

Prepare for Battle

Ephesians 6:10-20

Sermon Outline & Quotes

1. The Christian's Strength (v. 10)

The simple exhortation "Be strong!" is both dangerous and useless. Self-reliance in spiritual warfare is suicidal. Believers do not strengthen themselves. Our strength must come from an external source, namely, the Lord. The strength of an earthly general is in his troops. But in the Christian life, the strength of the troops is in their general (Sam Storms)

^{ESV} **Ephesians 1:18–19** ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might

^{ESV} **Joshua 1:9** Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

^{ESV} **Ps. 18:31-32** "For who is God, but the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God, the God who girds me with strength, and makes my way blameless?"

^{ESV} **Ps. 28:7-8** "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him and I am helped; therefore my heart exults, and with my song I shall thank Him. The Lord is their strength, and He is a saving defense to His anointed".

^{ESV} **I Sam. 30:6** 'Moreover David was greatly distressed because the people spoke of stoning him, for all the people were embittered, each one because of his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God".

2. The Christian's Call (vs. 11-13)

"The Christian life is one of war, do you see that?"

^{ESV} **Acts 19:11-20**

^{ESV} **Isaiah 59:15–17** Truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. The Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. ¹⁶ He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede; then 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.

God is himself a warrior fighting to deliver and vindicate His people. The supernatural armor which God himself wears has been graciously made available to us. In other words, it is the armor of God not simply because He gives it, but because He wears it! (Sam Storms)

3. The Christian's Armor (vs. 14-17)

^{ESV} **2 Corinthians 5:21** For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

^{ESV} **Ephesians 4:22-24** ...to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness

If the expression is to be understood in the light of its Old Testament context where righteousness is parallel to salvation, then to speak of donning God's own righteousness or appropriating his salvation is in effect to urge the readers once more to put on the 'new man' of 4:24, who is created to be like God in righteousness and holiness. By putting on God's righteousness believers are committed to being imitators of him (5:1) and acting righteously in all their dealings. (Pillar)

"Sharing the message of Christ advances God's army against the enemy's position."

^{ESV} **Romans 8:1;31-39** There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus... ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

What is in view here is not some ad hoc word addressed to Satan, as though what we speak against him will defeat him. Rather, it is the faithful speaking forth of the gospel in the realm of darkness, so that men and women held by Satan might hear this liberating and life-giving word and be freed from his grasp. (Pillar)

4. The Christian's Dependence (vs.18-20)

*Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;
Prayer keeps the Christian's armor bright;
And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.*

-William Cowper

"The whole point of the armor I believe is this: Put on Jesus, He is truth, his righteousness we wear, we stand ready to deliver his message, our faith that he was who he said he was and has saved us is our shield and helmet, and our proclamation and spreading of his name to our neighbors and the rest of the world is our sword. And through his reconciling work we can boldly approach our God in prayer, not just as a soldier and a general, but as sons and daughters with a loving Father!"

Introduction

Is Christianity a “personal journey” or a call to battle? With all of the talk of being “missional” and “culturally relevant,” it may seem odd to use this militant language. Today more than ever, church folk are terrified of the militant language of the New Testament.

This week's text:

^{ESV} **Ephesians 6:10-20** Finally, ^abe strong in the Lord and in ^bthe strength of his might. ¹¹ ^aPut on ^bthe whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against ^cthe schemes of the devil. ¹² For ^awe do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against ^bthe rulers, against the authorities, against ^cthe cosmic powers over ^dthis present darkness, against ^ethe spiritual forces of evil ^fin the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore ^atake up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in ^bthe evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, ^ahaving fastened on the belt of truth, and ^bhaving put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, ^aas shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up ^athe shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all ^bthe flaming darts of ^cthe evil one; ¹⁷ and take ^athe helmet of salvation, and ^fthe sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying ^aat all times ^bin the Spirit, ^cwith all prayer and supplication. To that end ^dkeep alert with all perseverance, making ^esupplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and ^aalso for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth ^bboldly to proclaim ^cthe mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I ^aam an ambassador ^bin chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Discussion 1: Are you in a war?

– *At war with whom (or what)?*

^{ESV} **2 Corinthians 10:3-5** For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power **to destroy strongholds.** ⁵ **We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ**

– *Is this a culture war or a war for the spread of the gospel?*

[It is so easy to confuse social or political action evangelism. They are not the same! It is good to fight social injustice and it is good to fight for good laws and better science and philosophy, *but neither of these should be confused with or substituted for evangelism.*]

– *Are you called to be a friend to the world? ... to your neighbor?*

^{ESV} **James 2:8** If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ^a"You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well.

