

In the name of Jesus our Savior, dear friends,

The next time you're watching a football game—and maybe that will be later today—I want you to envision this: Among all those huge, fierce, powerful, practiced, and padded players walks...you...in your shorts and t-shirt...and flip-flops...and you have a cold...or maybe it's the flu—either way, you're not doing so great. It doesn't matter though because you're told that you don't have a choice—you're playing and you're playing right now. No one seems to care that you're not remotely prepared for this. There will be no mercy.

Seem unfair...hopeless even? What if you were told in advance that this would happen and that you should have been wearing the right equipment? What if your equipment was so advanced that even if you're 82 years old or just a little kid, you would not only do great, you would win? What if the equipment was so great that it didn't matter even if you were sick? And what if you knew all that but you just didn't get ready? Well, that would be a shame, wouldn't it? You would let that amazing equipment go to waste and you'd get trampled over and messed up horribly. I think we'd say that you were pretty dumb! You would have no one to blame but yourself.

This morning I'm going to help you avoid a situation far worse than that, far more dangerous than that. I'm going to share with you the Apostle Paul's words to the Ephesians. This is God's encouraging command to you through Ephesians 6:10-20:

### **BE ARMED FOR BATTLE AND FEARLESS!**

God says that there is a spiritual battle going on between us and the devil and his troops. Remember, Satan is not just a storybook character, simply a way for us to picture evil; he is very real. He rebelled against God and God threw him out of heaven along with other angels who sided with him and opposed the Lord. The devil is a very real spiritual being who hates God and hates you, God's child. He would love for you to reject Jesus as your Savior and join him in hell for all eternity. Here Paul refers to the divisions and ranks in his well-organized kingdom. That includes **rulers...authorities...powers... and...spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms**, or we would say, in the "spiritual world." The devil and his evil angels have thousands of years of experience in spiritual warfare compared to your 10 years or 23 or 75. He is a deceitful, scheming liar with all sorts of tricks, many of which have worked on people for a long time. He battled Jesus himself as our Savior was working out our salvation. He battled the Apostle Paul, who asked the Ephesians to pray for him to go fearlessly into battle. And now YOU are in the devil's sights!

When the apostle mentions **the day of evil**, you might think that he is talking about the day of your death. Or you might think that he means Judgment Day. But what he's talking about is the battle that you will be confronted with on the day of temptation. As

a wise Christian, you may realize that there are attacks by Satan every day that bring temptations to sin. You may also realize that sometimes BIG temptations confront you. But what you may not have thought of is that there may be some severe test of your faith still to come. There may be a serious confrontation with Satan on a day in your future.

It could come in many forms, but make no mistake, the devil is behind it. You may face a sexual temptation. You may face an unforeseen temptation to cheat or steal. You might never believe that you would be tempted to do violent harm to someone, but with just the right temptation, Satan believes, you will give in. You might say that you will always speak up for God and the truth of his Word, but given the right circumstances, the devil believes, you will fall. I don't know what you're going to face or how many battles you're going to have to fight, but I do know this: they're going to come. The devil hates you because you love God and he will try to find every weak spot your sinful nature has.

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Satan is not going to stop coming after you, so you need to **BE ARMED FOR BATTLE!**

It's awkward if you aren't dressed properly for an occasion, isn't it? Unless you are unusually comfortable in your own skin, there is a hint of embarrassment if you show up in jeans and a t-shirt at a black tie event. You don't quite fit in at the party if you're wearing your Sunday suit when what you really needed was your swimsuit. Well, it's far worse than embarrassing if you are not properly dressed for the spiritual struggle you'll face. It can be spiritually fatal.

First of all, God wants you to **be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power**. Like the weak, sick person who might walk onto a football field filled with big, powerful men decked out in protective gear, we are totally unfit to handle this battle on our own. Sin has weakened us and, left on our own, we will lose. And so we rely on GOD's strength and GOD's power. He is the one who can bring us victory in our spiritual struggles. We trust him and so we listen when he tells us what to do in order to be victorious.

