesus intends to make his home within our lives. Ephesians 3:14-21.

Is Jesus at home in your life? How do we do this:

Table talk – going through Revelation now

Scripture memory

Reading the Bible through every year

Get back to your closet type praying

Be willing to take risks for the Lord. Step out in faith and trust. Hebrews 11:6 says, “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he would come to God must believe that He is and He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”

Get engaged in a Small Group where you can be held accountable.

Conclusion

Tom Tarrant’s Story

He was on the ten most wanted list in North America and it is also true that he ran the most successful terrorist cell in North American history. It is also the case that Edgar Hoover tried to have him assassinated and he spent a lot of time in prison, and he came to Christ in prison. When he was in prison after his conversion, the 26 men who had been appointed to try and shoot him on the day that he was actually captured (after he became a Christian,) he wrote a letter to them asking if he could meet with them. And so 22 of them agreed and came to the prison he was being held in and 21 of them became Christians when they heard how God had so changed his heart and life. And the special agent who had master minded the entire secret operation against Tom Tarrant he himself was so struck by the change in Tom Tarrant’s heart that he went on to write his own book and in his own book and in his own words he says that “from the moment he entered the prison cell after Tom Tarrant’s conversion he knew that he was looking at a different man” and two months later he himself came to Christ and gave his life to Christ.

Book: *Consumed by Hate, Redeemed by Love*

We need to train our young people and arm them in readiness to understand the times in which we live and to understand how to stand firm for the faith.

I’ve been committed to that for many years: the elders of this faith family are committed to that principle; and by God’s grace, we will until the day we see the Lord’s face in heaven.

Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like a man, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.