

Mystery and Clarity//“Life is War” #10//Ephesians 5:14-21

(Normandy) Tuesday, June 6, 1944; 6:25 am... 5,000 ships carrying 175,000 Allied Troops approached the southern beaches in France for the largest invasion in modern history... what we know now as D-Day.

Some of the men who survived the invasion said that they remember in the final minutes before the ships landed the steady stream of messages and exhortations being broadcast over the ship intercoms,

- ‘Fight to get your troops ashore. Fight to save your ships. And if you’ve got any strength left, fight to save yourself.’
- Another went, ‘We shall die on the sands of France, but we will never turn back.’
- Another one, ‘This is it. Pick it up. Put it on. You’ve got a one-way ticket and this is the end of the line.’

The two messages that the survivors most remembered was the clear call at about 6:20, ‘*Away all boats*’ and ‘*Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.*’

Over 12,000 Americans died that day in a span of about 15 minutes. As the boats reached the shores the disembarking soldiers literally had to crawl over the bodies of other soldiers to get ashore.

That’s an image, I realize, that’s not pleasant... it’s sobering... makes your grateful... but I share it because the men that approached the beach at Normandy that day had no delusions that they were going to the beach for a vacation. They understood exactly what they were walking into... they knew there was a vicious enemy who wanted to destroy them and that many of them would die.

The book of Ephesians pulls back the curtain on the mysteries of life and shows you that you are in the midst of a battle no less stringent with an enemy no less fierce. And, quite honestly, the tragedy is that many of us have no idea we are even in a battle... we approach life as if it were a vacation.

But it’s not... and you can wish all day long it was (I do sometimes), but that doesn’t change the fact one bit that this is a battle, and unless you wake up you are going to waste your life, and even worse, you and those you love might be casualties. How stupid to show up at Normandy on D-Day with a beach towel and ducky... but that’s how many of us are showing up for a battle no less intense.

For those of you familiar with Ephesians, you may be used to thinking of Ephesians 6 as the passage on spiritual warfare. But, the theme of battle pervades, really, all of Ephesians... I’ll show you that today from Ephesians 5.

Today, I’m going to show you why many, many people, honestly, don’t make it as Christians.

- In Matthew 7 Jesus said, “Wide is the gate and easy is the path that leads to destruction... but narrow is the gate and difficult is the path that leads to life, and few there be that find it.”
- Jesus told a parable about the seeds... says that the seed of God’s word was cast on the a certain type of soil and that that soil received the word with gladness and immediately sprang up with fruit... but the sun came up and dried them up because they didn’t have any roots. Others had the seed of life choked out of them by the temptations and distractions of this world.

Paul here is talking about the same thing... I hope to warn some of you today...

And I also hope to bring comfort to some of you... because many of you have wondered why the Christian life is so hard... You’re

discouraged because you became a Christian and thought that everything was just supposed to get easy and it didn't... for some of you life got harder... maybe I'm not cut out for this... is there something wrong with me? Yes, something wrong with all of us. None of us are cut out for it. Today, I'll show you why.

Ephesians 5: The context of Ephesians 5 is that the world we live in is not a friendly one for growing spiritually... Several metaphors at work:

- **Vs. 8**, the world is dark; **Vs. 14**, the world is a grave. **Vs. 16**, the age is evil.

Into that world, we get a number of commands that tell us to fight against the current... to struggle, to do things that almost feel unnatural... if you just coast, you're going to drown... *Here's what I mean:*

Vs. 8: in the midst of a dark world,⁸ Walk as children of light, and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord...

- Almost get the image here of trying to read in the dark... *really got to focus*. **Sometimes I try to read after Veronica** goes to bed and it annoys her when I leave the bedside light on... we're laying in bed (V is my wife)... so being the awesome husband that I am, I bought one of those little headlight lamps so I wouldn't disturb her... you've got to focus... the only place you can see is where you focus the light. What is awesome is when she says something to me and I turn my head to look at her... BLIND her.
- Or, "try to discern..." Here I get the image of being in Calculus class where you are really trying to follow the teacher's methodology and if you doze a bit you are going to get lost (this is why some of you failed Calculus, right?). You have to focus and concentrate and you can't just coast, if so, you're going to get lost... because the natural current is toward

moron-land and if you are going to escape it you have to fight upstream!

¹⁴Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

- (This is a great one). You know hard it is to get up from a good sleep? I hardly ever feel like getting up. Something wrong with me.
- I never come so close to bursting into praise and speaking in tongues like when I remember the snooze button... "I don't need to go to the gym today..." SNOOZE. "I can skip a day of work" SNOOZE. I've always wondered what it's like to be on welfare... SNOOZE
- Getting up is hard...

¹⁵ Look carefully (Gr. diligently) then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,

¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.

