



Are You Playing Russian Roulette?

As this difficult summer draws to a close and we begin the unique challenge of gearing up for another school year and increased activities in our church's ministry, I can't help but wonder how many of our Peace family are playing Russian Roulette. Let me explain.

In case you are not familiar with the game Russian Roulette, it is played with a revolver. A bullet is placed into one of the pistol's chambers. The other five chambers remain empty. Once the bullet has been placed the cylinder is then rotated so that it is impossible to know which chamber holds the bullet. The "player" then holds the pistol to his head and pulls the trigger. Some might find this game exciting. I find another word for it: STUPID! Most thinking people would be highly reluctant to play Russian Roulette. There is nothing to gain by it and everything to lose.

We would hardly take the chance of injuring or killing ourselves by pointing a gun at our heads and pulling the trigger, even if there was only one bullet in it. By the same token, we probably would not prefer to carry a Russian Roulette equipped gun into a dangerous situation. If the need arose and we had only enough time to fire one shot, the chances are that we would like to have a fully loaded gun instead of a single bullet in an unknown chamber.

How many Christians, however, routinely walk around with their "spiritual pistols" loaded like a gun in Russian Roulette? In his letter to the **Ephesians** the Apostle Paul speaks of the believer putting on "**the whole armor of God**" in order to be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. We sometimes make the mistake of thinking that our world is pretty safe from a spiritual point of view. We can become convinced that it isn't necessary to

carry a fully loaded spiritual gun by our sides. But nothing could be further from the truth. Paul's message to the Ephesians is true for us as well because the devil is continually using the circumstances of our lives to pull us away from God and to have our relationship with our Lord wither and die.

Yet we may be content to live with our spiritual pistols nearly empty, that is, spiritually unequipped to deal with difficulties, tragedies, and even successes in a way that doesn't jeopardize our relationship with God. Being defenseless, these circumstances can result in our drifting away from God as we blame Him for our troubles or fail to recognize His blessings in times of prosperity and victory. Being content to live in such a way is truly playing Russian Roulette, and for far higher stakes than our earthly lives.

What keeps our spiritual pistols loaded is being fully grounded in God's Word. Attendance in worship, use of the Lord's Supper, remembering what God has done for us and works in us through our baptism, reading and pondering the Scriptures – all of these done on a regular and frequent basis is like loading all the chambers in the gun. All of these equip us to defend ourselves from the devil's wiles against which St. Paul warns us.

In the old Andy Griffith Show (one of my favorite programs to watch) Sheriff Andy Taylor didn't carry a gun. Deputy Barney Fife did – but it wasn't loaded. Barney carried one bullet in his shirt pocket. It was part of the comedy to see Barney struggle to unbutton his pocket and try to load his gun when danger arose. But we don't live in an idealistic Mayberry, as did Barney and Andy. Ours is a real world with a real devil seeking after our real souls. What was funny in Mayberry becomes deadly in our world. Let's keep our spiritual defense strong by keeping our spiritual guns loaded. You have this opportunity at PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH through WORSHIP, ADULT BIBLE STUDIES and CHRISTIAN SERVICE. Please let us know what topics and areas interest you so that you may keep your spiritual gun loaded. To do otherwise is like playing Russian Roulette, and it's not worth the risk!

In Christ's service and yours,
Pastor Love