

Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians 10:3–5

I. Introduction

Good morning. If this is your first time here, my name is Adrian Garcia. I am the associate pastor of student ministries and missions here at Cornerstone. Our lead pastor John Marc will return next Sunday from his sabbatical.

We always tell our guests three things: First, we are grateful that you are here. Thank you for choosing to worship with us this morning. We consider you God’s gift to us.

Second, you’re in a place where the ground is level, meaning no one is any higher, better, or more significant than anyone else. The ground at the foot of the cross is level, and we are all sinners in need of a Savior. And Jesus is that wonderful Savior.

While your salvation may be a personal matter, God never designed it to be a private matter. He wants us to live as brothers and sisters in the family of God. This leads to the third thing we have to tell you: That we love you enough to speak the truth to you. And that is Truth with a capital T. The truth from God’s Word about Jesus and His work and how He can transform your life. He is the Cornerstone of our faith.

“Is not our life a warfare? It is so; for we struggle with the common [trials] of human life. Is not our [faith] much more a warfare? It is so; for we struggle with the opposition of the powers of darkness, and with many enemies who would keep us from God and heaven. We have enemies to fight against, a captain to fight for, a banner to fight under, and certain rules of war by which we are to govern ourselves. Now it is [required] that a soldier be both [courageous] and well armed.”¹

This quote captures the reality of the Christian life. We are in a constant struggle. A constant battle. A constant war. We have a real enemy who presents real challenges to our faith. Wisdom is in that last line. A good soldier must possess courage and be well-supplied. This passage in Ephesians shows us where we find our courage and supply.

Let’s read Ephesians 6:10–20...

Main Idea: Given what God has done in the gospel (Eph. 1–3) and commanded (Eph. 4–6), Paul gives three final exhortations to the church to stand firm in the battle of the Christian life.

¹ Matthew Henry, [*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2319.

Outline:

- 1) **Stand Firm in Christ's Strength and Strategy (10–12)**
- 2) **Put On God's Supplied Safeguard (13–17)**
- 3) **Pray in the Spirit for Shared Vigilance (18–20)**

Purpose: My prayer for all of us is that we would be strengthened through this passage, and as a church stand firm in the battle.

I. Stand Firm in Christ's Strength and Strategy (10–12)

Christ's Strength

Paul opens this section with the word **Finally** because he is summarizing everything he has said in the letter so far. In light of the theological truths he has unpacked and the application of the gospel to daily living, he wants to end the letter with a sober yet encouraging charge to be ready for the battle.

At the center of the battle is **the Lord**. Ephesians presents a high view of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the resurrected King, seated at the right hand of the Father. He is far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. God has put everything in subjection to Christ. All things are under His feet. God has given Jesus as the Head of the church. He is the reigning sovereign Lord. This is what Paul prays that the church would understand in Ephesians 1:15–23.

When we consider the church's warfare, we shouldn't approach it with a pessimistic mentality. Christ is already victorious. As I mentioned in the previous teachings, Christ is building and preserving His church. Satan will not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18) As we watch the world around us plunge deeper into immorality; we shouldn't lose heart.

Paul writes **be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might**. The phrase could be translated as "Be strengthened" because the idea here is of Christ strengthening us. It is His strength being dispensed. It is not our strength. But Paul writes this as a command.

What does that mean? Because of the gospel, we have been granted Christ's strength and might. Ephesians 1 says that the power that rose Christ from the dead is now at work in us, producing our sanctification. **How does this apply to us?** We are responsible for cooperating with Christ's power in us to grow. The power doesn't come from us. It comes from our Lord, and we must depend on Him for it.

How do we experience this strength? Notice it says **be strengthened in the Lord**. To access this strength, we must be walking with Christ. We can't live contrary to His will and expect to

be strengthened in Him. Instead, we must walk in obedience; as we do so, the Lord supplies us with His strength.

This should be a great encouragement to us. If you are a Christian and have been walking with Christ for any duration of time, then you know that your strength is absolute weakness. Your courage, apart from Him, is cowardice. But in Christ, you have access to His infinite strength and might. And He is always willing to dispense it to those who humbly acknowledge their need.

