

Sermon: Stand Strong

Scripture: Exodus 1:1-20; 2:11 and  
Ephesians 6:10-20

I read a book entitled “In Charge” by Dr. Myles Munroe. In it he shares the story of his upbringing, in the village of Bain’s Town on the island New Providence, home of the capital Nassau. In this story he talks about a long-standing tradition called Commonwealth-Flag Day. There were about 200, six and seven-year-old, that stood outside wearing their neatly pressed green and white school uniforms. Each of them holding a twelve-inch stick with Great Britain’s Flag attached to it.

All over the island, every school was mandated (instructed, commanded,

required) to gather all the students in assemblies to honor the Queen of Great Britain through patriotic songs, recitations of British poetry and corporate pledges. He recalls participating with millions of others throughout the commonwealth of Great Britain. Knowing that they were considered second-class subjects of the Queen and the United Kingdom of Great Britain, on that hot Commonwealth Day morning under the scorching sun, they sang the songs of the Empire, as they did every morning. Children lined up in their uniforms singing those songs, each of them straining to be heard above others. He said that he did not realize the mental impact of these imperial psalms.

They were brainwashing, converting, conditioning and eventually shaping the self-concept, self-worth, self-esteem, and perceptions of the world in which they would live.

Let me stop in the middle of this story and ask you what are some things that you have allowed to shape you?

What do you repeat over and over to yourself that has shaped the opinion you have of yourself? I'm not good enough. I'm not skinny enough? I'm not pretty enough. I'm not light enough. I'm not dark enough. I'm not smart enough. I'm not tough enough.

**STOP!**

Say this with me, "I AM ENOUGH!"

Now write it down.

Say it with me again.

Say it with me one more time, “I AM ENOUGH!!!”

Back to the story.

The songs reinforced the books used in each classroom by their teachers, volumes that only spoke of the English life, culture, and history. They were being convinced that all that was British was good, honorable, superior, and just. Sounds familiar?

There young minds were conditioned to believe that they were born to serve and worship the empire.

**Write this down:** Limiting thoughts limits one’s ability to succeed.

Stop limiting yourself. Stop down playing the AWESOMENESS God created you to be.

I believe that is why scripture tells us to be transformed by the renewing, the renewing, the renewing of your mind.

The question then becomes do you want to be transformed into something greater?

Or are you content with being the ordinary.

I don't know about you, but I want to be the extraordinary person that God has created me to be.

So, I refuse to succumb to being anything less than ALL (somebody say all) that God has created me to be.

Yet, this is what these young minds were being conditioned to believe. That they were less than. They were conditioned to believe that they were limited in their abilities, that they were not capable of leadership.

They were conditioned to “depend” on the colonial powers for life and value.

They were conditioned to look to others for their worth.

They were being conditioned to believe that others were superior to them. They were trained that they could not determine their own destinies, outline their own future, or plan out their own lives.

Listen to a couple of lines from the song, that from birth these children sang, that left the greatest impact on their very impressionable minds: “Britons never, never, never, shall be slaves” and “Long to reign over us.”

Versions of this song was also song by the various branches of the British Military as they were going out to conquer new territory.

Songs sung by millions in Africa, Asia, the Americas (North and South), and the Caribbean. Both statements sung while they were slaves and subjects of the imperial powers. All my historians know that these places were conquered and colonized (taken over) by the people who they were glorifying in the song.

Imagine the psychological implications (how this affected the mind).

Independent nations led by and composed of people who were robbed of their sense of self, self-worth, self-confidence, and belief in their ability to lead.

Most nations that are products of mental conditioning struggle with leadership issues.

It is ironic that former imperial powers blame and accuse new, developing nations for their lack of effective leadership, when in fact they are the one's responsible for creating the poor leaders in the first place.



Oppression throughout history results in the failure to mentor, develop, cultivate, and produce leaders.

People being oppressed, conditioned not to experience the fullness of who they are, is nothing new. It existed in the days of Moses; in the days of Paul and it continues to exist today.

The Book of Exodus begins more than four hundred years after Joseph, his brothers, and the Pharaoh during Joseph's time, have all died. The new leadership in Egypt, Pharaoh one day looks out over the land and sees the children of Israel and feels threatened, because they have increased greatly in size. So, he embarks on a campaign to subdue, conquer, and oppress the

Israelites, forcing them into slavery. He went on to make a decree that all the Hebrew baby boys be killed at birth and their bodies thrown in the Nile River.

