

Ephesians 6:10-20
Pentecost 15, 2021

How strong are you? Maybe you are emotionally strong. Maybe you can handle a lot of pressure, work for long hours, day after day after day. Maybe you are the one who is the emotional anchor in your family and everyone leans on you for support. Maybe you have physical strength. There is no job too tough for you. Maybe you are in great health. You wake up every day, refreshed to take on the new challenges of that day. How strong are you?

Yet, no matter how strong we might feel there is a battle that all of us face every day. Paul speaks about that in battle when he writes: **“you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”** As believers in Jesus, the devil is not going to stop trying to pull you away from Christ. This is not going to be easy for us.

In the last eight weeks, we have been working our way through the book of Ephesians. Today, we come to just about the end of this book, the last reading in this series. Paul has been talking about how we are to live our Christian life. We have been adopted and united to him and to each other. We are to model and imitate him as we follow him because we know we are loved by God. God wants us to know that He will also equip us to face every challenge that the devil puts in our path.

Yet, he also wants us to know that the devil is really good at making something wrong looking so good. To illustrate how good the devil is, I want you to think about bacon. Bacon makes everything better, right? Pizza is good. Pizza with bacon is better. Hamburgers are good. Hamburgers with bacon are better. Hot dogs are good. Hot dogs wrapped in bacon are better. For many people, they will eat almost anything, or try it, if it is wrapped in bacon. One of the biggest traps of the devil is that he wraps his lies in bacon. He wraps his lies in truth. He wraps his lies in good things. Yet, no matter how good Satan makes his lies look, they are still lies and sin is still sin.

That’s the struggle that we all face each day. We have enemy sources in us because of our sinful nature. We have enemy sources outside of us in this sinful world. The devil’s only goal in his life is to drag us away from Jesus. He wants you to doubt God’s love and forgiveness. He wants you to trust in your own abilities and listen to his lies. He is going to pull out all the stops to make that happen.

So, how are we equipped to fight this battle? Paul tells us. **“Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.”** We cannot win this fight alone. This battle that we face is not a wrestling match between a father and a son. I used to do that with my son. We used to roll around on the floor, push each other away, and maybe throw some punches at each other. The whole time that we might do that, we would both be laughing our heads off. We weren’t trying to hurt each other. We were just goofing around. But the day did finally come that we needed to stop because he had surpassed me in strength. I realized that if we would continue, I was going to lose.

The devil is not goofing around with his temptations. This battle that we face daily is a serious battle. It is a struggle between life and death. His lies bring us pain. He is a master in dragging up the past, the old life that should be dead and gone. He calls us fakes and frauds. He sends wave after wave of sickness, disaster, anger, hurtful words and all kinds of other really nasty things our way. He knocks us down from our feet again and again. Like the Psalmist says we may even feel like: **“Why, Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?”** (Psalm 10:1)

How do we face this battle? Paul also writes: **“Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”**

This armor was first worn by Jesus as he carries out his work to save the world. He wore his righteousness as he lived a perfectly sinless life. He put on the helmet of salvation in the form of a crown of thorns. He hung on that cross as he

defeated sin, death and the devil. With that armor on, he accomplished the forgiveness through his death and resurrection. We are blessed that Jesus then gives us that armor through faith. With him, we will be victorious in this battle with Satan. Our Savior has paid for every single sin we have committed and will commit. Yet, we also realize that in this battle we may stumble and fall at times. What does Jesus do then? He picks us up and covers us again with his armor. Therefore, go to the Gospel because it is there that Jesus will strengthen you to face all the battles that we will face today. We also realize that there will be more battles tomorrow, next week or next year. Jesus will be there for you on those days as well. He will never leave you. Someday, he will place on your head a crown of glory.

Finally, Paul says that you are to keep coming to him by prayer. Keep coming to him in prayer not just for yourself, but keep praying for each other. Keep praying for those who may not even know who Jesus is and what he has done for them. Paul closes: **“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people. Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.”**

May God help us to remember that our strength comes from God. We are in battle with Satan every day. Yet, as we wear the armor that Jesus gives us, we will always be victorious in Christ. May God grant that to each of us. Amen.