

“Dressed and Ready for Battle!”—Ephesians 6:10-11

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Dressed and Ready for Battle!”, is Ephesians 6:10-11 → *Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Preparing for battle both offensively and defensively is a rigorous endeavor. The armed services take people through intense basic training so that the soldier is capable and ready to defend himself against the attacks of the enemy as well as out-strategize the enemy and bring him to defeat. However, it would seem very ridiculous to invest so much time, energy and effort to train a soldier, suit him up for action, drop him off at the front lines and tell him to simply stand there. It would be very natural not only for him to defend himself against the attacks of the enemy but also to move forward against the enemy in an effort to defeat him. For this reason the concepts of engagement put forth in our text seem very odd, to say the least.

In the midst of describing how to live obediently in the sanctified life with the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul reminds us that such obedient living will be met

with much resistance. The devil will use our sinful nature and the world around us to attack Christ in us in an effort to turn us away from the Christian faith and take us to hell with him. Brothers and sisters, we are definitely in a battle waged at every level of our existence! Thus, Paul commands us in verse 11 of our text to *put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil*. We must be dressed and ready for battle!

Actually, we are not unfamiliar with daily battles. We have them constantly in family relationships, work environments, revolts and military conflicts worldwide and yes, even in the church. According to Ephesians 6:12, what underlies every conflict on this horizontal plane in relationships with others is the spiritual battles which are happening in the spiritual realm, especially in the hearts and lives of Christ's people. *For we do not wrestle 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*. Thus, the Christian strives to be discerning in the midst of human conflict, recognizing the enemy, the weapons of warfare and the means for defeat.

The enemy is never the individual with whom you are conflicting. Using the picture of a lion seeking it's prey, 1 Peter 5:8-9 tells you to *be sober-minded and watchful* because *your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring*

lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith. Satan desires to take a disagreement between two people and turn it into a full-fledged battle which draws you away from Christ and into sin. The devil with his many schemes desires to break up your relationship with the LORD. Why? Because when your relationship with the LORD is messed up, your living in relationship with those around you will be messed up as well.

Think about it. Has a simple difference of opinion led you into anger and contempt for someone else? Have you ever discovered yourself condemning another person's opinion in a self-righteous, slanderous manner? How could a simple disagreement end up separating two people with fierce resentments and grudges? Because there is a much deeper spiritual conflict which seeks to separate and destroy relationships at every level and the culprit is not the issue at hand nor the person with whom you are engaging. The culprit is satan.

Thus, the Christian, recognizing the battle field from this perspective, gets dressed and ready for battle daily with weapons which are different than the world's weapons. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 says: *Though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and*

*take every thought captive to obey Christ. The weapons of our warfare are bound up with Jesus. This is why our text tells us to **be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.*** (cf. verse 10)

Because our battle is against the devil we cannot fight it by using merely human resources. This is why verse 13 of our text tells us to simply *take up the whole armor of God, and . . . having done all, to stand firm* in Christ Jesus our Lord! Even *the whole armor of God* described in the following verses describes the Person & Work Jesus, the Christ:

- *The belt of truth* (cf. verse 14) → The devil's basic goal is to get us to believe a lie since he *does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him . . . for he is a liar and the father of lies.* (cf. John 8:44) Jesus is described in John 14:6 as *the way, and **the truth**, and the life.*
- *The breastplate of righteousness* (cf. verse 14) → Christ is our righteousness. (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:30) We have Christ's righteousness as our protective cover so that our heart remains in a right relationship with the LORD.
- Shoes for our feet making us ready *by the gospel of peace* (cf. verse 15) → We walk according to the Good News that having *been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* (cf. Romans 5:1)
- *The shield of faith* (cf. verse 16) → The object of our faith is Jesus. We trust completely in His atoning work for the forgiveness of our sins and the

victory He's won over the devil **for us**.

- *The helmet of salvation* (cf. verse 17) → A protection which is secure by the sure salvation we have through faith in Jesus Christ alone!
- *The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God* (cf. verse 17) → The written Word of God points to Jesus, was “fleshed out” in Jesus and was fulfilled in the Person & Work of Jesus. It is that through which the Holy Spirit works conviction of your sin as well as the forgiveness of sin by testifying to Jesus Christ. (cf. John 15:26) According to Hebrews 4:12 *it is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart*. We have the same Word which Jesus placed before the devil to resist His temptations in the desert, by which He won the victory over satan **for us!!**
- *Praying at all times in the Spirit* (cf. verse 18) → Standing firm in prayer is important because the victory over satan has already been won for us in the accomplished work of Jesus. The Holy Spirit empowers us to cling to the work of Jesus in the midst of our spiritual battles daily.

Since the means for satan's defeat in the midst of his attempts to lead you astray are bound up in the Person & Work of Jesus, your best defense is simply to “suit up” in the means of grace and stand firm with your faith in

Christ. Notice throughout this picture we are never told to fight. We are told over and over to be dressed and *stand . . . in the Lord and in the strength of His might!* Too often we try to live our discipleship according to our own ideas, including our efforts to battle the devil on our own. These are attempts which will always lead to failure in overcoming the devil. Rather, the focus should always be on Christ and the victory He has already won for us, not on ourselves.

Yes, we are familiar with daily battles in our relationship with others as we strive to live obediently for the Lord. We also recognize that the devil is the culprit in the midst of these daily battles striving to lead us away from Christ, destroy our relationships and take us all to hell with him. However, we stand firm in Christ, dressed and ready for battle. It's a battle which is fought for us by Jesus and His accomplished victory on our behalf!! Though the battles wage and we feel outdone or defeated many times, we continue to stand firm, trusting in Jesus Who has won the war for our eternity! Thus, we can live in the victory that is already ours in Jesus and, instead of satan having his way with us, God can use us for His glory!! Amen.

For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world.

And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

(1 John 5:4)