Listen, Systems of oppression crush, humiliate, animalize, impoverish, enslave and kill people who are created in the image of God.

**Write this down:** I refuse to be less than who God created me to be because I AM created in His image.

Some body ought to give God praise right there! Because what you just said is that you refuse to be less than who God created you to be.

You refuse to be walked on, walked over, crushed, reduced, or defeated.

Somebody just got their breakthrough!

What are the reasons people feel the need to oppress others?

Why do people need to make themselves look big and others small?

The biggest reason is FEAR! Fear that growth will happen. Fear that people will take a stand!

Israel had a population explosion. There increase in numbers was a threat to Egypt. Imagine, all of them coming together on one accord. So, Pharaoh felt threatened. He felt threatened because if there was a war to breakout, he feared that Israel might turn on the Egyptians (the people who oppressed them) and take

a stand with their enemies. Secondly, Israel was not totally integrated into Egyptian religion and culture. Israel was separated. God made a distinction between Israel and the nations.

God makes a distinction between us (the body of Christ) and the world.

We are chosen by God to represent Him. And the world fears Christian growth because Christianity is separated from the world's values and the world feels threatened.

Because if ever we were to really come together things would change!!!

If we were to ever really come together, we could build some things.

If we were to ever come together in prayer things would change.

How can God answer the prayers of one person asking for rain and another in the same household asking for sunshine on the same day?

Somebody shout “Stand Strong!”

If we are doing everything that the world is doing how are we different?

I’m preaching to myself now! I am not talking about you, I am talking about me now.

I must Stand Strong on the things of God. I must Stand Strong in the ways of God. I must Stand Strong on the word of God.

Pharaoh didn’t know God. Modern day Pharaohs do not understand us because they don’t know the God we

serve. They don't know Jesus! We have to share Him with them!

Remember Superman? Faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive.... The Man of Steel fights a never-ending battle for truth, justice, and the American way. He has super strength, he could fly, he was invulnerable, super speed, heat vision, he could freeze things with his breath, he had x-ray vision, superhuman hearing and healing abilities. It's a bird, it's a plane, no it's Superman.

He is recognizable with his blue uniform, the flowing red cape and a "S" shield on his chest, Superman is one of the most recognizable and beloved Super Hero of all time. The Man of

Steel is the ultimate symbol of truth, justice, and hope. He is the world's first Super Hero and a guiding light to all.

Superman has spent the last eighty years redefining what it means to stand for truth, justice and the American way. He is the last survivor of the planet Krypton. Raised in Smallville, Kansas. Superman is as much a legend as he is a man: the gold standard of heroism, compassion, and responsibility.

His story is not one of greed or conquest, but instead his story was created to represent the inherent goodness of the human spirit, and the capacity of every living thing to do right by their neighbors.

The apostle Paul knew this all too well because when he wrote to the church at

Ephesus, he was preparing the people to face their oppressors, the great powers of evil. I imagine that Paul envisioned a spiritual warfare between Christians and very personal forces of evil. Christians during that time were being crucified along the roads to Rome. They were thrown to the lions in the Coliseum, so it isn't difficult to imagine what Paul was preparing these new Christians to face. He was preparing them to face the forces of evil. The face of evil was a human face—from the face of the emperor, to the face of the gladiators, to the faces of crowds crying for blood. The oppressors!

Sometimes the faces of evil we face are very real. Sometimes it's our own face and like Superman always being able to overcome his enemies, we as Christians



have to be prepared to overcome ours.  
Even if that enemy we face is ourselves.

Somebody shout, “Stand Strong!!!”

That’s exactly what Paul addresses in Ephesians 6:10-20, where he talks about putting on the whole armor of God. He gives us a comprehensive defense strategy, and we must pay attention to all parts of this armor God offers. So that we can **STAND STRONG** against the very thing that tries to oppress us.

This armor can be used to shift our mindsets. This armor can be used to assist us in preparing to overcome the plots and plans of things that try to oppress us.

While in prison, Paul wrote to the Ephesians, one of the best strategy’s possible.

