

Be Strong

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Ephesians 6:10-18

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Good morning. Today is February 12th, a very important week on the calendar. But depending on your preferences, it could be important for two totally different reasons. So as I was preparing for this message and asking the lord, lord, what do you have for us? I really wrestled between these topics. You've got Super Bowl Sunday. Valentine's Day. Competition. Love.

Well, I'm glad to tell you, I've come to a conclusion, and we are going to be talking about preparing for battle. But then I thought, you know, either one of those can work, depending on your spouse. So. All jokes aside, the title of our message today is be strong. We're going to be looking in the book of Ephesians, chapter 6. So if you begin turning in your bibles to Ephesians, chapter 6, beginning in verse ten.

While you do that, I'd like to give you some background information about the passage that we'll be reading today. The book of Ephesians was originally just a letter written by the apostle Paul while he was in prison in Rome, the first time. And he's writing to believers in Ephesus. And this letter really can be broken into two main categories. For the first three chapters, Paul is talking about this grand gospel narrative.

And this family of God that he's creating through Jesus Christ and how all our invited because of the sacrifice of Jesus. And then in chapter four, Paul shifts gears and for the rest of the letter, he talks about what does it look like then to be part of that family. How do we live in light of this grand gospel story? So when we enter into our story today, we're entering at the very end of this letter.

As Paul is wrapping it up, he's finishing talking about how do we live in the family of God? But I know today that even as you come here to church, many of you may just find yourselves weary. Maybe you feel weary emotionally today. It's been a year it's been a season. It's been a week of just emotional attacks.

Maybe interpersonal relationships that are strained, thoughts inside your own mind, and you say, man, I just, I'm weary today. Maybe you come this morning and you feel weary physically. We have 5 children. So I feel like someone's always sick. Can I get an amen from the young parents? So we feel a little weary that way, but maybe you have a disability or an illness that you're wrestling with and you come in and you say, man, I'm just, I'm weary today.

Also, I know that some may come in here and feel weary, spiritually today. Like you've gone through a season where you just say, lord, I don't feel like I hear you. I'm tired. My hope and my prayer is that the Holy Spirit today through the word of God will give us a renewed sense of hope. A renewed sense of hope as his people.

But before we get into our passage, I'd like to pray. Lord Jesus, we don't come to your word lightly. We know that you long to speak to us. You long to move our hearts today. And so Holy Spirit, we ask that you would open our ears, open our hearts and ways that we may not even realize today. And for the one who feels weary, emotionally, physically, spiritually.

I pray that you would give us a renewed sense of hope today through your word. We give you all the glory in Jesus name. Amen. So if Ephesians chapter 6, we're going to begin reading in verse ten. Paul writes, finally,

be strong in the lord and in his mighty power. Paul is saying, hey guys, it's time to be strong. It's time to take a stand, but notice it says be strong in the lord.

Paul is making it clear that we should stay in the presence of God. This is not a strength that we venture out on our own and do it our own way. It starts with staying near to the lord. And Paul also says, we're standing strong in his mighty power. This is God's power that we use to be strong. It's not by our own strength. And Paul is just laying the groundwork for the rest of what he's going to tell us about being strong.

Let's read verse 11. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the Devils schemes. I love that God has created a specific set of armor. For us to access his power. Isn't that beautiful? It's his design for his power. But with all of that being said, did you notice we have a responsibility?

Paul begins with put on the implied noun as you put on. And this is one of the great mysteries all throughout scripture. What does it mean that it's God's work and it's his story and it's his power. And yet you and I have a very real responsibility in the journey. And Paul is saying it's both in this moment. And we access God's strength by putting on the full armor of God.

And notice it said full armor. This is not a piecemeal kind of thing. These all work together as a package deal for our strength. And honestly, as I was studying these, I thought it was amazing. Pastor Joel and I were just talking between services, how really God has positioned these in such a way that they flow from one to another. And we see that very intentional for our strength.