Paul opens this section by reminding us that the Lord's strength is the only basis for our ability to live the Christian life. We are engaged in a battle and are under attack every day. The only way we can persevere and live a life worthy of the gospel is by Christ's strength. He is the One who clothes us with faith, humility, love, goodness, courage, and wisdom. He sets our minds on things above, where He is, and not on things of this world.

To continue in Christ's strength we need to **put on the full armor of God**. The armor is described in the following verses, but notice that this is the armor of God. This helps us remember that God supplies the armor. This is His means of protecting His people. If we are faithful to put on the armor, we can have confidence in its ability to protect.

After pointing us to **Christ's strength**, Paul shifts to **Christ's strategy** for the fight...

Christ's Strategy

Paul says that we need to put on the armor **so that we will be able to stand firm**. The phrase "stand firm" is mentioned three times in this passage. The first two (v.11, 13) are written to communicate to us that this is the goal and strategy. We are to stand and be steadfast and unmovable in the Lord.

Although standing on a battleline in war certainly involves offensive attacks, the picture here isn't of an army charging ahead. It's not one of advancement but rather of holding firm. One pastor summarized it this way, **"the present picture is not of a march, or of an assault, but of the holding of the fortress of the soul and of the Church for the heavenly King" (CB).**²

Standing firm then conveys a watchfulness, alertness, and vigilance for the battle. We are to hold our ground, or to put it another way, to hold fast to the truth we have believed. To maintain an unwavering commitment to convictions rooted in God's Word.

The last mention of this phrase to **stand firm** is in verse 14. There it isn't being used to describe the standing firm. Rather it is commanding it. We are commanded to stand firm in Christ.

² Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 10, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 176.

Hebrews 3:6 but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house—whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

Hebrews 3:14 For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,

Matthew 10:22 “You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.

Colossians 1:22–23 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—²³if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard...

- A mark of saving faith is standing firm.

Why this emphasis on the need to stand? Look with me at verse 13 **so that you will be able to resist in the evil day**. This is a reference to a time when the conflict is most severe. This can come in the form of persecution, an onslaught of false teachings, mounting societal pressures, disputes that disrupt the fellowship in the church, or general trials that come into our lives.

Paul was no stranger to trials. He was very familiar with hardship. He knew by experience Christ’s words in the Upper Room. “In the world you will have tribulation” (John 16:33). He understood the unique temptations that arise in our hearts when suffering or difficulty comes.

And the command for us, no matter the attack, is to be resolved to stand firm. By God’s grace, we must resist Satan and our propensity to sin. That we would stay committed to Christ, be committed to the life He has called us to, and put on the whole armor He has supplied for His glory and the advancement of the gospel.

One aspect of any good strategy is to know your enemy. That’s why he mentions Satan, his schemes, and his forces here.

Our Enemy

The first thing we should know about our enemy is that he is crafty (skilled). The end of verse 11 says we are to **stand firm against the schemes of the devil**. Our enemy has a strategy. One pastor has pointed out, **“Satan has had multiple millennia to study and master the human disciplines, and when it comes to human subversion, he is the ultimate manipulator.”**³

³ Bryan Chapell, *Ephesians*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 337.

His schemes include temptations and snares. He plots assaults, conflicts, and persecutions. He manipulates through deceptions, deception, and fraud. He can identify our weaknesses and can expertly apply the optimal enticement. He is skilled and prepared, but before we give him too much credit, we must never forget that we have an infinitely greater Savior.

But we need to be wise to our enemy's ways. He will constantly test our knowledge of God's Word, "Did God really say?" His manipulation of the truth is masterful. He disguises himself as an angel of light and even his servants disguise themselves as servants of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:14–15). And if he can't deceive us, he will try to destroy us by persecution. **1 Peter 5:8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.**

But listen to what Peter says next, **v.9–10 But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.**

A key to us standing firm is in verse 12, **For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.**

Paul points out something that we need to be reminded of. Our battle is not against flesh and blood. Our struggle isn't against people. It isn't a physical battle. We can't forget this because when the pressure from the world continues, we will be tempted to sin in response if we ignore this truth. We will forget the words of Christ and not love and pray for our enemies.

