

Put Your Armor On, Stand Up, and Stand Firm (Ephesians 6:12-13)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at GCBC on November 11, 2012

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We just sang how we long for the day “when with Christ we stand in glory.” Until that final day, Christ is glorified when we stand up for Jesus, when we stand firm for Jesus, and take a stand for Jesus. That’s the message of our text in Eph 6, and of the song we sang:

O church arise and put your armor on, Hear the call of Christ our Captain,
for now the weak can say that they are strong In the strength that God has given

Ephesians 6:10 *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.* ¹¹ *Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.* ¹² *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.* ¹³ *Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.*

Title of Message: Put Your Armor On, Stand Up, and Stand Firm.

1. Remember Your Sovereign Lord in the Battle
2. Recognize the Spiritual Reality of the Battle
3. Resolve to Stand Firm in the Battle

#1. Remember Your Sovereign Lord in the Battle

I can’t do what v. 12-13 (or the rest of text) says if I forget v. 10. 2 Lord’s Days ago in Eph 6 we saw the all-important life-changing truth that all Christians are slaves of Christ (6:6). I must see myself as a slave of a sovereign Master, and that must change how I live and look at the world and my place in it. Last week we looked at another truth in the next section of Eph 6 with equal potential to radically change your worldview if you really think in these terms throughout the next week. The truth is all Christians are in a war. We are to see ourselves as soldiers under a sovereign Captain. That truth also must change how we look at the world and our place in it (timely reminder if after Tuesday we feel defeated or discouraged)!

Turn back to chapter 1 where Paul talks about how our eyes need to be lifted up from this world to the hope we have in God’s sovereign calling of us, our heavenly perspective, and the power source God has given us. That is what Paul prays for his readers to grasp in Eph 1:18-19:

¹⁸ *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,* ¹⁹ *and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might ...* [same phrase in 6:10 “in the strength of His might”]

That resurrection power in v. 20 in the One sitting on a throne in victory and glory, every spiritual being put in subjection under His feet in v. 22, that same “strength of His might” that in v. 21 is far above the prince of darkness and his principalities and powers, that is the power source that enable Christians to be strong spiritually. Notice v. 19 says the greatness of this power is ‘to us who believe.’

Eph 1:20: *‘which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,²¹ far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.²² And He put all things under His feet...’* (NKJV)

In the spiritual realm, Jesus after His resurrection was exalted and enthroned at the seat of power, not just *above* all fallen angels and powers of darkness (terms for demons in Eph 6, Rom 8), but Jesus is *far above* all dominions and demons who are all under His feet.

Come see the cross where love and mercy meet
As the Son of God is stricken
Then see His foes lie crushed beneath His feet
For the Conqueror has risen
And as the stone is rolled away
And Christ emerges from the grave
This victory march continues till the day
Every eye and heart shall see Him

Paul wants the eyes of our heart to be opened to this reality now. If you turn to Eph 3:16, Paul prays this power would strengthen us:

¹⁶ *that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man ...*

...²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us...

This is the ascended Lord’s almighty abundant power, far above all angelic beings and far beyond all we can ask or think, all-sufficient power according to His glory, strengthening us in His might. Look at 6:10: ... *be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.*

Paul didn’t want soldiers of Christ to live powerless or hopeless lives. He prays in Eph 1:18 for God to open their eyes to see the resources they have in Christ, power far greater than any challenge that may be surrounding or overwhelming the servants of God. The “strength of His might” in Eph 1:19 is the resurrection power and reigning power of King Jesus at the seat of power, the right hand, in the heavenlies, all demonic “powers” under His feet (1:19-22).

Eph 6:10 assumes you know the prior context of Ephesians 1, the omnipotent, invincible, undefeatable *strength of His might for us!* May God open our eyes to see the Lord of hosts, His army with us.

In 2 Kings 6, Elisha had strong enemy forces surrounding him.

¹⁵ *When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. “Oh, my lord, what shall we do?” the servant asked. ¹⁶ “Don’t be afraid,” the prophet answered. “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” ¹⁷ And Elisha prayed, “O LORD, open his eyes so he may see.” Then the LORD opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. [those terms were used of angels from heaven earlier, Elijah’s army escort up]*

God’s armies and armies are greater than man’s or even Satan’s. When his eyes were opened to see God’s power and protection, it helped him not to be afraid, and Paul prays the Lord would open our eyes to see God’s power and protection for us (Eph 1:18-19).

The invincible King of heaven's armies has unlimited might and resource and reinforcement ready for fearful servants who ask Him for help. Hebrews 4 tells us those who come in prayer to the throne of grace find help in time of need. Every private in the Lord's army has personal access to and assistance of the Commander-in-Chief. So be strong in the Lord, v. 10 says, in the strength of His might. Not "let go and let God"; "stand firm in the power of God"!