^{ESV} **James 4:4** ^aYou adulterous people!¹ **Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?** ^bTherefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

[Is this a confusing distinction? Look again at **2 Cor 10:3-5**. Who/what is the enemy? It's clearly not your neighbor. It is spiritual warfare with Satanic forces *in the battlefield of the mind*. (strongholds → arguments/opinions ...) Notice how the [*go on the*] offensive language is to attack the faulty arguments/opinions raised against the knowledge of God, not the demons themselves. We destroy the arguments/opinions of the enemies of God by faithful Gospel proclamation! (1 Cor 1:17-29)]

– ***When you disagree with your neighbor-- Intolerant!!***

Our culture's moral relativism¹ has made this especially challenging. Since everyone's thoughts, ideas, moral & ethical convictions, etc. are considered equally valid (subjectively true for each person), to disagree is to disrespect a person--earning you the label "intolerant."

– *How do you deal with such a charge? How do you avoid it?*

[Have you earned the right to speak into the life of this person by being loving, genuine, etc. Are you patient enough to carefully define your terms? (subject vs. objective truth, tolerance, etc ...). The ambassador series is focused on equipping in these areas.]

Discussion 2: The Christian's Strength & Dependence

^{ESV} **2 Corinthians 10:3-4** For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but **have divine power** to destroy strongholds.

– ***Where do we tend to (wrongly) look for strength?***

[Discuss examples in your own life... How do God's people fare in battle when sent by the Lord? Do we have promises to stand upon?]

^{ESV} **Deuteronomy 20:1-4** "When you go out to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them, for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. ² And when you draw near to the battle, the priest shall come forward and speak to the people ³ and shall say to them, 'Hear, O Israel, today you are drawing near for battle against your enemies: let not your heart faint. Do not fear or panic or be in dread of them, ⁴ for the LORD your God is he who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory.'

^{ESV} **Matthew 16:18** ... I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

^{ESV} **Romans 8:37** ... in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

¹ Don't understand these terms? Our ambassador class is there to equip soldiers for Christ with this kind of knowledge. Imagine a soldier who doesn't know a swamp from an open field? Distinguish an arrow from a cruise missile?

Discussion 3: The Christian's Call

^{ESV} **Luke 9:23-25** And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him ^adeny himself and ^btake up his cross ^cdaily and follow me. ²⁴ For ^awhoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. ²⁵ ^aFor what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?

- *In what ways does the level of commitment in Luke 9:23-25 appear "militant"?*

[Always on duty, lifestyle, sacrificial, is following the King ...]

- *Are you taking the call seriously? Personally?*

[Would you take a letter of conscription ("you've been drafted!") from the government seriously? Personally? When you received Christ as Savior and King, you received your letter of conscription.]

Discussion 4: The Christian's Armor

- *Are you equipped for the battle at hand?*

[What does your battlefield look like? Are you fighting in the dark? Are you using dull weapons? Do you recognize the enemy when you see it? Are you "an army of one"?--(an army of one is already a casualty!)]

Discussion 5: Operation Church Plant

- *Discuss this as a military maneuver.*

[No matter how well established "air superiority" is, "boots on the ground" are required to advance the battle lines. Gospel proclamation via the local church is God's chosen means for advancing His Kingdom.]

- *In what ways are you supporting your unit's² mission to advance the battle lines through church planting?*

[All are called to pray, some to go, some to stay and send support. *Have you prayerfully considered your role?*]

² Desert Springs Church is your unit until you are reassigned by the Supreme Commander (and your CG is your platoon ... OK, enough with the military metaphor).

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Acts 19:11-20, Isaiah 59:15–17

3. The Christian's Armor (vs. 14-17)

2 Corinthians 5:21, Ephesians 4:22-24, Romans 8:1;31-39

“Sharing the message of Christ advances God’s army against the enemy’s position.”

4. The Christian's Dependence (vs.18-20)

Summary

“The whole point of the armor I believe is this: Put on Jesus, He is truth, his righteousness we wear, we stand ready to deliver his message, our faith that he was who he said he was and has saved us is our shield and helmet, and our proclamation and spreading of his name to our neighbors and the rest of the world is our sword. And through his reconciling work we can boldly approach our God in prayer, not just as a soldier and a general, but as sons and daughters with a loving Father!”

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James 2:8; 4:4; 1 Cor 1:17-29

– *When you disagree with your neighbor*

– *How do you deal with such a charge? How do you avoid it?*

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2 Corinthians 10:3-4

- *Where do we tend to (wrongly) look for strength?*

Deuteronomy 20:1-4

Matthew 16:18 ... I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Romans 8:37 ... in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

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- *Are you taking the call seriously? Personally?*

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- *Are you equipped for the battle at hand?*

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- *Discuss this as a military maneuver.*
 - *In what ways are you supporting your unit's¹ mission to advance the battle lines through church planting?*
 - *Have you prayerfully considered your role?*

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