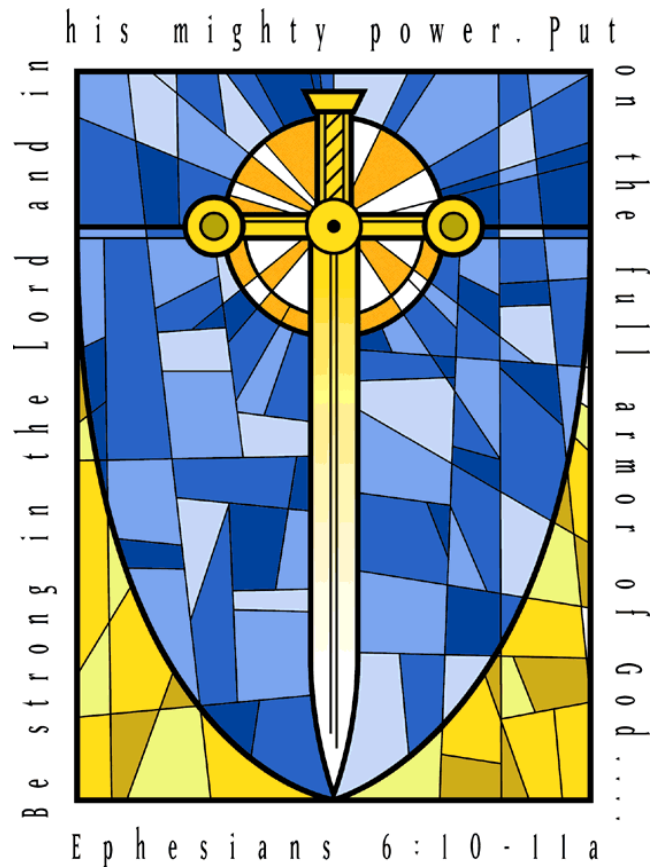


Sermon for Sunday, September 5, 2021

Ephesians 6:10–20 (EHV) <sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God, so that you can stand against the schemes of the Devil. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup> For this reason, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to take a stand on the evil day and, after you have done everything, to stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand, then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness fastened in place, <sup>15</sup> and with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace tied to your feet like sandals. <sup>16</sup> At all times hold up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the Evil One. <sup>17</sup> Also take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. <sup>18</sup> At every opportunity, pray in the Spirit with every kind of prayer and petition. Stay alert for the same reason, always persevering in your intercession for all the saints. <sup>19</sup> Pray for me also, that when I open my mouth a message will be given to me that boldly reveals the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may speak about it boldly, as it is necessary for me to speak.



Do you realize that we are in the middle of a war, standing on a battlefield right now? I'm not talking about the kind of battlefield our military has been on in Afghanistan. It's not an onscreen battle between superheroes and invading monsters. Just watch the evening news. People battling against other people. We hear about school shooters, murderers, rapists, abusers, and bullies. We read about business leaders who abuse their position and take advantage of employees. Government officials take advantage of gifts and donations.

This battleground isn't only on the news. The battleground is on the road. Accidentally cut off someone and watch the anger explode. We battle with next door neighbors. One wrong word and the door slams shut in our faces. We struggle at home. Husbands drop the gloves with wives, and wives fight back. Parents play favorites with their children. Sibling rivalry erupts into an all-out brawl. Those battlefields are real, painful, and difficult. Sometimes we end up with broken relationships thanks to "flesh and blood" people who hurt us or others.

Here in Ephesians 6, Paul warned, **"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the**

**spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”** (Ephesians 6:12 EHV). Our struggle isn’t against flesh and blood people. We struggle against the Devil and his evil forces. Ever since he rebelled against God the Devil has been ruling this dark world. He uses every possible weapon to try and destroy faith in believers’ hearts.

This battle is serious, and we need to be aware of two things. First, the Devil isn’t a comic book character with a pointy tail and a pitchfork. He is a **REAL**, evil spiritual force. There’s nothing good in him. Jesus described him like this: “[**The Devil**] **was a murderer from the beginning and did not remain standing in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he lies, he speaks from what is his, because he is a liar and the father of lying**” (John 8:44 EHV). The Devil is the opposite of good. His name says it all! Devil means “deceiver.” He is 100% pure evil all the time.

Second, the Devil is a **DANGEROUS** spiritual force of evil who works and rules “in the heavenly places.” We can’t see him because he is invisible, like God’s good angels. He is strong and quick and super-intelligent, like God’s good angels. He uses all of that to carry out his evil purposes. He will watch and wait until the time is right. Then, he pounces and destroys. Peter wrote, “**Be alert. Your adversary, the Devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour**” (1 Peter 5:8 EHV). When the Devil gets a hold of us, it won’t be pretty. Like a lion ripping apart its prey to eat it, the Devil wants to rip us apart and destroy us. He is **DANGEROUS!**

The Devil is real. He is dangerous. That’s why Paul encouraged us, “**Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can stand against the schemes of the Devil**” (Ephesians 6:10–11 EHV). We can’t fight this battle on our own. We need strength. Paul literally says, “Become strong *in the Lord and in the strength of his strength.*” Paul used 3 different words for strength. First, he tells us to **ἐνδυναμώω**— “become strong!” Go to the gym! Work out. Build those muscles so we can go from a position of complete weakness to ultimate, dynamite strength.

We’re not building physical muscles. We’re building strength “in the Lord,” and only he can give “the strength of his strength.” Paul used two Greek words for strength that are **ONLY** used for the Lord in the New Testament. The first one is **κράτος**. **Κράτος** strength is something that the Lord has naturally. It didn’t come from anyone or anything. It’s his and always has been, and it is strength that will always win, always be victorious. The second strength word is **ἰσχύς**. **ἰσχύς** strength is guaranteed strength. It’s strength that the Lord has and possesses, and no one can ever take it away from him.

