

Introduction

- Flick back through Ephesians for a moment
 - in 1:15-23 we have one of Paul's glorious prayers for the church - that they would know the "hope of his call" (beginning), the "glory of his blessings" (future) and the "greatness of his power" (present);
 - later in the letter we have Paul's description of the heart of the Christian faith - the radical disease that sin is, the radical remedy God provided in his Son, the radical response that should issue from that in discipleship;
 - and then we have Paul's encouragement that we should be growing in faith, towards increasing maturity, modelled on the master, learning humility, gentleness, patience, tolerance, to speak truthfully in love, to use our gifts;
- All of that is quite a positive assessment of the Christian faith.
 - and rightly so - for it is great good news!

BUT:

- It doesn't always work out like that in practise, does it?
 - life is never that simple; things rarely seem to work out so positively.
 - especially in our Christian lives, as we seek to grow, while there will be times of blessing, when we know God to be real and close, when we see him at work through us;
 - there will also be times when life is a struggle, when God seems far away, when there is opposition to what we are seeking to do, discouragements.
- Paul finishes off his letter to the Ephesians with some help for that young church in precisely this area, as they faced problems and opposition.

The Accuser of the Brethren, Father of Lies

Temptation

- The Devil seeks to thwart the effectiveness of God's people by leading them into sin:
 - to do that he brings temptation across our path...
 - as he did to Jesus in the wilderness at the start of his ministry...
 - or Adam in the garden of Eden...
 - so also us...
- Isn't that your experience?
 - perhaps particularly after a spiritual high - a Holiday Club, a camp, an really good conversation about the Gospel with a neighbour?
 - temptation specific to where we are weak

Accusation

- The Devil seeks to thwart the effectiveness of God's people by making them feel accused:
 - reminding them of sin... running mistakes they've made through their minds... at worst making them doubt their salvation... more often making us doubt whether what we did or said in a particular situation was good enough for God
 - chips away at our security in God's love - whispers in our ear "you aren't good enough"
 - I was up at Braeview during the week - painful, painful stories of ways in which parents can kill the future security, well-being and hope of children by chipping away at their identity: "you aren't good enough, I don't care about you"
 - that is what the Devil seeks to do with us.

Deception

- The Devil seeks to thwart the effectiveness of God's people by deceiving them:
 - deceived about what is important in life - adverts, social pressure
 - deceived about what the Scriptures say - this weeks General Assembly as but one example

Warfare

- The Devil opposes God's work:
 - makes things difficult!
 - Motherwell Holiday Club stories - there was always something, a child being ill, the murder threats thing, the vandalism on the building, even the weather...

The Fight

- Do we submit to the enemy?
 - no!!! And the passage here gives us some pointers in resisting...

1. Be Strong in God's Power

- To face a foe you need to be prepared:
 - first, knowing that foe, not flesh and blood, but real evil powers;
 - second, facing that foe, not ignoring or making light of, nor even making too much of his power;
- We face the Devil in God's power, realising his trickery and deviousness:
 - yet also aware of his limits, his fallibility - in the face of God's mighty power
- Jesus is risen, death is defeated - this mighty power!

2. Be Protected in God's Armour

- Second dimension of fight is that we need to be protected by God's armour:
 - any emergency service goes out properly equipped - paramedics in ambulances, firemen, police....
- We need to enter battle properly equipped.

- As Paul writes he is in prison - probably with a soldier at the door - picks that as image for communicating truth...

Defence

- confidence grounded in truth of gospel;
- certainty grounded in being on the side of righteousness and good;
- a readiness to fight since we know the future is secure, we cannot be touched

Attack

- faith which refuses to be daunted sends doubt into retreat;
- salvation - a confidence that shines like a light for others;
- God's word convicts, and is always at heart of God's work.

3. Be Prayerful in God's Spirit

- How can we use these weapons effectively?
 - *Prayer!*
 - you don't just give troops guns; you train them to use them!
- God doesn't just give us weapons, he asks us to deploy them in the most effective way - through prayer.
- If we will not pray then we will not succeed.
 - not just praying for the sick and dying, not just praying for world peace, but also for the battle;
 - for consistency of life;
 - for strength to face temptation;
 - for insight and help to change old habits and ways of living;
 - for effectiveness in witness;
 - for courage to speak for Christ;

Lets engage, then, in this great battle:

- *Strong in God's Power; Protected in God's Armour; Prayerful in God's Spirit*