So I want you to understand this is a package deal, but God has created and resourced us to battle the enemy. This spiritual battle is not just for missionaries or pastors. Sometimes we think, you know, they're doing spiritual warfare. This battle is coming to you whether you like it or not. Because the devil is going to make every effort to steal and kill and destroy.

Now this morning, you might say, I don't feel this whole spiritual battle. I don't know that I ever have. Life has just felt pretty normal. I want to offer you two possible answers to that this morning before we dig into our passage. The first is, maybe God has you in a season of preparation. God is preparing you and he's saying, hey guys, time to put on the armor now before the battle comes.

And God is molding you and preparing you for the fight ahead. But I think the much more sobering answer is, have we become so numb in our spirits that we miss the fact that the enemy is already wreaking havoc. That's a scary thought. It's something we should each process this morning. Let's continue reading in verse 12.

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. Now, I personally think out of all the verses we're going to look at, this is maybe the most difficult to rightly understand. So I want to unpack it a little bit. Because the reality is we do face human opponents of the faith.

Throughout scripture and even Paul himself, it often talks about people who are opposed to God's plan and God's people. Even earlier in this very book, Paul writes in Ephesians four 14, and he warns about the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. And we know that throughout scripture, there's a pattern that you and I are responsible for the decisions we make.

You're not going to be able to stand before the lord one day and give an account for your life and say, the devil made me do it. It wasn't me. We're responsible for our actions. And so I asked myself, what does Paul mean when he says that our struggle is not against flesh and blood? I believe he's trying to get us to understand a few key things before we talk about this armor.

Number one, Satan and his demons are actively trying to destroy you with spiritual attacks. Paul wants us to realize there is more to the story than what you see. You have a very real enemy. But the second is that this spiritual battle does manifest itself in a very physical way.

Those who have not submitted to Jesus Christ and who walk in wickedness are tools of the enemy in this very spiritual battle to steal, kill, and destroy. And likewise, for the people of God. As we put our faith in Jesus, as we submit to him, you are part of this spiritual battle. And the decisions you make in this physical world have spiritual implications of healing and hope and life.

And it's in light of both of those facts that Paul is starting off by saying, we don't fight like physical warriors. We don't just go out and win this spiritual battle by killing people. This is not the crusades or holy Jihad, this is the spiritual battle. And we don't protect ourselves in this battle by just slapping on Kevlar and becoming the best prepper.

So what does it look like to be strong and put on the full armor of God? Let's continue reading in verse 13. Therefore, put on the full armor of God so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground and after you've done everything to stand. The day of evil attacks each and every one of us. Did you notice it does not say if the day of evil comes, says when?

When the day of evil comes because there is a spiritual attack from the enemy that is out to destroy every true believer. Not just missionaries, not just pastors. The enemy is after your heart, the enemy is after your mind. The enemy is after your marriage. The enemy is after your children. The enemy is after our church. The enemy is after our community. We are at war.

And Paul is stating that the goal of this spiritual armor is that after everything will still be standing. I imagine like a hurricane coming and battering the coast. And after all the wind and all The Rain stops, the home is still standing. That is God's desire and what Paul's expressing for each and every one of us in the spiritual batter, battle.

So now Paul is going to explain, what is this practically look like? So let's continue reading on in verse 14. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth, buckled around your waist. Truth is the starting point of spiritual warfare. The people of God must begin with the reality that there is absolute truth in this life.

And God's truth is to surround us and not only hold our armor together, but keep us from being exposed. And without absolute truth, we are left exposed to the attacks of the enemy and exposed to our own shame. And I think to myself, it's no wonder that in this time that we face such a serious attack from the enemy in our culture. And when those around us, that the major driving force is this idea of moral relativism.

The idea that, you know what? If that religion is good for you, cool? And you can have that religion and you can have that belief and if you want to define your body in this way and if you want to define what you put in it in this way and how you connect with people and how we respond to people, you do you. It's an absolute affront against the reality that there is absolute truth.