The point of that is not for us to be passive, but to strengthen us to be active soldiers who say "I'm in the Lord's army. Yes sir!" That children's song has better perspective than some Christian adults have. We all need to remember 'I'm in the Lord's army, and Jesus is my Commander, and when He speaks, I am to salute, "yes sir!"'

One time when we were doing family worship, singing songs from church, one of our girls (very little at the time) asked for "Amma neber." Jaime said, "what?" "You know, momma, Amma neber march in da infantry, ride in da Calbary...I'm in da Lord's army.'

Another song originally written for children, we all sang earlier. It was written by a minister in England for Christian school children in the 1800s, but it speaks to all ages. Its author wrote:

'It was written in a very simple fashion, without thought of publication ... I wanted the children to sing while marching from one village to the other, but couldn't think of anything quite suitable, so I sat up at night resolved to write something myself ... It was written in great haste, likely in less than 15 minutes.

... Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war
 With the cross of Jesus going on before
 ... Christ, the royal Master, leads against the foe;
 forward into battle see His banner go! ...
 Like a mighty army moves the Church of God;
 brothers, we are treading where the saints have trod ...
 Onward, then, ye people, join our happy throng;
 blend with ours your voices in the triumph song.
 Glory, laud and honor unto Christ the King
 This thru countless ages men and angels sing.'¹

These are the marching orders for Christian soldiers, and singing is important for the troops as they keep in step with each other. Our cadence is "glory, laud, and honor, unto Christ the King," and our song is a "triumph song" of the One who "leads against the foe, forward into battle see His banner go." He is with His soldiers, we are "with the cross of Jesus going on before" us to victory in Jesus

So, remember your sovereign Lord in the battle (that's #1), now ...

#2. Recognize the Spiritual Reality of the Battle (v. 12)

*our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the **spiritual forces** of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

Our candidate may have been defeated earlier this week on earth but our King in heaven remains undefeated and undefeatable. Our hope isn't in the White House, our hope must be built on nothing less than Jesus' and His righteousness (our breastplate in v. 14 that guards our heart). Our struggle is not ultimately physical or political, or won or lost in that realm, based on who won or lost last Tuesday.

The direction of our nation may be discouraging or disturbing, but we can't lose heart or fear or fret or give up, we must stand up for Jesus and hold up the gospel. In a world that grows darker, we must shine brighter. The thicker the battle, the stronger soldiers need to be for the fight. No more sleeping in the barracks, it's time to awake and arise and put your armor on, church, and get your battle mindset on for war. Christians need to wake up to the reality of this warfare, and take up the Lord's armor, and stand up for Jesus, as soldiers of the cross

It's a war out there. If you don't wake up to it, you're going to be a casualty of this war, if you're not already wounded by it. There is a war going on in our State for the hearts and minds of our children, waged by our enemy's under-cover operations, its indoctrination via schools, TV, in liberalism, humanism, secularism, Darwinism, naturalism, moral relativism, neo-paganism, homosexual activism, socialism, etc. The schemes of the devil in v. 11 are more subtle than converting kids to Satanism, he'll happily infuse church-going Bible-quoting kids with any otherism along with their parents religion. If parents aren't fighting to counteract the assault, many children are already gone.²

As 70-90% of church-raised kids go AWOL from the faith of our fathers, we need to recognize there is a war going on in our homes, and we need to go back to what v. 4 calls fathers to do, which is to be a family shepherd, to raise up his children in the instruction of the Lord, so that they can be strong in the Lord as v. 10 says. Dads must continually be teaching their kids the Lord's instructions (the verb tense of the command in v. 4 is present active imperative, non stop, regularly, dads are to teach their kids the Word)

We are not around our kids 24/7, but the world sure is, so we need to strive to fight against the influence of the world, the flesh, and the devil, some consistent way we structure time to obey v. 4. It may work for some to have family devotions around the table after a meal, for others maybe in their living room at a regular time, but I'll tell you from experience, if you don't plan the time to pray as a family and worship in song and scripture, your enemy will distract that from happening (and may be giving you excuses right now).

This is why we started the "family shepherds" study recently, because there is a war for our families, and our wives and children need to see a man fighting for his family, leading them spiritually in this battle, rising up to do what v. 4 commands him to, standing firm, and protecting his family from the fiery darts of the evil one. If you think you can't benefit from that study because you've got that down, I would first of all encourage you to ask your wife and see if she also agrees you can't benefit from other soldiers fighting for their families. And if you *are* the valiant victorious warrior you think you are in this area, come and help us lesser soldiers learn the truths that helped you raise warriors. I say that somewhat tongue-in-cheek because we all can learn and deepen our arsenal. Soldiers need to keep training and need fellow soldiers, especially in battle.

