

Sonoraville Baptist Church
Sunday, February 7, 2010 – 6:00 PM
Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor

The Super Bowl and You – Hebrews 12:1

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Hebrews 12:1 (NIV)

Introduction: I don't know if you are in to football or not. If you are, then you are probably aware of the significance of the Super Bowl. If you are not, let me tell you a little bit about it. Tonight's game will be the 44th Super Bowl. The game is between the AFC champion Indianapolis Colts and the NFC champion New Orleans Saints. This is the first Super Bowl for the Saints franchise, and the third for the Colts franchise.

Actually, the first Super Bowl game played in 1967 was not called the Super Bowl. It was called the AFL-NFL World Championship Game, and was part of a merger agreement between the two leagues. It wasn't until 1970 when the merger took place that Lamar Hunt, the founder of the old AFL coined the Super Bowl name after watching his kids play with a super ball in their yard.

Of the teams that have played in the Super Bowl, the Pittsburgh Steelers have won more championships (6) than any other franchise. The Dallas Cowboys and the San Francisco Forty-Niners have won 5 each.

The only NFL teams who have not played in a Super Bowl are the Detroit Lions, Cleveland Browns, Jacksonville Jaguars, and Houston Texans.

It is estimated that somewhere between 130 – 140 million people will watch at least some part of tonight's game. That translates to about 60% of all American households.

With the Super Bowl potential to reach so many people, advertisers are willing to fork over huge amounts of money to have their ads broadcast during the game. Last year, some 30 second ads cost advertisers \$3 million.

One other bit of trivia...since 1987, every player except one who won the "Most Valuable Player" award has been asked on live TV, "*What are you going to do now that you've just won the Super Bowl?*" And they have answered, "*I'm going to Disney World!*" Do you know who the first player to utter the tag line was? Phil Simms, QB of the New York Giants.

The Super Bowl in America is a big deal. In fact, today is called Super Bowl Sunday. It's not an official holiday, but it's treated as one. More parties are thrown, more food is consumed, more beer is guzzled, and more TV is watched on Super Bowl Sunday than on any other day of the year including holidays.

Tonight, I want us to consider how our view of the Super Bowl says something about us as a person. To me, the Super Bowl, and all stuff surrounding it brings out three types of people. I call the first group:

The Curious. These are the folks who are just curious. Mostly, all they care about are the new commercials or the fact that they get to watch grown people yell at the TV, while they put away more food in a four hour period than most people do in a week! They don't know a whole lot about football, if anything. They just know that the Super Bowl brings out certain crazy emotions and reactions in people, and they want to watch them make fools of themselves. Then, there are:

The Casual. These people couldn't care less about the games, the commercials, or even the food. They get excited over the gathering. The Super Bowl means they have a chance to get together with friends and take a break from life for a few hours. They couldn't tell you the difference between a quarterback and a halfback, but they know there are people around, and that's all that matters. Finally there are:

The Committed. To them, the Super Bowl is about football – nothing more and nothing less. These folks have been glued to their TV's for the past 18 weeks during the regular season and post season. They've got their Satellite dishes and cable networks hooked up with all the games at their disposal, and they haven't missed a one. To them, the Super Bowl is the ultimate championship game and they wouldn't miss it for the world.

Now, I don't know if you can relate to any of these categories of people- or not. But since chances are that we're all Christians here tonight, this is a most opportune time for us to stop and consider for a moment how Super Bowl Sunday relates to the Christian life.

When you trusted Christ, in essence, you joined a team and you are involved in a contest of sorts. Actually, it's more of a battle. In **Acts 26:18 (NIV)** Jesus told Paul that He saved him, in part, so that He could be His servant. He said that He was sending him to the Gentiles *“to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”*

That kind of service, and that kind of witness involves warfare. Turning people from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God takes strength and effort and teamwork and sacrifice – everything football players must go through in order to become champions.

The difference is, every minute of every hour of every day we are engaged in a contest that is bigger than all the Super Bowls combined. Instead of 130 million people watching, we have billions of angels and the God of the universe tuning in.

Ephesians 6:10-12 (NIV) says, *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”*

This battle encompasses the whole physical and spiritual universe. And just like the big game, it brings out three types of people. It will bring out:

The Curious. Did you know that in spite of this intense spiritual warfare going on, there are people who call themselves Christian who are only interested in entertainment? They're only into the latest Christian fad, or they get a kick watching other people make fools of themselves as they get 'radical' for Jesus. There may be a battle going on, but you wouldn't know it by watching the **Curious**.

Of course there are also:

The Casual. For this group, the only reason they became a Christian was for the fire insurance and living for the present. They could care less about advancing God's Kingdom and fighting the good fight. There are too many church functions and fun things going on! Give me the a Six Flags trip or a lock in. Let's have some fun, but don't ask me to get involved in a spiritual battle. Don't ask me to share my faith because that's too personal. In fact, the **Casual** wouldn't know a non-believer from a golden retriever. But praise the Lord there are:

The Committed. These are the ones who take their Christian life seriously. They are all about the spiritual contest. They are concerned about lost souls and overcoming the enemy through prayer and Bible Study and the power of the Holy Spirit, and they discipline themselves to be the best they can be for the Lord's service.

The Apostle Paul was like that. He said in **1 Corinthians 9:26-27 (NIV)** *“Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”*

Conclusion: So, we're going to dismiss tonight, and some of us are going to watch the game, or at least most of it. But while we do, let's do so with the knowledge that someone is watching us to see which type of believer we've chosen to be. Are you Curious, Casual, or are you really Committed?