We need the Lord’s strength to fight these battles! “**For this reason, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to take a stand on the evil day and, after you have done everything, to stand**” (Ephesians 6:13 EHV). Put your armor on, because you’re going to need it! In today’s military they wear body armor called ***The Improved Outer Tactical Vest (IOTV)*** to protect themselves against the enemy’s weapons. It weighs 27 pounds. That’s a lot of weight. It’s not super comfortable. The soldiers don’t complain. They don’t “forget” to wear their body armor. Paul wants us to understand that we need to wear God’s armor. We can’t go to battle without it!

**“Stand, then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist”** (Ephesians 6:14 EHV). When an ancient soldier prepared for battle, the first piece of protective equipment he put on was the belt. Small brass plates provided the greatest possible protection. It would also prevent the soldier’s robe from getting in the way while fighting.

When we buckle on the belt of truth, we are preparing for action. The apostle Peter said it like this: **“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect”** (1 Peter 3:15 NIV). We are prepared to answer when we use God’s Word. His Word is the only truth we have, and we need to be ready to share it with someone else whenever we have the opportunity!

**“Stand...with the breastplate of righteousness fastened in place”** (Ephesians 6:14 EHV). After a soldier buckled his belt around his waist, he would have fastened the breastplate over his chest. The breastplate protected his vital organs. If he didn’t wear that piece, an arrow or sword could easily pierce the soldier’s chest, wounding him fatally.

We need to protect our vital faith from every one of the Devil’s attacks. The breastplate of righteousness provides the protection we need, the perfection we can’t earn. It’s not something we can go out and buy. Romans 3:22 says, **“This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe”** (Romans 3:22 NIV). God gives it. Gives. He doesn’t charge. He doesn’t demand good attempts. He doesn’t require a checklist filled out before we can have it. He gives it freely! When we have the breastplate of righteousness on, it’s like a giant hug from Jesus. His love, his life, his forgiveness, his victory surround us and don’t let the Devil anywhere near us. We are ready to live for him.

**“[Stand]... with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace tied to your feet like sandals”** (Ephesians 6:15 EHV). Marching was an essential part of a soldier’s life, and no soldier could march very far without something sturdy protecting his feet. A Roman soldier’s shoes had a thick leather sole and had metal studs on the bottom to give them traction on any kind of surface. Without his studded shoes, a soldier could easily slip and fall. A fallen soldier was an easy target for the enemy.

The gospel of peace makes us ready to stand against the devil’s attacks. We have news that scatters the darkness. It disperses the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. It brings peace, real peace, where only conflict and war existed. The peace Jesus brings to each of us is different from any other kind of peace. Paul said, **“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”** (Philippians 4:6–7 NIV). When I get anxious, when the battle seems to be the fiercest in my heart and my brain, I say this passage to myself. When I get to the last part about God’s peace, he gives it. It’s amazing! I don’t understand it. I don’t deserve it. He gives it, and I’m ready to go on, to try a little harder, to live a little louder for him!

**“At all times hold up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the Evil One”** (Ephesians 6:16 EHV). A Roman shield was made from two sturdy pieces of wood glued together and covered with canvas. Next, craftsmen stretched leather tightly

over the wood. A leather strap to carry it, along with strips of iron binding the edges completed the shield.

Shields were a vital part of the soldier's defense. Archers often dipped their arrows in tar, lit them on fire, and launched them at their opponents. Wooden shields could catch on fire, and when the soldiers dropped them, they were vulnerable to attack. Roman soldiers drenched their leather wrapped shields with water before they went into battle. When fiery arrows struck the water-soaked shields, the flames went out immediately. Soldiers could also link together their shields for more protection in what was called a phalanx.

The shield of faith is our protection against temptation. When the Devil lobbs his fiery temptation arrows at us, don't let them smolder and burn in your shield. Trust Jesus for strength and extinguish them quickly. If the temptation is too strong, band together with other faithful believers. Rely on their support and their words of encouragement to extinguish the arrows that burn the brightest and hottest. We can't lose. Jesus promised us, **"Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith"** (1 John 5:4 NIV84).

**"Also take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"** (Ephesians 6:17 EHV). A Roman soldier's bronze helmet protected his head and also the sides of his face. It was designed to protect his skull and neck from enemy weapons. The helmet of salvation covers us with Jesus' ultimate victory over the Devil. When we wear this helmet nothing can ever take us away from Jesus!

Don't forget about the only weapon Paul includes in the armor of God. He tells us to stand with our sword drawn and ready. A Roman sword was a two-foot-long piece of iron, heated in a forge and coated with coal dust. The coal dust formed a hard carbon coating on the blade and helped it stay sharp.

The sword of the Spirit is a powerful weapon—greater than any light saber or military weapon. Jesus wielded it against the devil's temptations when he said, **"It is written..."** (Matthew 4:4,7,10). We can do the same! In the book of Hebrews God reminds us, **"For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart"** (Hebrews 4:12 NIV). Every time we swing this sword, we cut away the Devil's lies and find the truth. When we thrust this sword at him the Devil turns and runs.

Put on your armor--we can't afford to go anywhere without it! We tie God's truth tightly around our waists. We protect our faith with the breastplate of Jesus' righteousness. We wear his peace on our feet so we can walk safely in slippery, dangerous situations. We hold up the shield of faith to guard us against every evil attack. The helmet of salvation protects us from the Devil's deadly blows, and we can go on the offensive and strike back at the enemy with the sword of the Spirit—with God's own words and promises. Put on your armor--God's armor, and let's fight the battle against our enemies. We don't have to be afraid, because Jesus has already guaranteed the victory! Amen.

To God alone the glory! Pastor Jon Brohn