

Call of Duty Pt 3 “Be Strong in the Lord”

CENTRAL QUESTION:

What does it mean to be strong in the Lord before we can carry the armor of God?

I. THE FOUNDATION: STRENGTH BEFORE ARMOR

Key Scripture: Ephesians 6:10 "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

The Context:

- Paul wrote from prison, likely looking at Roman soldiers in full armor
- Roman soldiers were strategically placed throughout occupied cities
- They were paid professionals, fully equipped by the government
- Their presence was meant to intimidate and establish control

The Problem We Miss:

- We focus on verses 11-17 about the armor of God
- We skip verse 10 about being strong first
- Without strength, we cannot carry the armor or wield the weapons

II. THE REALITY OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Key Scriptures: Ephesians 6:11-12

Paul's Military Language Throughout Scripture:

- "No weapon formed against me shall prosper" (Isaiah 54:17)
- "A good soldier doesn't get wrapped up in the things of this world" (2 Timothy 2:4)
- "Put on the whole armor of God" (Ephesians 6:11)

Our True Enemy:

- Not flesh and blood
- Principalities and powers

- Rulers of darkness of this world
- Spiritual wickedness in high places

III. UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUAL STRENGTH (THE PHYSICAL ANALOGY)

The Physical Fitness Parallel:

- You can't get fit by taking a magic pill
- It requires sacrifice, commitment, and daily routine
- You must eat right, exercise consistently, and push through resistance
- Results come from sustained effort over time

Running the Loop Illustration:

- Running 5 miles daily, rain or shine
- Discovering that running uphill (with resistance) brings better results
- Plateauing until you change the routine and increase resistance
- Watching what you eat and drink to see results

The Military Standard:

- Regular military requires physical fitness tests
- Must complete sit-ups, run miles in specific times
- Special Forces (Navy SEALs) have even more demanding requirements
- Soldiers carry 80-120 pounds of gear into battle
- Most of us wouldn't last five minutes

IV. THE COST OF SPIRITUAL STRENGTH

What It Takes to Be Strong:

- Staying in the Word of God daily
- Spending time in prayer

- Fasting
- Listening to spiritual leaders who've gone before us
- Fighting through when you feel like quitting

The Ranking System Reality:

- You don't just sign up and become a general
- You work your way up through battles and good decisions
- You prove yourself strong before receiving more responsibility
- There are no shortcuts in the Kingdom of God

Learning from Generals:

- Pastor Fred Cornelius example (91 years old, 70 years married, lifetime of ministry)
- Calling mentors when going through difficulties
- Listening to those who've fought the fight
- Gaining strength from those who've stood the test of time

V. THE ENEMY'S ATTACK STRATEGY

Where the Enemy Comes After You:

- In your relationships
- At your work
- In your mind
- In your sleep
- In your lonely times
- In your downtimes
- In your sickness

The Truth About Using Jesus' Name:

- Matthew 7: Some will say "didn't we cast out demons in your name?"
- Jesus will respond "I never knew you"

- You can use His name, but if you're not strong in Him, you won't be productive
- The stronger you get in Him, the more productive you become

VI. THE CALL IS FOR EVERYONE

God's Invitation:

- Unlike physical military that must weed people out
- God is calling everyone to His army
- There is work in the Kingdom for you
- Young or old, there's a place for you

David's Armor Illustration:

- Saul tried to put his armor on young David
- It didn't fit because David wasn't strong enough or big enough yet
- We sometimes want to be something we haven't worked to become
- We need armor that fits our current spiritual strength

The Basketball Team Story:

- 36 girls trying out for 12 uniforms
- Running them hard to see who really wanted to play
- The fastest girl quit mid-practice, grabbed her bag and ran out
- She almost made the team but quit right before the breakthrough
- Later came back and became one of the best players

VII. WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE QUITTING

The Honest Truth:

- Every spiritual leader has felt like quitting
- "Lord, I can't do this anymore. I'm tired."
- Something inside pushes you forward

- The time spent in Scripture gives strength to continue

The Encouragement:

- You feel like quitting - you can do it
- You feel like you can't make it - you can make it
- Everyone has failed
- Dust yourself off and keep going

VIII. PRACTICAL STEPS TO GET STRONG

Daily Routine:

- Pray consistently
- Read God's Word
- Fast
- Get in a spiritual routine and do it every day

The Challenge:

- It's tough and it will bother you
- But it's necessary for the battle ahead
- God wants you strong
- He's calling you to come and be strengthened

KEY TAKEAWAY:

Before you can effectively wear the armor of God or wield spiritual weapons, you must first be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Spiritual strength isn't instant - it requires daily discipline, learning from those who've gone before, and pushing through when you want to quit.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:

- Are you trying to wear spiritual armor you're not yet strong enough to carry?
- What daily disciplines do you need to establish to grow spiritually stronger?
- Who are the spiritual mentors in your life you can learn from?

- In what areas is the enemy attacking you, and how can you strengthen those areas?
- What makes you want to quit, and what will help you push through?

Scripture References for Further Study: Ephesians 6:10-18 | 2 Corinthians 10:4 | Isaiah 54:17 | 2 Timothy 2:3-4 | Psalm 139:7-10 | Matthew 7:21-23 | Genesis 2:7