

The 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
August 29, 2021

“Rise to arms, O Christians, in the Power of the Lord’s might!”  
(Ephesians 6:10-11)

By Rev. Ed Weber

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,  
Today’s text for this 14th Sunday after Pentecost is from our Epistle reading –  
Ephesians 6:10-11

**“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”**

I. The call to arms

“Finally”, Paul says. He closes out his epistle with a call to arms. Who is he calling to be strong in the Lord? Of course, the Ephesians. But as we’ve been hearing these past 7 weeks in our walk through Ephesians, Paul has been speaking to the church, Christ’s bride, sacrificially loved, holy in His eyes by His spent blood, purchased by a sweet smelling offering to the Father as we remember from Ephesians 5:2. Paul is talking to you and me! He’s telling you and me to put on the whole armor of God!

This holy, apostolic church, chosen in Christ before the foundations of the world (Ephesians 1:4), predestined to adoption as sons by Christ Himself (Ephesians 1:5) is not idle, but it is engaged in battle. Whether you are aware of the fight you are in or not, it’s real and it’s coming at you daily. This you can be assured of because your enemy is real and he’s not idle. The devil doesn’t stop fighting. The evil one’s goal is to make your soul fall in battle and give up hope like he did to Saul and Solomon and Judas Isacariot and Peter.

Paul himself, God’s great apostle to the Gentiles, His great ambassador in chains, asked for the Ephesians to pray for him also at the close of his letter. Pray for all

the saints, for each other, for each of us is engaged in the same battle and without the Lord's might we would utterly fall.

**“My brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” (Ephesians 6:10-11)**

## II. Against the spiritual powers of evil

“Rise! To arms! With prayer employ you. O Christians, lest the foe destroy you. For Satan has designed you fall.” So, we sang in the opening stanza.

The devil is constantly scheming. His wiles, his trickery, his insidious cunning wars against you. As Luther wrote in his great hymn, “A Mighty Fortress” “his deep guile and great might are his dread arms in fight”.

His dread arms are in fight. Are you? If not, you will not be left standing. Just so that we know the enemy, and the seriousness of our battle, Paul describes it to us in one breath taking sentence.

**“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12)**

We are in a grappling match, but not with an opponent that we can see. Last night, I happened to flip to the sports channel ESPN and there was a wrestling/boxing fight going on. I wasn't planning to keep watching it, but what caught my attention was the name of one of the combatants – Gilbert Urbina, and where he is from. You may recognize that name because he is from Mercedes, the youngest of the brothers who trains and fights in the MMA – mixed martial arts.

He wasn't supposed to fight, but was called on a short 10 day notice to fill in for someone who couldn't. Well, Gilbert came out strong in the first round, but it was quickly apparent that the 10 days of preparation weren't enough for this championship bout. He faded quickly in the second round, was thrown to the ground and tapped out when he couldn't continue. As hard as he tried, he wasn't able to stand against the wiles and strength of his flesh and blood opponent.

Sometimes when we watch TV, the sporting events seem distant to us since we don't have any connection to them. This one was close to home, Mercedes Texas.

Though you don't see a flesh and blood opponent in your soul's fight, Paul reminds us that he is real and powerful. The spiritual forces, powers, principalities, rulers of darkness, hosts of wickedness are who you are fighting against. That's a sobering thought. You, brother and sister in Christ, from Mercedes Texas are in this battle as we speak. The devil comes to your home, your doorstep, your soul. Your strength is not enough. Your preparation is not enough.

III. In the power of the Lord's might with the whole armor of God

So, Paul, tells us again in the strongest words possible,

**“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.” (Ephesians 6:13)**

Therefore, therefore, therefore... since all this is true of your fight against spiritual evil that you cannot withstand, Paul tells you how you can withstand... with the whole armor of God!

The evil day that comes to each Christian is different and it comes in different ways. The devil tempts each of us differently, always looking for our weaknesses. He was allowed to throw a whole lot of punches at Job...disasters, loss of possessions, loss of family, loss of health... The devil has many fiery darts that he is constantly shooting at believers to make them despair and give up the fight and tap out. Covid, natural disasters, the evil that our country has turned a blind eye to.

But, Paul tells us that we have protection and arms – the whole armor of God. From head to foot God gives us His protection and the sword of His word to go on the offensive and make the enemy retreat!

Look at your armor that you have been given in baptism in the name of the Triune God. His truth around your waist to keep you from living in deceit, lies and hypocrisy. His truth sets you free from your sin because it points you to the truth that Jesus was born of a virgin to suffer die and rise again for you, full of grace and truth.

**“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)**

Jesus took up the fight that we had lost and battled in our stead. By His righteousness, we are made righteous and can stand without shame in His forgiveness with the breast plate of righteousness protecting us and leading us to righteous living.

We remember from Ephesians 4:23-24, Paul told us **“be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”**

We daily repent and say “no” to the devil, and put on the new man given to us in our baptism in the righteousness of Christ.

This Gospel of forgiveness and salvation, given to you by grace, lest any man should boast, shodds your feet so that you live and move and have your being in Christ. (Acts 17:28) And as God’s people you come to the aid of your brothers and sisters in the fight with this Gospel to encourage and lift them up when they have fallen. And, you come to those still in darkness and free them from the spiritual powers of the devil with the Gospel message of Christ’s salvation that you proclaim! “Redeem the time”. We heard in chapter 5 verses 14-16. Call sinners to **“Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.”**

And Paul tells you to take the shield of faith. “Though I be a sinner and have an imperfect life, both in what I have committed and omitted, yet there is a perfectly holy One, clean and pure, who has given Himself for me and died for me.” Luther says. “Him you dare not touch, Him you dare not condemn.. wherever there is a defect in my work and life which exposes me to assault, there my Christ must help and fight for me. You cannot condemn Him.” So answers our shield of faith and clings to the Savior.

In faith, we receive Jesus’ very body and blood and answer the devil’s accusations, “this body and blood is given and shed for me”. You cannot condemn me for you would have to condemn Christ. And this you cannot do!

Indeed, God gives us the helmet of salvation to assure us that though we must pass through many tests and temptations in this life, our final victory is assured. Our battle has been won by Christ. We will gain the heavenly treasure and inheritance.

The devil loves to hear a Christian say that he or she isn’t sure whether he or she will go to heaven. He loves to hear someone say, “I don’t know”. He loves to raise doubts in the believer’s mind.

But the Christian should daily take up the helmet of salvation. For with it the head is protected from the blows of doubt and despair that are thrown at it. "But this is our confidence," Luther says, "that we believe on Jesus Christ, who is Lord over all the world, the devil and everything, through whom we are confident that we shall inherit another life and that He will deliver us from every evil work and misfortune and subdue under our feet all that threatens or torments us now."

How often in our fight, do we need to use the sword of God's word to fight back the devil's lies and evil assaults. How often each of us should remember God's word to us in Romans 8:35-39.

**"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long;**

**We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."**

"Finally", brothers and sisters in Christ, Paul says to each of us today. Having heard God's word, engage in the battle. "Finally", put on the whole armor. Don't leave anything unprotected from head to toe! Take up the shield of faith and wield the sword. Be in the word of God daily and you will stand. You will stand victorious in the Lord's might, not yours. You will stand on the last day with sheep, not the goats, all by the grace of God. For the victorious Lamb of God has won your battle with His death and resurrection.

So, Paul says in 1 Timothy 6,

**"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses." (1 Timothy 6:12)**

Most beautifully, our hymn of the day concludes, "Praise God, our triumph's sure. We need not long endure, scorn and trial. Our Savior King, His own will bring, to that great glory which we sing." Amen.

**The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus." Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**