In Paul's observation he became well acquainted with the armor worn by the Roman soldiers that oppressed God's people. Following Isaiah's lead (**Isaiah 59:17**), Paul made a powerful comparison between a soldier's armor and the spiritual armor of God. The armor that enables us to stand strong.

The first thing, Paul saw was the belt around the soldier's waist. The soldier's sword hung from the belt, providing him quick access to his weapon. Even in the dark, he knew just where to reach for his weapon. Paul tells us, Fasten the belt of truth around our waist. Other people may guess and grope, but Christians live confidently, because we know the truth. That truth is given to us in God's word. Always have a ready word to speak to

your situation when your situation tries to speak to you contrary to God's word.

Then, Paul sees the breastplate protecting the soldier's heart and said, Put on the breastplate of righteousness. Paul says it this way in Ephesians 4 If you have really experienced the Anointed One, and heard his truth, *it will be seen in your life*; for we know that the ultimate reality is embodied in Jesus!

And He has taught us to let go of the old self - life, which was corrupted and made everything new. Out with the old limiting thoughts and in with the new "I AM more than a conqueror thoughts!"

Righteousness is an excellent defense; our critics might clamor, but they have

trouble wounding us if we have done nothing wrong.

**Stand Strong!!!**

Paul saw the soldier's shoes and tells us to put on whatever will make us ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. Shoes on our feet are a sign of readiness to perform our mission. The soldier with his boots off is at a serious disadvantage when the action starts. He can't perform his mission very well. Our mission is to proclaim the good news of the gospel. We need to be ready on the spur of the moment to do that.

Paul saw the soldier's shield, used to provide maximum defense. It was made of thick wood. When flaming arrows hit it, they sank deeply enough that the

flame was extinguished. Paul tells us to take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one.

Paul saw the soldier's helmet and said Take the helmet of salvation. The helmet is one of the soldier's most important pieces of equipment. Even a small splinter of shrapnel can do terrible damage if it strikes a soldier in the head. A serious wound to a leg may require amputation, but a serious wound to the head destroys who we are.

Earl Nightingale said: "Man is the complete sum of his thoughts. Man is made by the armory of thought he forges the weapons to destroy himself. He also fashions the tools in which he can build mansions of joy, strength and peace."

The bible tells us in Proverbs 23:7 As one thinketh in their heart so are they.

*There's another quote I read that says it this way, "Your mind is a garden. Your thoughts are the seeds. You can grow flowers, or you can grow weeds."*

## **Write that down.**

Think of the mind as the soil in which you plant your garden. It offers a foundation for seeds to grow and take root, providing the plants with nutrients and water. It gives them a place to thrive. However, it also offers a wonderful place for weeds to flourish and multiply. The soil doesn't discriminate; its purpose is to create and support plant life of all kinds—beautiful and ugly, bitter and sweet.

**Write this down:** The mind is the seat that holds my thoughts and shapes how I see things.

So be careful of what you give study too.

Like the seeds that are planted in a garden. Every thought we think is a seed.

A conscious thought which reappears often will eventually make its way into your mind, where it will grow into a permanent belief. When we plant a seed in our garden, it always grows into what the seed was meant to be. If you plant roses, you will reap roses. If you plant apples, you will reap apples.

And just like the seeds you plant in a garden, the thoughts you think also grow into what they are meant to be. If your thoughts are predominantly about

scarcity, you will build permanent beliefs of scarcity into your mind at its deepest level. Do you think that might affect your life? You bet! Your outer reality will reflect your inner thoughts and beliefs with great precision.

Gardeners know that if they do not plant seeds of their choosing, their garden will grow seeds that blow in from the wind, such as dandelions and other weeds. In other words, the garden will grow into a wild, unrestrained, weed-filled mess. The same is true when we allow our minds to think whatever thoughts blow into it, without checking and scrutinizing those thoughts. Left unchecked our minds have the potential to become a wild mess, and so will one's life be.



But put in check. Renewed in Christ we can flourish and produce the fruit planted.

I leave you with these words that was quoted by many: “Watch your thoughts, they become your words; watch your words, they become your actions; watch your actions, they become your habits; watch your habits, they become your character; watch your character, it becomes your destiny.”