And this leads to the next verse and the next piece of armor. With the breastplate of righteousness in place. Notice that Paul jumps directly from truth to righteousness. Absolute truth by very nature declares that there is a clearly stated order of what is right. If you have an absolute God, then he is the creator of everything.

If he's the creator of everything, then he decides what he has created, how it's to be used. And if his clear expectations for what he has created, our disobeyed and twisted, that's what we call sin. It's taking what God has created to be used in a specific way for his glory and twisting it and using it in unnatural ways for our own glory.

And this is why in our wickedness, humanity pushes for a godless reality. Have you ever thought about it? I don't think anybody really loves the idea that they're a cosmic accident. That they're no more important than the tree next to them, The Rock next to them, the mud next to them, and that they have no intrinsic value. I don't believe that anyone wants to believe that.

But instead, we don't want the submission and the responsibility that comes along with acknowledging absolute truth and an absolute creator. Now, as we think about a breastplate, I think, you know, this really covers what's most important and valuable in your body. All the most precious, vulnerable parts of your body, especially your heart.

And I think the Holy Spirit is trying to get us to understand walking in paths of righteousness, protects what matters most. Now, don't misunderstand. I am not saying that we earn our Salvation. I am not saying that we somehow earn our way to Jesus, but because of being saved by grace through faith.

If a believer then continues on in sinful patterns and lifestyles, we lay ourselves vulnerable to the attack on what matters most. And we see that at play in our own lives and in our own church, marriage is destroyed by sexual sin in the body of Christ. Children left scarred by the effects of rage and drunkenness.

Friendships severed because of lies and dishonored, dishonesty. Even entire churches split because of gossip. And selfishness. Righteousness protects what matters most. Let's continue in verse 15. And with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

Now, when I think of feet, I think not only of stability, but I think of movement. My feet keep me upright, but they also take me places. I'd first like to talk about the idea of movement. The reality is that as the people of God, we don't just proclaim that there's absolute truth and that there's righteous living. If we stop there as a church, we become inward focused, self-righteous, bigots.

Paul is saying it doesn't stop there. Instead, we continue on and we carry the gospel the good news that God through the blood of Jesus has made peace available. We share with others that they can share in that piece as they put their faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. And Paul is saying we should have a readiness to spread that good news.

We're not just bashing people with truth and with righteousness, but we say, there's good news. There is peace to be had in Jesus Christ. So then I think, how does this relate to stability? If that's the readiness to go, the readiness to move with the gospel, how does this keep me firmly planted? Well, the reality is, as we stay committed to spreading the gospel, God in turn invests back in our own stability.

We read a verse like this last week, but this is Mark 8 35. And this is Jesus talking, and he said, for whoever wants to save their life, will lose it. But whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. We are ready to move forward with this good news and God in turn gives us stability in ourselves. Let's continue in verse 16.

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And when we talk about faith, we're talking about believing and trusting that what God says is true. What he said about himself, what he said about you and I, the promises he's made for his people today, the promises he's made for our future.

And these arrows from the enemy, I believe, come in all different circumstances. These arrows can come in moments of trial in your life. The loss of a loved one. Betrayal of a friendship. A physical illness, but I believe they can also come in the form of successes. A raise at work. A physical accomplishment.

Maybe a great relationship that God has given you. And it's in these moments that the enemy tries to insert a lie. If God really loved you, you wouldn't be feeling this pain today. If you were really a Christian, you wouldn't have this temptation. Now that you have this financial stability, who needs the church?

Everything you need is found in your relationship to the person next to you. And the enemy tries to insert a lie, but I want you to understand those circumstances in themselves are not the flaming arrows of the enemy. We talked last week about how every experience every moment of your life is something that God has entrusted to you to provide return for him.

And for his glory. So it's not the moment that is the arrow, instead it's the lie that the enemy is trying to attach in that moment. And so our defense is to extinguish these lies with the faith. That God is who he says he is, and he will do what he has promised. And what he said about me is true. We read on in verse 17.