"It is the Devil which blows up in us the fire of lust, pride, covetousness, and all other vices. He lays before us evil baits, agreeable to our nature, and so seduces us. He enrages persecutors, he blinds idolators, he seduces heretics, etc. If this were well weighed it would make us pity "flesh and blood" when it fights against us, rather than envy [that is, feel a grudge against] it; it would keep us from snarling like a dog at the stone which is flung." – William Gouge, The Whole Armour of God (London: 1619) p. 60

And so how do we stand firm in a godly, Christlike manner? How do we persevere through the onslaught of Satan's attacks and temptations? Paul points us to God's supply...

II. Put On God's Supplied Safeguard (13–17)

In verse eleven, Paul said to **put on the whole armor of God**, and here in verse thirteen, he tells us to **take up the whole armor of God**. The force of both of these commands is that we are to fully embrace the supply of armor that God has given us. We are to take it up and apply the use of it in our lives.

Paul is drawing on Isaiah 11:5, 59:17, and possibly 52:7. In the first two passages, we find the righteous Branch, the arm of the Lord, Yahweh Himself, is the One who is clothed in this armor. This is Jesus' armor. He was equipped in this armor during His earthly ministry. And one day soon, He will come back arrayed in this armor to defeat His enemies.

Just to be clear, this armor isn't physical. Instead, each piece represents a virtue (or, in the case of God, an attribute) that Christians are called to exemplify.

The Belt of Truth

Paul exhorts them to take up the armor writing, **HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH**. A girdle in this context refers to a type of belt that would be used to secure loose clothing for the battle. **Now how does one put on truth?** The idea here is of someone putting on integrity. As believers, we have been empowered and commanded to put on honesty, uprightness, decency, and goodness from the heart. This is what we see David acknowledge in **Psalm 51:6, Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.**

The word for truth in this context has a close association with the English word sincere or sincerity. Someone has said, "As 'the girdle ... gives ease and freedom of movement', so 'it is the truth which gives this freedom with ourselves, with our neighbours and with God. Lack of perfect sincerity hampers us at every turn.'"⁴

"Sincere" comes from the Latin *sine ceres* meaning "without wax." Merchants in ancient Rome used wax to disguise a chip on a statue, a ceramic pot, or a vessel. The craftsman would attempt to hide the mistake of his chisel or damage that had come to the product. No one would be able to see the flaw. That is until the sun's heat melted the wax or the wax became eroded. The merchant was engaged in a deception, passing off an imperfect product as a perfect one. In this way, he wasn't being truly sincere.

If we allow cracks and defects in our life to be ignored and go unaddressed, and worse, if we attempt to cover them up, we aren't being truly sincere to our profession of faith. We have to put on the belt of truth and sincerity if we are going to be ready for the battle.

The Breastplate of Righteousness

When we read **HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**, we might think this references Christ's imputed righteousness. It is true that because of the gospel, we have now been justified and forgiven of our sins. We now stand before God in the righteousness of Christ that has been credited to our account.

⁴ Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 10, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 179.

But this isn't what is meant here by the breastplate of righteousness. Instead, this refers to the practical application of that righteousness to daily living. If we aren't committed to living a righteous life, we have a gaping hole in our armor. A breastplate was used in battle to protect a soldier's chest from attacks. In the same way, a determination to grow in sanctification, holiness, and righteous living will guard our life against Satan's schemes.

The Boots of the Gospel of Peace

Look at verse 15 it says, **shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE**; The word here for preparation is a "prepared foundation." This gives the idea of firm knowledge and dependence upon the gospel that produces peace in a person's heart. The gospel is our foundation, our sure footing. We must remind ourselves of the gospel daily. Doing this will remind us of our purpose. We are a people who have been rescued and are being transformed for the glory of God.

When we constantly keep the gospel before our hearts, it reminds us of the glorious peace we have with God. It helps us to not live with legalism or self-righteousness. We must recognize that we cannot earn or merit God's favor. And so, when we fall in the battle, the gospel reminds us of God's free and gracious gift of salvation, which then leads us to His mercy and grace through repentance.

