

STANDING FIRM IN THE FIGHT

EPHESIANS 6: 10-20

AUGUST 20, 2

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. **11** Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. **12** 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. **13** Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. **14** Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, **15** and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. **16** In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; **17** and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, **18** praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, **19** and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, **20** for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

In the name of Jesus:

John Paul Jones was a Scotsman who became an American citizen during the era of the Revolutionary War. He made his mark in life as a sailor on the high seas and he is well known as the first American fighter in the Navy. It was during the Battle of Flamborough Head on September 23, 1779 that he was asked if he was surrendering his ship. John Paul Jones responded with the now immortal words: "I have not yet begun to fight!"

That is what one does in a fight, you don't surrender, and you keep on fighting until the end, until the battle has been won. Now, to be certain, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, has fought for your salvation and has won an overwhelming victory for you, a victory over sin, Satan, and death. Jesus has won this victory for you by living His life in perfect obedience to the will of His Heavenly Father, and by offering Himself up in

death as the payment for the forgiveness of all of your sins. On Easter morning Jesus rose from the grave, obtaining an overwhelming victory over sin, Satan, and death for all who believe in Him. You have been given this victory by a sheer act of the grace of God. In Holy Baptism God the Holy Spirit has made you into a child of God, giving you a saving faith in Jesus, a faith that you are to live in your life everyday. This has been the Apostle Paul's message throughout his letter to the church at Ephesus. God's plan for you is that you have been saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ, this is not of your own doing, it is a gift of God. You have been created in Baptism to be God's workmanship, created by God to live your life giving God the glory.

This is by no means easy. It is a battle to live for Jesus each and everyday. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking those whom he can devour. You, as a believer in Jesus, have a huge target on your life; Satan seeks to destroy your relationship with Christ so that you will join Satan in the eternal flames of Hell. The devil has been defeated, but he is not without resources. His chief weapons are leading you astray through false doctrine, attacking the truth, causing you to doubt and despair in God's Word, and by giving you a guilty conscience. You don't need to seek the devil out, he seeks you out and is out to destroy you!

You have a battle on your hands, as Christians we all do. Are you taking these threats seriously? Are you living your life fighting the good fight of faith? Or don't you take these threats seriously? Do you think, along with many in our culture today that Satan is a figment of an active imagination or that he doesn't really exist? Don't be fooled, dear friend; Satan's ploy is that you minimize who he is and what he is capable of

doing. When you do not realize the seriousness of the war for your soul; this plays right into the devil's plans, it is tantamount to surrendering. That is why the Apostle Paul urges you to be strong in the Lord.

The times have changed. Not too long ago, it was comfortable to be a Christian. What I mean by that is that Christianity, its teachings, and values were accepted by many in the culture and in society. But not anymore. Today powerful forces in society tempt followers of Christ to be ashamed to be a Christian and to be ashamed of the Gospel. Today Christians are called bigoted and unloving for taking stances, which are based on the teachings of the Bible. Followers of Christ are minimized and marginalized when they state that marriage is between a man and a woman, or when they stand up for the rights of the unborn and speak against the horrors of abortion. Sadly, some Christians and many Americans have been so desensitized to the horrors of abortion that they have no response to abortion.

In our age of political correctness, we don't want to call a spade a spade anymore, but this evil is a result of Satan and sin. The silence regarding this evil is deafening and it is sinful to fail to speak up for the dignity of every human being and to speak of the gift of human sexuality as it is revealed in the Bible. To be silent shows a shame of being called a Christian. Why are we as Christians willing to avoid standing with Jesus and what he teaches in the Scriptures?

It is not just about speaking out about marriage and life issues, it is all about standing with Christ and fighting the good fight against the devil and his minions. Jesus says that either you are for Me or against Me. Jesus has already picked the sides; you are

on the side of Jesus. He has paid the price for your life and salvation with His perfectly led life, His innocent suffering and death on the cross, and in His victorious resurrection on Easter. He promises that on the last Day that He will come again to judge the living and the dead. On that day He will separate the sheep and the goats. So, being on the side of Christ, are you willing to stand by Him and proclaim His truth? Are you willing to fight the good fight, or have you already waved the white flag of surrender?

