**The Upside Down**

**Week 1: The End My Friend**

**I. Today we're kicking off a new series of messages called, The Upside Down. Some of you are instantly like, "Say What?!?!" That's cool! Some of you are like, "Say What?" As in I have no clue what you're talking about. The Upside Down is the alternate dimension in the hit Netflix show, Stranger Things. Do you know what significant event took place on November 6th, 1983? Will Byers went out of this world and your pastor came into the world! November 6th, 1983! How about that?!?!**

**A. My point is not to promote Stranger Things. My point is to emphasize a resurgence happening in our culture currently regarding a curiosity toward the supernatural. A spiritual realm that supersedes the physical world. If our culture at large is yearning to understand what is truly taking place in the spiritual realm and how that has a very real impact on our physical realm, then let's have the conversation.**

**B. The Bible, from cover to cover, talks a lot about the reality of life beyond what we physically see. The Old Testament Book of Job may be the oldest book in the Bible, and we get this in the first chapter:**

**Job 1:6-7 [Slide]: 6 One day the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them, 7 The LORD asked Satan, "Where have you come from?" "From roaming through the earth," Satan answered him, "and walking around on it."**

**1. That's some interesting stuff which gets my mind rolling on a lot of questions. One thing is blatantly clear in this verse, Satan isn't down in hell with a pitchfork. He's a spirit being roaming the earth. In a few verses God and Satan are having a conversation about this man Job and he is about to be put to the test. We can read Job another time and see how this plays out.**

**2. We can look at many instances throughout the Bible that describe the reality of a spiritual realm. Our physical dimension is better defined in relation to the spiritual realm from a Scriptural perspective than the other way around. There is more to our existence than meets the eyes. Whether we want to be or not, even if we deny it, our physical existence is interconnected with a supernatural reality and there are forces of good and evil in opposition.**

**C. We call this:**

**[Slide]: Spiritual Warfare**

**1. This realm or dimension surrounds us and permeates every part of our existence down to the inner chambers of our heart. These forces of good and evil are engaged in a battle, and we're caught in the crosshairs. There's a lot I cannot explain, but this I know. Good is not an impersonal force, nor is evil. God reigns supreme. He is love and He is good. He has a host of angels that worship and serve Him and together are bringing about the good and pleasing will of God in the heavenlies and on earth. There is an opponent to God's good and perfect will and that opponent is Satan and demonic powers charged to do his bidding.**

**2. Please hang in there with me. Some of you may be freaking out by this point. This would be the worst time to tune out.**

**3. Satan is a defeated foe. He is aware of the endgame that is quickly approaching. However, his aim is to derail the Christ follower and to destroy those who have yet to place their faith in Jesus Christ. I have so many questions as I'm sure you do, but this is the crux of what the Bible explicitly states as spiritual warfare. We can deny this unseen reality and Satan is more than happy to chalk that up as a win. I want to plead that we not do that and stay open over the next several weeks as we discuss the unseen realm that impacts EVERYTHING. Nothing we do is separate from the spiritual reality that surrounds us.**

**D. We're going to start the conversation with Ephesians 6:10-13 and use these verses as a launching point throughout the series. We'll look at verses 14-20 (the armor of God) at different points throughout the series.**

**1. Ephesians has a major theme running through it focusing on God's plan for the Big "C" Church (the family of God). In 6:10, Paul is giving us the grand finale of the fireworks show. This is the beginning of the end.**

a. He's spent 3 chapters (1-3) helping the Ephesians think correctly about God and His character. We call that orthodoxy.

b. Then Paul has spent the last 3 chapters (4-6) helping the Ephesians think correctly about what their response to God should be. We call that orthopraxy.

2. Peppered throughout the letter is this constant reminder that what God is doing through the Big "C" Church is displaying His power in the heavenlies or spiritual realm for all other powers to see! The stakes couldn't be higher. Our engagement in spiritual warfare is more acute BECAUSE we are in Christ!

3. I believe that's why Paul ends his letter in this way:

Ephesians 6:10-13 [Slide]: 10 Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and by his vast strength. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens. 13 For this reason take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand.

4. There are two gutters we need to avoid. Like a bowling lane, we can miss our target by overcompensating in one of two ways.

a. Number one, we embrace the foolish (and rather Western Perspective) that the spiritual is all ancient world mumbo jumbo. Now we have science, so now we know! I do not pit science against faith, but I do gladly acknowledge the limitations of science when it comes to the spiritual realm. If you are born in America and have grown up in the Western Hemisphere, we have been ingrained to rationalize everything. Satan is happy for us to deny him.

Here's how Paul set the stage back in Ephesians 1. Give me an equation or formula for this:

Ephesians 1:20-21 [Slide]: 20 He exercised this power in Christ by raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens- 21 far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

(1) Resurrection from death to life is beyond rationalizing and the scientific method, but it is reality. The same power that rose Jesus from the grave is at work in us! We're not slaves to the scientific method. We are spiritual beings. Again, it doesn't deny the fact that God is a God that brings order out of chaos. Science is a part of knowledge but not the totality. The cornerstone of our faith is the Person of Jesus Christ and His resurrection from the dead! Our authoritative and inerrant Scriptures give a consistent presentation in both the Old and New Testaments that God isn't limited to the laws of nature. He created them!

(2) Paul's world, along with much of the world today, is far more comfortable with the supernatural than we are in the U.S. This is an area that we need to learn from and recognize the reality of the unseen realm and the forces therein. Maybe we're rationalizing ourselves into stupidity? IDK!

b. The second gutter is an unhealthy over-spiritualization that can lead to a lack of responsibility for the individual or fear from thinking demonic activity is behind everything. That would be an overreach on the other side and the Bible presents a more balanced approach. As we talk through spiritual warfare, we shouldn't walk away with fear but with confidence.
Who resides far above any other power that might come against us?