The Shield of Faith

Paul then transitions to the shield of faith saying, **in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. What is the shield of faith?** Faith is demonstrated in a dependence upon God. It is fixed gaze upon the Lord trusting Him and all that He has promised. Listen to **Psalm 25:15, My eyes are continually toward the Lord, For He will pluck my feet out of the net. Psalm 123:2 Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, So our eyes look to the Lord our God, Until He is gracious to us. Psalm 141:8 For my eyes are toward You, O God, the Lord; In You I take refuge; do not leave me defenseless.**

A more significant, incredible, and fuller view of God is like a shield for the believer. It is this shield that protects us from all the flaming arrows of the evil one. In ancient times arrows would be dipped into pitch or tar-like substance and then set on fire before being shot from the bow. Shields were covered in a thick layer of leather to absorb the arrow and extinguish the flame.

The piercing pain of trials can disorient and confuse a believer. When the heat of affliction turns up, it can put seemingly unbearable pressure on God's people. But this is where faith is needed most.

When the loved one is taken, when the diagnosis comes in, when the job is terminated, and when suffering just won't end, this is where a right view of God and a desperate clinging to Him and His promises are needed.

The Lord has graciously left us the testimony of Job to help us to see His gracious and sovereign hand in our trials. Job started out being oriented to God. As he is overwhelmed by the afflictions of Satan, he becomes disoriented in the confusion of his suffering. At the end of the book, we find him re-oriented by God's sovereign, gracious preservation. Job says, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees You." (Job 42:5)

And what do we learn from the book of Job? That God is glorified in the preservation of His people through trials. And that God uses trials to produce good in us. It takes a deep abiding faith to see and understand this.

It is interesting to point out that the Romans had a system of locking their large shields together for the corporate protection of one another from the enemy's attacks. What a vivid picture of Christians ministering to one another during the trial.

The Helmet of Salvation

Next, Paul mentions **THE HELMET OF SALVATION**. The mention of salvation brings to mind the deliverance from the penalty of sin, the power of sin, and the future deliverance from the presence of sin. And this provides us hope. This understanding of the helmet is supported by Paul's use in **1 Thessalonians 5:8, ... and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.**

Hope provides us the strength to stand. Our sins are forgiven, we are no longer enslaved to the power of sin, and we eagerly look ahead to the fullness of our salvation when Christ returns. The Christian can say like the psalmist, **Psalm 140:7 "O God the Lord, the strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle."**

The Sword of the Spirit

We come now to the final piece of this armor. What is interesting is that it isn't really armor. It is a weapon. Paul says to take up **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**. Although it is a weapon, the context implies that believers are to use this weapon defensively.

And there is no better picture of the Word of God used defensively than Jesus' own temptation by Satan in the wilderness. There, Jesus displays that the Word of God must be our ultimate authority for all we believe and do. He demonstrates that one must have a comprehensive knowledge and correct interpretation of the Word of God to resist Satan's cunning schemes.

Remember Satan quotes Psalm 91:1-2 to try to get Jesus to jump from the pinnacle of the temple. Jesus rebuffs Satan's challenge by quoting Deut. 6:16. Jesus also shows that the Word of God must regulate our worship. Satan says he will give Jesus everything if He simply bows

down and worships him. But Jesus confirms that no amount of worldly goods or success should ever cause someone to compromise their allegiance and devotion to God.

III. Pray in the Spirit for Shared Vigilance (18–20)

Verse 18 reads **With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.** Prayer is not an item included in the armor but is crucial in discussing it. The different parts of the armor have been described. It is as if Paul is telling us that each armor piece must be put on with prayer. Notice, **all prayer and petition at all times**, we are continually praying to put on the armor. Pray for integrity, righteousness, and more insight into and appreciation of the gospel. Pray for increased measures of faith and trust in Christ that will help you to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Pray for a greater hope for and application of salvation in your life. Pray for a greater grasp and comprehension of God's Word. Pray that, like the Psalmist, you would hunger after God's Word.