- In other words, the tempo and rhythms of the world are not in line with God's purposes. Our world has different values; different agendas; different priorities; different desires. And, if the rhythms of your life are set by the world, you're going to completely waste your life!

The point of all these: **Christian life is struggle**. And if we are going to 'make it,' we have to declare absolute war on the gravitation pull of the world, a world which is sleeping, in the dark, and in the grave.

Remember in **Ephesians 2:4** he talked about **"the course of this world."** That course is completely anti-God. Prioritizes lusts of the flesh (bodily pleasures); lust eyes (materialism); pride of life (us point, not God)

- That's the music of the world. Not only that, but our own flesh is still saturated with these things. Again *Ephesians 2:4*, that spirit of the world is at work in our flesh and we gravitate toward it like a moth to a flame...
- We are like a car severely out of alignment...
- If we are going to make it, we have to declare absolute war! I always thought this was helpful in my Muslim friends... I say the word, "jihad," most people think of violent warfare.
- If you're not fighting, you're losing.
 - College students... when you go home... if you're not fighting, you're dead. You won't coast your way to spiritual victory... If you don't have a plan. If you're not setting priorities, choosing relationships and growing intentionally... you're dead.
- John Owen said, "We are either killing sin or being killed by it." At every point we are doing 1 of 2 things...
- My own life... I flirt with sin... not that bad.

So how do we engage in warfare? (I count at least 6 commands here)

(1) "Look carefully" on how we walk (vs. 15—also vs. 8, 17)

- Vs. 8 "try to discern"
- Vs. 17, "strive to understand"
- Strive to learn the will of God in every situation because it won't come naturally.
- Early in the message I referred to the parable of the seeds... D. Martyn-Lloyd Jones said:
 - The only seeds that survive as those that are driven deep. Drive the Gospel deep until you learn to see all your life... your success, your failures, your joys, your pains, your hopes, your fears... all of it through the Gospel.
 - *When I 1st became a Christian...* I thought escaping sin was like a decision you made... 2 paths. I'm no longer going to break the laws of God... I'm going to obey

them. So, I started to be involved in my church and do Christian things... even went and served as a **missionary**. You can't sin... But what I found was that the same sinful heart that drove me to sin wanted to corrupt everything... it wanted to use religion to make me proud... I still wanted to be admired, I still wanted money, I still wanted to serve the desires of my flesh. It's war.

- **John Owen:** "Let not that man think that he makes any progress in holy who does not mortify the heart of his lusts."¹
- **The Rock... sorry if I spoiled it. 17 years old...**

(2) Be intentional with your time (v. 16)

- Make the most of it... (Let me tell you a secret): Often, I don't feel like seeking God... you get up in the morning, the last thing I feel like is reading my Bible... 1000 other things to do—get to the office, got to return that email; I should sleep the extra 30 minutes because I need more energy today; or, if at night, I need to sleep; I really feel like watching TV... I've had a hard day.
- If you are going to grow with God, you have to set the priorities.
 - I learned a very important lesson years ago from a book I read called *7 Habits of Highly Effective People... Big Rocks*.
 - If I want to develop something, I have to decide to make it a priority. God. Marriage. Church; student ministry; getting to know unbelievers.
 - "If you don't plan your time, someone or something else will." If you don't get control and start making the use of your time, the trajectory of your life will be directed by the world... which is not going the right direction. Not always bad, just tedium... the tyranny of the urgent. For some of you, it's not like you miss

¹ Mortification of Sin, p. 15

growing with God because you're worshipping Satan, it's just that there so much tedious stuff to do that you neglect the most important things.

- Remember this phrase we learned this summer?
Direction, not intention, determines destination.
 - I told you it was like... going to Myrtle Beach... going to Wilkesboro... let's be honest, not the same experience.
- If you don't carve out time to grow in God... you will lose.
 - Eph 6:18, pray always
 - "Pray that you enter not into temptation." If you don't take time for God to search your heart, fill you with strength, you are dead.

So, for how to engage in warfare, point 1 is to "look carefully on how we walk"; point 2 is "be intentional with our time"; point 3 is...

(3) Choose the Spirit, not "the spirits," to "deal" with life: (vs. 18)
"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit."

- *Check this out...* life is hard... lots of pressures, disappointment. Most everybody learns that. And Paul identifies the 2 ways people deal with life's pressures and anxieties.
- The 1st is alcohol, the 2nd is the Spirit. Now, there's a lot of similarities to what the Spirit does in your life, and what alcohol does. You believe that? Check this out.
 - People drink because they are worried... the Spirit of God gives you the peace that passes all understanding.
 - Some drink to get courage. Acts says that when the Spirit filled the disciples they had boldness.
 - Some drink because they are having problems and alcohol is an escape... Romans 5 says that the Spirit sheds abroad God's love in your hearts and assures us we are the children of God.