To fight the good fight, the Apostle Paul encourages you to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. You are powerless in and of yourself to defeat Satan. You can't. He is an enemy who never stops or becomes tired. When one temptation stops, another fresh one arises to attack you and your faith. So rely on the One who has already defeated Satan, Jesus Christ. You have been baptized in the name of Jesus. You have been given faith in Christ. Your sins are forgiven. You are a child of God. So from this time forth, put on the armor of Christ that Jesus gives you. This is a choice that God enables you to make each and every day. Doesn't the Bible say: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

This is an intentional and daily choice to serve the Lord. How is this done? The Apostle Paul spells this out. He uses the imagery of the Roman soldier, which many in his day was familiar with. The people of Paul's day believed that the champion's armor brought strength, so Paul uses this example to show that God has clothed you with His

divine strength against the devil. This armor is not only given by God by it is empowered by God to fight the devil. Jesus Himself wore this armor in His life to defeat Satan. This is what Isaiah means where he wrote about Jesus: “his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him. **17** He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.” (Is. 59:16-17). The righteousness of Jesus has been already given to you in your Baptism. You have been placed into Christ in your Baptism, so that in Christ Jesus He fights for you today. Placed in Christ in Baptism, Jesus is your truth, your righteousness, He has made you ready for battle with the Good news of His salvation, He is your helmet of your salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the One who extinguishes the flaming darts of the evil One, He is the Word of God incarnate, who spoke the Word and gives you His Sword, His Word the Holy Bible which you go into battle with daily against the devil. All this has already been given to you in your Baptism, for when you were baptized into Christ you put on Christ, and now you are equipped to do battle against the Evil One. You get dressed for battle each day, each week by coming to Church, for here God gives you all that you need in His Word to extinguish the flaming darts of the evil one. Satan is alive and well and seeks your destruction. Why would anyone then, not want to come to worship to receive God’s gifts for the battle that you daily face? It would be foolish to think that a soldier would not take time to put on his battle gear, not take time to rest, to find food and refreshment before he goes into battle. It is foolish for you, then to think that you can miss even one worship service, for here is where God forgives you, here is where God equips you with a

stronger faith, here is where you find rest and refreshment, right here is the place where you receive God's gifts to go into battle with Satan in your life.

In times of battle, warriors need to speak to the general in charge, to receive instruction as to how to fight. You are not a spiritual crusader; rather you are a soldier on sentry duty. Your task is two fold: one you are to stand guard in your daily tasks and two you are to be watchful for an attack by the enemy, Satan. You have your armor, and you are protected by the blood of Jesus; so now your duty is to pray. I want to encourage and challenge you to pray daily, but also to take the time to come to our prayer services held on Thursday evenings at 7 pm, where we will gather around the cross to pray. God encourages you to not forsake the assembly of the saints, so you are to pray together and you are to pray individually, petitioning God for all the saints, praying that they be helped in time of need, you are to pray for the mercy of God, pray for pastors and missionaries who are God's chosen workers and are attacked by the Devil, and you pray for yourself. You do this by using the Word of God in prayer that is your weapon of offense given by God to do battle with Satan. You do this by faithfully attending bible study and church service for here the Spirit equips you for the fight. God warns you to watch for attacks on your spiritual support system, and this system includes church attendance, your devotional life, your marriage, your family, your children and grandchildren, your wider family, and the leaders of this congregation and the Church at large. God has given to you the gift of prayer, where you can speak daily with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, making petitions and supplications to Him to help you and your support system in your time of need. The Lord is your ever-present Help in time of

need. Yes, the devil is strong, but Jesus is stronger. Fight against evil, the devil and his band of followers by being a person of the Word. Return to the Word, immerse yourself in the Word, and find refuge in the Word. Jesus works for you, He works through you who actively battle the devil. Take comfort in the fact that Christ has already won the victory, and that Jesus gives to you His Help in your times of battle, all so that you can live your life to God's glory. This is God's Plan for you, that you be saved and be rooted in the truth of Jesus Christ. And here in this place He gives you all you need for your salvation.

On the last Day each of us will give an account of all we have done and failed to do. Don't be fooled into thinking that God will turn a blind eye to how you have lived. You will stand like everyone else before God, the God of truth and the Lord of history. God won't be asking you if you are on the right side of history. He will be asking if you have believed in His Son Jesus Christ and have lived your life according to His Plan. Jesus is the way, truth, and Life. Stand firm on His salvation. Fight the good fight of faith. He has won the victory. Now go and live your life to the glory of God, and with His assurance that He is with you always even until the end of time.

In the name of the Father,
Son, and Holy Spirit.

Amen