God desires to give all of these things to His children, but according to His wisdom, He sanctifies us through our asking. **The question is are we willing to ask? The Puritan Thomas Watson said, "Christ went more readily to the cross than we do to the throne of grace."**

Or we could rephrase the question. **Do you have the faith to pray? What do I mean by that?** In Luke 18:1–8 Jesus uses the parable of the persistent widow to teach the disciples to pray at all times and not lose heart. In verse eight He concludes the parable by pointing to God's faithfulness to respond to prayer but He says, **However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?** The lack of prayer in our lives is the evidence of an absence of faith.

This reality should cut us to the heart, but we can't remain in despair. We have to remember the gospel. We must not forget Christ's strength and depend on Him to make us disciplined, diligent, and vigilant in prayer. And we can only do this **in the Spirit.**

We have been sealed with the Holy Spirit in Christ. The Spirit is the One who empowers our prayers. His ministry in our hearts prompts us to be watchful and alert. He convicts us of laziness and a false sense of security. He wounds our conscience when we spend hours on social media, news, sports, movies, and entertainment but claim to have no time for prayer.

We must yield to His leading of our lives. He is always leading us into the things of Christ. Through His strength, He empowers us to continue to pray and persevere in it. I think we all have experienced a wandering mind when we have gone before the Lord in prayer. We need to ask the Spirit to give us more focus and clarity of mind.

The Spirit also helps us to know what to pray. Praying in the Spirit means we are praying requests that conform to the Spirit's will. And the Spirit's will is one with the Father and the

Son. We often close our prayer with the phrase, "In Jesus' name." That isn't a formality. It isn't a means by which we automatically get our requests. To pray in Jesus's name is to pray for the things He desires. And the Spirit is the one who teaches us these things.

The Spirit teaches us that we need to pray for **all the saints**. Christians are not to think only of their own spiritual conflict but to be concerned for the whole church. In the first message I gave, we saw that God's wisdom is now manifest through the church. For someone to participate, they have to be present in the church's gatherings (some exceptions).

In the following message, we saw Christ's design for the church. For Christians to use their gifts and grow the way Christ designed, they must be involved in the church's life. Here we see that for the church to stand in the warfare of the Christian life, we need to be praying continually for one another.

Can you imagine what it would be like for an army to go to battle filled with soldiers who are not concerned for their fellow soldiers and only care for themselves? That would be an army doomed to defeat. The picture isn't of a bunch of scattered individual Christians running around aimlessly with armor. Instead, the image is of the church, organized in a coordinated strategic battlefield, standing firm together. Ministering to one another and praying for one another through it all.

“Life is war. That’s not all it is. But it is always that. Our weakness in prayer is owing largely to our neglect of this truth. Prayer is primarily a wartime walkie-talkie for the mission of the church as it advances against the powers of darkness and unbelief. It is not surprising that prayer malfunctions when we try to make it a domestic intercom to call upstairs for more comforts in the den. God has given us prayer as a wartime walkie-talkie so that we can call headquarters for everything we need as the kingdom of Christ advances in the world. Prayer gives *us* the significance of frontline forces and gives *God* the glory of a limitless Provider. The one who gives the power gets the glory. Thus, prayer safeguards the supremacy of God... while linking us with endless grace for every need.” – John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 65.

Brothers and sisters, I ashamedly admit that I saw prayer as an added perk to the Christian life for so long. It was there if I needed it and when I needed it, but it wasn't fundamental to my faithfulness as a follower of Christ. Prayer is a mark of the new life in Christ. Prayer is the evidence of our faith. Prayer for one another is essential for our ability to stand firm together in the battle of daily Christian living. Prayer isn't merely supplemental. It is who we are in Christ

IV. Conclusion

The Christian life is a daily battle until we are safe at the shores of eternity. Our enemy is strong, but our Savior is beyond compare. We must rely on His strength. We must put on His armor. And in faith and dependence, we must pray for ourselves and one another. The victory is sure, but the responsibility to walk in that victory rests on our shoulders.

Benediction:

Jude 24–25 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, ²⁵to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.