[Slide]: Jesus!

5. As we're staying in our lane and getting a grip on spiritual warfare it is also important to note that Ephesians 6:10 follows immediately on the heels of Paul describing what godly relationships look like in the life of a Christ-follower. And not long before Paul goes into his instructions on relationships, he says this in Ephesians 4:26-27:

Ephesians 4:26-27 [Slide]: 26 Be angry and do not sin. Don't let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and don't give the devil an opportunity.

a. Spiritual warfare most often (*not always though*) is subtle and we must not give the devil a seat at our table. Paul says this can happen when we sit on our anger. Anger is always a secondary emotion. The

**tip of the iceberg! Someone has wounded us, or we are embarrassed. Perhaps we're frustrated or scared? And the catalyst of the emotion is usually derived from a relationship we have. Spiritual warfare is often played out in the tension we experience through interpersonal relationships. This is one of Satan's favorite ploys because we can easily get blinded by emotions.**

**[Slide]: Evil rarely looks the part until it has accomplished its goal!**

**b. If we're angry, we owe it to ourselves and others to process through that anger quickly and determine its source. Because when we don't, we're making the choice to give Satan, and/or the forces of evil, a seat at our table. That's a cracked door that Satan loves to pry open. Often for Christ-follower, the greatest amount of destruction from spiritual warfare happens when we allow evil to reside in our relationships. Do we want the litmus test to see if we're giving the devil a foothold? Do we really? It's a tough list:**

**Ephesians 4:31-32 [Slide]: 31 Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander be removed from you, along with all malice. 32 And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.**

**(1) Do we have to? Yes, that's why tenaciously pursuing unity is such a high value for the Christ-follower.**

**E. With all that lead up, which Ephesians 6:10 calls for, let's begin to unpack these verses and how we have success in the fight! We're equipped by God with everything we need to succeed! Satan and his evil schemes have already been dealt the decisive blow. We must start with the end, because we engage in the fight from a place of confident hope!**

**1. We are not in this fight alone. On the contrary, we don't even think about engaging on our own terms! After Paul has spent almost 6 chapters talking about how we think right about God and live out the Christian life he says:**

**Ephesians 6:10 [Slide]: 10 Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and by his vast strength.**

**a. This letter has been laid out chain linked with direct links to verses 10-20 with all that has come before. It's a sobering reminder that our physical lives overlap the spiritual realm, and we have an enemy that is proactively seeking out our demise. There is no neutral zone in the Christian life. The Spirit of God indwells us and is the power of God at work in us. The Holy Spirit isn't supplemental but the source of strength that supplies all we need to effectively stand in the fight. At the onset, Paul doesn't want any confusion to occur. In the Greek there are 3 different terms that all express different facets of God's strength. We could say Paul's command to the Ephesians is "be strengthened by the Lord's strong strength!" It is a strength imparted by God from without not something we conjure from within!**

**b. The word that is translated "vast" could be expressed by "powerful" or "mighty" and it's the same word Paul used way back in chapter 1:19-20 to describe the power of God, so mighty it could overcome the tomb. I live close to the Naval base and when those C-130's take off I can't help but stand in awe of that magnitude of power. Paul is connecting the power we've been given access to in Christ as the same power God exercised in Christ that pulled Him out of the grave! We should stand in awe of the power God has granted us and not just standing in awe from a distance. We should step into the reality of the victory that has already been won!**

**Ephesians 2:6-7 [Slide]: 6 He also raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might display the immeasurable riches of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.**

**c. When Jesus came up out of the grave He sealed the victory, once and for all, for all those who place their trust in Him! We live in the tension of the "already" and "not yet" and it's in that tension that the fight ensues. The victory is won! We must start with the end in mind!**

**2. Satan and fallen angels (we call demons) know they're heading toward eternal destruction and they can't overturn the victory, but they can derail the Christ-follower and bring as many as possible with them into eternal destruction in hell. That's their goal. In Christ, we're commissioned to:**

**Ephesians 6:11 [Slide]: 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil.**

**a. Satan can taunt us, but he can't touch us!**

3. **We have been granted everything we need to effectively engage the fight and it's the FULL armor of God! Head to toe! And none of us are special forces. If we're familiar with ancient combat, the charge Paul is making is to armor up and hold the wall.**

   **[Slide]: Take our stand!**

   a. **In the matter of 4 verses, Paul uses the word 'stand' or 'resist' 4 times! I think God is trying to tell us something! The Greek word all 4 times is the verb:**

      **[Slide]: ἵστημι**

   b. **There's a lot of battle language being utilized, and it is here as well. It's the idea of "holding the line." The victory has been secured and the power has been supplied. The schemes of Satan are varied and real. He can taunt but he can't touch us. Our task as we engage in the fight, both individually and corporately, is to "hold the line." Take our stand!**

**II. We have so much more to unpack over the next several weeks. We all need to be praying! These are exciting times at Tab Church. God is moving in a mighty way. Lives are being transformed by the gospel. As we take our stand, Satan is going to push back. The victory has been won. We're fighting a defeated foe and God has granted us power and protection to successfully take our stand! God doesn't set His family up for failure. He's already won on our behalf. But we must stand against our enemy.**

**A. Paul in the next few verses is going to clarify even more who our enemy, Satan, really is and how he manifests. Please be praying as we step into a difficult subject next week but one that we need to be aware:**

**Who is Satan and what are his schemes?**

**B. But I want us to end on a positive note. When I'm discouraged by evil and Satan's schemes in the world, I'm reminded of Philippians 2:9-11:**

**Philippians 2:9-11 [Slide]: 9 For this reason God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow- in heaven and on earth and under the earth- 11 and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**