

Ephesians 6:10-20 Let the Lord Make Us Strong! Pentecost 15 Sept. 2, 2018

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Grace and peace are yours from God our Father who gives us strength through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Paul words to the Ephesians warn them of their enemy and of the best defense in Ephesians 6:10-20 These are Your Words, heavenly Father. Give us strength to fight using Your Word. Your Word is truth! Amen.

Dear Christian Friends,

In the closing section of Ephesians the Apostle Paul wrote about the devil and his forces of evil. He is real and although he doesn't always attack us openly, he is always looking for weaknesses in our lives. He had specific attacks when tempting Jesus in the desert. He also had his day with Job when enemies attacked Job's herdsman and stole his animals. He sent a powerful wind to destroy a house that killed Job's children. The devil inflicted Job with sores and bad dreams. What are we to learn from this? The devil is an evil force that we can't avoid. Also, we can't stand against him alone. We need to be with Christ who is our strength. We need to

Let the Lord Make Us Strong!

First, be strong against the devil's ways and works. Paul warned us to watch out for the devil's schemes. He is so cunning that many people don't realize they are under attack. With him, there is an army of evil angels, ready to do their part to trouble us. We are in serious danger. Recently at our school we've gotten grants to improve our school safety as a precaution against attackers. How much more we should be prepared for the devil and his forces that use temptations which locks, cameras, and bullet-proof glass will not stop!

Paul wrote, "*Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers... authorities, powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly (supernatural) realms (v.12)*" Once in a while there is a science fiction movie about aliens from outer space attacking but people on earth don't know it. The Bible tells us about unseen spiritual attacks by the devil ever since Adam and Eve sinned. The devil doesn't always come in powerful ways, he uses little nudges to get people to fall into sin that slowly separates them from Christ. We must not be overcome by the devil's schemes! Paul wrote, "*The god of this age (devil) has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see ... the gospel of Christ.*" (2 Corinthians 4:3) The devil is constantly trying to discredit what God's Word says about creation, sin, or the way to salvation. He will use any way to keep us from applying God's Word, which is our only source of power.

If the devil can't slyly overcome us, he will use other attacks to cause us to sin so that we become discouraged. We all sin. But as believers, God calls us to repent and receive freedom in Jesus' forgiveness. The devil tries to enslave us to a sin so that it controls us. It was like when King Saul's jealousy of David filled his mind or it was like when King David committed adultery with a woman which led to her husband's murder. David didn't wake up one morning thinking about sinning. The devil caught him at a weak moment and it destroyed his faith in God. We need to remember that any sin is dangerous if we do not repent of it. Living with sin is like walking down the middle of the road at night in dark clothes. It's only a matter of time before you get hit. Ask King David or the disciple Peter who ended up denying Jesus. Paul wrote earlier in Ephesians, "*Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold*" (4:26-27) The Bible also warns, "*If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!*" (1 Corinth 10:12)

Second, be strong by being fully connected to God's Word. In our verses Paul used a picture of a Roman soldier fully armed for battle. It is quite the opposite of David when he was a boy and stood to fight Goliath. David had no armor at all, physically speaking. Yet he had God's full armor on as he defeated his enemy. We need that spiritual armor which is connected to God's Word. Paul wrote, "*Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist*" (v.14). The devil attacks with half-truths or lies like when he tempted Eve. When we know God's Word, it surrounds us with truth and is like a belt that holds our defenses together.

Another protection is *“the breastplate of righteousness.”* (v.14) Law enforcement use bullet-proof vests when in dangerous situations. Spiritually, our heart of faith is covered with the vest of Jesus’ holiness. He took away our sins so the devil cannot accuse us. The devil also tempts us to think that we cannot do anything for God because we don’t know enough or are not talented enough. The truth is: through faith in Christ, we are connected to Christ’s power to accomplish many good things. The devil is like a snake hiding in the grass. But, Paul wrote that believer’s feet are *“fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.”* (v.15) Satan tries to bring discord among Christians or to get us off course. But God’s Word assures us that we have peace with not by our feeling but by Christ’s death to forgive us.

The next parts of the armor are *“the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one”* and *“the helmet of salvation”* (v.16-17). The shield Paul described was about 4 foot long and could protect most of the soldier’s body. Our shield of faith is God’s Word. The more we know the Word, the more we can shield ourselves from temptation like Jesus did. Martin Luther wrote, *“One little word can fell him (the devil). As we hear God’s Word together in worship, we will encourage each other with God’s Word.*

Just like the early church are seeking to boldly proclaim the truth. God’s Word is described as helmet of salvation. What is this helmet to do? It protects your minds from doubt. It makes us certain that Jesus was won an eternal victory for us by His obedient death on the cross. One day we will be free from the devil. Now, we stand against his temptations knowing our future is certain with Christ.

God also provides *“the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”* (v.18) The Bible is not book of empty promises. *The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes”* (Romans 1:16). Hebrews states, *“The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates to ... judge the thoughts and attitudes of the heart”* (Hebrews 4:12).

After we have on all the armor connected to God’s Word in Christ, Paul wrote, *“Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.... Be alert and always keep praying for all the saints”* (v.18). We pray in the Lord’s Prayer: *“lead us not in to temptation.”* We are asking God to protect us so we can win the victory over the devil. All of us pray for: relatives, friends, Christian teachers, pastors, seminaries, and even for unbelievers that God would give them faith. Paul asked for prayers while he was in prison awaiting his Roman trial that God would give him boldness to speak.

Thankfully so far our government has not threatened us as the Romans did to Paul. But it is just as important to tell people today that Jesus died to destroy the devil’s hold over them by the power of sin. God has given us His precious Word to us so we can help connect others to Jesus and His saving power! Next Sunday, Sunday school begins. We need a few more teachers to tell good news of Christ to the children. We want them to be prepared to fight against the devil just as we are with God’s truths. As we pray that God will give us the strength, wisdom, and opportunities to help others know the truth, we trust in Jesus’ promise: *“My Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”* (John 16:23)

Paul connects God’s Word to all the pieces of armor that we can use against our spiritual enemies. God will give us strength when we depend on Jesus alone. St. Paul wrote, *“I can do everything through [Christ] who gives me strength.”* (Philip. 4:13) The devil won’t go away. But, through Christ we can be ready for his attacks. As we repent of our sins and receive Christ’s forgiveness we will stand. At death, we’ll enter heaven. Nothing will compare to the victory celebration as we praise Christ’s strength which saved us! Amen