- Some drink to be able to open up about their feelings and be vulnerable. The Spirit gives you the security that comes from knowing you are God's child so that you can let others in to see your weakness.
- Alcohol and the Spirit both produce some of the same things in you. But they do it in entirely different ways:
 - Alcohol is a depressant that dulls your senses to reality... makes you less aware of your surroundings. The Holy Spirit, by contrast, is a **stimulus that makes you more aware** of reality! Both alcohol and the Spirit give you a way to cope with the difficulties of life, but in entirely different ways!
 - **Foxhole illustration.** *You hear there is a group of 200 enemy soldiers coming straight for you just two miles away. How do you have joy and confidence to stand your ground when you know you're going to die? One way is to get drunk on alcohol. Another way is to do some reconnaissance and find out that there are a group of 2,000 friendly troops only one mile away from your location, and when they get there, they'll surround you.*
 - The Holy Spirit gives you a way to cope by opening your eyes to the reality of God.
 - **Alcohol gets rid of worry** by making you forget... the Spirit gets rid of worry by helping you remember!
 - **Alcohol gives you courage** by making you unaware of the dangers around you... the Spirit gives you courage by showing you how much larger God is than your fears.
 - **Alcohol adds excitement to your life by giving you a cheap thrill...** the Spirit adds excitement to your life by reminding you of the overflowing promises of God and His goodness to you.
 - You don't need a 1/5 of jack; you need a filling of Jehovah. You don't need absolute vodka; you need absolute truth. You don't need... OK, I'm finished.

- Commentators point out that Ephesians 5:18–20 and Colossians 3:16–17 are parallel passages, and in order to understand then one you have to understand the other.

(FULL SCREEN)

Ephesians 5:18–20 ...Be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

(THEN, PUT THIS UP BELOW IT ON SAME SCREEN)

Colossians 3:16–17 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

- The 2 are almost identical except for that 1st phrase... in Eph 5 it is “be filled with the spirit” and in Colossians 3 it is “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,” which shows that in Paul’s mind “being filled with the spirit” is the same thing as “letting the word of Christ dwell in you richly.”

In Ephesians 3 Paul had prayed that we would “be able to comprehend what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” What is the fullness of God?

Comprehension of what is the breadth and length and height and depth of God’s love for you? What do those words mean?

- *The length*: from all eternity and for all eternity. God chose us from before the foundation of the world, which means there has never been a time when God did not know about us and love us. And there will never be a time in the future where He

will quit. His love was not conditioned on anything we had done, Paul said it was like an adoption...

- *The height*: how great and intense His love is for us. Psalm 103... as high as the heavens are above the earth, that’s how great God’s love for us. If you want to measure the intensity of God’s love for you, get out your telescope... and that feeling you get when you realize how big the universe is, that’s how much God’s love is.
- *The breadth*: the love of God for us controls all things... God has marshaled every molecule of the universe in pursuit of His good purpose in our lives. Nothing can separate us from His loving plan. As Ephesians 1 taught us, He is using everything: bad luck, injustice, even our own bad decisions for His purpose. The control of His love is *broad*.
- *The depth*: how far God went to save us. That’s a reference to how far down God had to come to save us. We were so unlovely and so screwed up and God loved us anyway and came to rescue us.

When the Word dwells in you richly, and you know the depth of the love of Christ, and the Spirit fills you, you can “cope” with life’s difficulties.

- That’s a much better way to deal with life’s problems than getting jacked up on Grandpa’s old cough medicine, right?

Right? We need to be filled with the Spirit so we won’t turn to things like alcohol or pornography or overworking or mindless, tedious entertainment to deal with life’s pressures.

And that shows you why He gives you the command of the next verses...

Review: how to engage in warfare, point 1 is to “look carefully on how we walk”; point 2 is “be intentional with our time”; point 3 is...

¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,

- **He's telling you to remind yourself, constantly...** of God's great work on your behalf. It is interesting to me that He tells you to do it through music. Not through quoting Scripture to yourself or listening to sermons on your Ipod... not that those things are bad... (You can download my sermons at www.jdqreear.com) but he chose music... why? I'll tell you why.
- First, let me give you a theology of music...
 - Creation started in a song.
 - Gen 1 is a poem.
 - Lewis in *Chronicles of Narnia*
 - That song has gone bad.
 - Now, Paul says (Romans 8), "it is groaning."
 - Salvation is a new song
 - Deut 31:19: God told Moses to teach Israel a new song and put it in their mouths...
 - Hebrews 2:12 Jesus describes salvation as a new song he has put in the hearts of God's people.
 - Psalm 96:1
 - Zeph 3:17
 - To be saved means to get swept up into that new song
 - **Guy with Summit sticker...** (I pull up next to them... freaks them out, shake my head like they're doing something wrong... this guy was clearly worshipping...
 - **better than me listening to myself**
 - Salvation is not just learning "truths" about God. Salvation is being swept up into the beauty of Jesus in a way that makes you worship. You change not when you learn facts, but when you are encounter beauty that captivates your heart.