He tells us to **Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes**. Again he says, **Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand**. You notice that he says to put on the "full armor." He doesn't say "Choose your weapon." No, God wants you to be FULLY armed for battle. He wants you dressed in the full armor that he provides for you. Listen very carefully now to be sure that you don't miss a thing. Your soul and your eternal life are at stake here. This is how God wants you armed:

**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. 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 saints.**

Truth, righteousness, gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the Word of God, prayer. We are to hold to God's truth at all times. We value the righteousness that Jesus has won for us. We are ready to spread the gospel that has brought us peace. We have unyielding faith in our God. We have full confidence in the fact that we are saved. We know the Word of God so well that we can apply it in any and every situation. And we are men and women, boys and girls, who pray all kinds of prayers, all the time. That's what it means to BE ARMED AND READY FOR BATTLE—the battle we know for sure is ongoing and may very well get worse!

Does that describe you? Is that how you look to God? Are you perfectly READY FOR BATTLE? Or is it possible that you have ignored the battle that is raging now and could get fiercer? If you've been nonchalant about the devil and his attacks on you, you have sinned against God who tells you to be alert.

When God looks at you, does he see you in full battle gear? Or is it possible that you have not been arming yourself with the full armor of God? Maybe you've picked up a piece or two, but have been unconcerned with the rest. If you have not put on the full armor of God, you have sinned against God who tells you to get ready to fight the good fight of faith.

It's like mom or dad telling you in the morning that you're going to a wedding in the afternoon. They even put the dress clothes you're supposed to wear out on the bed for you. Now the time for the wedding has come. But it's as if you never heard them say to get ready and you've totally left the clothes lying there on the bed! If you have not taken God's warning about the battle seriously and you have left the full armor he's told you to wear lying there on the bed, then it is time to repent and get dressed!

What a blessing it is that we CAN repent of our sins and know that Jesus Christ, our Savior, who extinguished every fiery dart of the devil hurled at him and presented God's Word in perfect ways at every confrontation, will forgive us for those sins!

You may remember Satan tempting Jesus in the desert as our Savior began his earthly ministry. Jesus deflected every temptation and used the offensive weapon of Holy Scripture to win the battles. In the Garden of Gethsemane when our Lord was tempted to hang it all up and not go through with the cross, he spent time in serious prayer, relying on the strength of the Father and the Spirit. Every single time you read about Jesus doing things like this and winning the battle against temptation, you can know he did it for you and me because we so often fail. That perfect, sinless life of his, given on the cross, did away with our every sin of not taking the battle seriously and being unprepared and unequipped for it.

And when we realize we are forgiven in Christ,  
we cinch up the belt of truth and  
we tighten the breastplate of righteousness until it's snug again and  
we lace up the sandals of the gospel of peace and  
we find that shield of faith again and  
we strap on the helmet of salvation and with the hand that's not holding the shield,  
we grab the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.  
Then—and only then—are we ARMED FOR BATTLE...and we can be FEARLESS  
because God has equipped us!

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There are glorious promises and results from God when we are **strong in the Lord**  
and when we **put on the full armor of God!**

We want to be victorious over the devil's assaults. After the smoke has cleared, we want to stand and watch Satan flee from us as we remain on God's side, the side of salvation. God says that will be the case as we rely on his strength and are properly outfitted to fight. See what he says? **Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.** And when speaking of the one piece of equipment, he assures us this way: **take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.** Those are fantastic results! We can actually repel the devil's deadly missiles and we can stand in the face of temptation! When we have this comfort, we can fight temptation fearlessly!

And finally, when we pray as Paul encouraged the people to pray for him, we can be sure that the Lord hears our prayers. This is what Paul asked of his fellow believers: **Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, 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.** You and I, brothers and sisters in Christ, ought to pray for one another—people for their pastor and pastors for their people—that we all would not back down, but instead boldly and fearlessly proclaim God's truth at all times—whether we are under attack for it or we are seizing an opportunity to go on offense, proclaiming the saving gospel of forgiveness and eternal life by faith in Jesus Christ.

Trust God when he tells you the battle is on. Trust him when he tells you that he has provided the armor and the weapon for you to use. Trust him when he promises you victories in the fight of faith. You are Christian soldiers who must face spiritual skirmishes, so listen to me...listen to Paul...listen to God: **BE ARMED FOR BATTLE AND FEARLESS!** The Lord will give you the victory over temptation and because of your trust in Jesus, his Son, he will give you the ultimate victory—eternal life in heaven with him when the battle here is over. Amen.

Now the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.