Take the helmet of Salvation. The hope that you and I will spend eternity with Christ is a guard to our mind in the battle. That crisis saved us from spiritual sin and death. And one day, Christ will also be our physical Salvation as we receive new bodies that are no longer bound to this life of sin and death. And so it's this confidence that guards our minds as believers, I want to encourage you this morning.

You don't have to guess if you're saved. You don't have to live your whole life thinking, have I done enough? And on your deathbed, go, we'll see. First John 5, 11 through 12, says this. And this is the testimony. God has given us eternal life. And this life is in his son, whoever has the son has life. Whoever does not have the son of God does not have life.

And so if you put your faith in Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins, let that be a guard to your mind that you are saved. The second half of verse 17, Paul says, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. Now, the Bible is the word of God that we're talking about here, and we should be immersing ourselves in God's word as a way that we attack the enemy.

If you notice, this is the first offensive piece of armor. Everything else has been on the defense. This is now how we wage war back. But I want to ask you a question. What good is a sword laying on the ground? Not good at all. Now take that same sword and put it in the hands of a skilled warrior, what good is it now? It's powerful.

Simply as a book in the hands of mere humans, the Bible is powerless for our victory. Now, I know many of you probably just went, oh, what? Stay with me here. There are many non-Christian biblical scholars. Who live in spiritual defeat every day? Because the Bible is not God.

The father, the son, and the Holy Spirit, our God, amen? We don't worship the Bible. We worship God. So the power of the scriptures are in the hands of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the author of the scriptures, and he's the one that truly changes us as we dig into God's word. It's his sword.

And so as we allow the Holy Spirit to meet us through the word of God, we access his power to cut down the enemy. Paul finishes with verse 18. And pray in the spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

Paul concludes by declaring that the key to being strong is getting low. Prayer, if you think about it, it's the ultimate act of humility. The ultimate act of submission because we come and we say, I cannot do this. And that becomes the launch pad for the Holy Spirit to guide us in the lord's power as we put on the armor of God.

So this morning, to the one who feels weak, I want to encourage you, be strong. There's two things I want to encourage you for this battle as you think about putting on the armor of God. Number one is, you're fighting from a place of victory. We sang about it right before this message.

Jesus said, in John 16:33, in this world, you will have trouble, but take heart. I've overcome the world. God has already purchased your victory through the blood of Jesus. We need to know as we enter this fight, I'm fighting from a place of victory. And second, you will experience Jesus. In more intimate and precious ways.

In the battle, then you ever could on the mountaintop. Paul speaks of this in second Corinthians 12 9 and ten. He says, but he said to me, my grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, I will boast all the more about my weaknesses so that Christ's power may rest on me.

And that is why for Christ's sake, I delight in my weaknesses in insults in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties for when I am weak, then I am strong. I know many of you here this morning could attest to the fact of the sweetness of knowing Jesus in the valley. Of just crying out to him with tears and anguish and saying, lord, I need you.

And so this battle is really precious to us. We're fighting from victory, and we can know him more deeply because of it. So this morning, I say, be strong. In the presence and the power that God has made available for your victory. Hold fast to absolute truth, your belt. Learn to walk in paths of righteousness, your breastplate.

Be ready to speak of the good news that God has brought peace. Your shoes. Extinguish the lies of the enemy with faith. Your shield. Guards your thoughts with the assurance that you have been saved by the blood of Jesus. Your helmet. And get into God's word. That the Holy Spirit through his word might give you the strength to fight back.

And in all these things, we pray. We stay humble to say, lord, do it only you can do in me. And I'll stay faithful to put these things on. So let's do that very thing this morning. Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, I thank you that you have bled and suffered and died and rose again in victory.

And so each and every one of us this morning, know how no matter how discouraged we may feel emotionally, physically, spiritually. We know that in this grand spiritual battle against darkness, you have already won. And so we come with hope today, lord. Lord, I pray that you would teach us to put on your armor. That we might access your strength.

Because you've made it available to us. And lord, even as we sing at the end of this service of the battle belonging to you, I pray that you would renew us with a sense of hope today. All these things we ask in Jesus name. Amen.