So, we are commanded to...

(4) Sing that new song constantly in our hearts (v. 19)...

- "singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart" (v. 19)
- This changes how we live life.
 - Soviet takeover... part of it was to rewrite all the songs. They banished old songs and taught new Soviet ones, because, in the words of Stalin, if you control the songs, you control the people.
- **Keller:** "We are changed more by our songs than our sermons. The Gospel is driven deeper into your heart by our songs than by our sermons. It is through our songs that you have the word of Christ dwelling in you – that is how you are filled with the Spirit."
- **In your heart the beauty of God should constantly be dancing around... I don't want you to just learn doctrines or verses or truths... I want the beauty of those things to come alive in your hearts. I want you to be swept up into poetry.**
- That's why I've told you I want you to study Jesus, but not like the seminarian studies doctrine, but like you study a sunset that leaves you speechless, or like a man who is enthralled with his wife studies her until the music of who she is bursts alive in his heart...
- Only when that music is dancing in your heart will you be able to say no to sin.

So, we're commanded to sing that new song not only constantly in our own hearts, and also to...

(5) Sing that new song to others (v. 19)¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,

- What does this mean? Like a musical? (story from DPAC)
- No... teach people the song of the Gospel. It is when people see and hear the beauty of God in our worship that they are brought to God.

- I see this all the time... often it is not through our logic or our sermons or our Bible studies, but through our worship that people are brought back to God.
- Anne Lamont, an adamant non-Christian...was attracted to the gospel music of a local church, and before she could stand to sit through the sermon, the music revealed to her God's creation and His redemption power.
 - She said, (when I heard the music) *"Something inside me that was stiff and rotting would feel soft and tender. Somehow the singing wore down all the boundaries... that kept me so isolated. Sitting there, and then standing with them, to sing, sometimes so spiritually aching and sick that I felt like I might tip over...I began to feel bigger than myself. As I sang God's praises, I began to feel bigger than myself, like I was being taken care of. It almost like I was being tricked into coming back into life. God was tricking me through the music."*
- We see this all the time at our church...

(6) You have to...

(6) Be around the people of God (v. 19)...

- One of the 58 "one another" passages
- You can only do this if you are around. Quit spectating at the church. If you want to make it in life... you have to be around.
- **A few weeks ago:** If you want the access to the power of God, you have to be connected to the people of God.
 - Join.
 - Small group.
 - Frequenting the community of God is the only answer to gradual backsliding.

So, there you have it. Life is war. These 6 ways (*Look carefully; be intentional with time; choose the Spirit; sing a new song; sing it to each other; sing that new song to others; be around the people of God*)

... are how you engage in it. You get this? If you coast, you die. And what most needs to happen to you is the beauty of God needs to come alive in your heart. That song needs to come alive...

Can I tell you how the beauty of God comes into your heart? Psalm 22... Jesus prays, "My God, My God..." song of abandonment. Jesus was forsaken by God. (CRUCIFIED FOR OUR SIN) At the end, he says, I will teach my brothers a new song about you." Because He sang a song of abandonment, we could sing a song of rejoicing in God. You want to know where to start? That's where. You want to know how the power of sin will be broken in your life? It is when you realize that your sin caused Him to sing that song of abandonment for you.

Start there... hearing that song of abandonment is what puts the new song in your heart. Receive what He did for you, in your place, and the power of God itself will come alive in your heart.

- Don't get drunk... don't fall into simply fulfilling spiritual pleasures
 - Be filled with the Spirit

Bullpen:

²⁰ *giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,* ²¹ *submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

- Worship is a choice... only by delighting in Christ can we drive out our affections for sin! Thinking often on the goodness of God.

What is the world system of darkness? Lusts of the flesh; lusts of the eyes; pride of life (MAHANEY)

- Lusts of flesh: body cravings; sensual pleasures. Happiness is found in comfort, sensual delight.
- Lusts of eyes: materialism and coveting things. Happiness is found in a possession.
- Pride of life:
 - self-exaltation;
 - self-sufficiency (you don't desperately need God, you don't need to obey—e.x. tithing; where to go with your future);
 - self-focus (someone wrongs you, and you go all Jack Bauer on them... this season, he's driven by anger over what the Russians have done to him... makes for a good program but a miserable life!)

Commands:

- "Look carefully"
 - (frequently examine: giving goals; my selfish dreams for our church; letting others speak into your life)
- "Make the best use of the time"
 - (strategically fill your life with activities that make you grow; big rocks);
- "Don't be foolish, but understand" (strive to; don't go along with the crowd; don't follow your heart; work to know God!);
 - D. Martyn-Lloyd Jones: Parable of the seeds: Driving the gospel down deeper into your heart