There is a war going on in the battlefield of our homes, in families, and if you don't have a wartime mentality, you may be losing, and if you're focusing all your energies on the wrong enemy, the real enemy is winning. Our great enemy isn't education systems or the media itself, it's not any flesh and blood judges in San Francisco or flesh and blood media execs or movie makers a few hours south in Hollywood.

And if our real enemy can keep us focused on other targets, all our ammo toward public schools, politics, protests, and picketing, or pouring all our resources into things that don't assault the real enemy or save souls from him, his diversion tactics have succeeded.

Verse 12 reminds us there are far bigger and badder forces at work, a force darker than George Lucas' dark side of the force, stronger than the blackness Hollywood portrayed as eating Peter Parker, an evil more like what was over Narnia till Aslan came, or like the armies of Mordor in Lord of the Rings till the return of the King (portrayal of spiritual war arguably by a more biblical worldview).

But beyond any big screen portrayal or best-selling books by Frank Peretti, the Bible itself gives enough to know our evil enemy isn't ultimately State education, Sacramento legislation, San Francisco's orientation or society's degradation. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood and it will not be won by human weapons (much less human whining about the conflict). We're in spiritual warfare struggling against what v. 12 calls '*world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places*'

The "struggle" in v. 12 can be translated "wrestle." We need to not think of modern warfare from long-distance rockets, laser-guided missiles to hit targets in other countries from a safe secure location. v. 12 has to do with close combat, like 2 soldiers in a one-on-one struggle, nothing to shoot with or spear the opponent with from a distance, they are on top of each other, wrestling, rolling around, fighting to keep the other from pinning and finishing them off. This isn't WWF, think *real* wrestling like in the Olympics (this Greek term was used for that in ancient Greek Olympic games).

A Greek dictionary states 'It was used of the wrestling of athletes and of the hand-to-hand combat of soldiers both of which required deftness and speed. It denoted the struggle between individual combatants in distinction from an entire military campaign.'³ This wrestling is maybe a little more like cage fighting but without a ref. The key for this fight? Stay on your feet.

Point #3: Resolve to Stand Firm in the Battle

¹¹ *Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to **stand firm** against the schemes of the devil ...* ¹³ *Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to **stand firm**.* ¹⁴ ***Stand firm** ...*

We'll look in future weeks at the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and the parts of the full armor (the word is panoply), but for our remaining time today I want to focus on the main point that is clear and appears 3x: *stand firm, stand firm, stand firm*. The middle of v.11: *stand firm*, end of v.13: *stand firm*, 14a *stand firm*.

We stand firm in v. 11 against the devil's schemes, and a related concept in context in v. 13 is the word 'resist.' We stand firm by resisting the devil and his schemes (and it seems "devil" in v. 11 is used as representative of all his demonic forces in v. 12, although Satan himself can only be one place at a time, his power is broad).

How do we "resist" specifically? James 4 and 1 Peter 5 give help:

James 4:7 *Submit therefore to God. **Resist the devil** and he will flee from you.* ⁸ *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts ...* ¹⁰ *Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord ...*

1 Peter 5:6 *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God ...* ⁷ *casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.* ⁸ *Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

⁹ *But resist him, firm in your faith ...* [both passages also quote the Proverb “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble”]

A prime way you resist the devil and stand firm is by fighting pride in your own heart, humbling yourself. If you’re not resisting pride, God will be resisting you, it says, but He gives grace to the humble

v.13: *take up the full armor of God so that you will be able to resist in the evil day ...*

“*the evil day*” may refer to evil time, or day of special temptation? A commentator says Paul implies it’s ‘not only for everyday evils but for the times of heightened and unexpected spiritual battles. For example, when the devil failed to tempt Jesus to sin, he left Jesus until an opportune time (Luke 4:13) ... in order to be able to stand in the evil day, [we like Christ must be] always prepared for the vicious attacks that the devil will make at opportune times.’⁴

Steve Lawson lists danger zones for opportune times, the evil day:⁵

1. *After a spiritual high point* (Luke 3:21-4:12)
2. *When you’re all alone* (also Lk 4, no one for 40 days)
3. *When physically drained* (4:2-4, lack of eating in case of Jesus, but can be for us also lack of sleep, disciplines).
4. *When you’re waiting* (4:5-7, Satan offers a shortcut)
5. *When you’re in God’s house* (4:9-11, Satan takes Jesus to the temple and quotes Scripture to him). ‘Nowhere perhaps is the devil so active as in a congregation of gospel hearers,’ that’s what J. C. Ryle said, and I think he’s right.

Lawson explains: ‘The first mention of Satan’s work in the book of Acts occurs...in the *church*. It was in the church that Peter rebuked Ananias: “Why has Satan filled your heart to lie...” (Acts 5:1-11) ... *church is the place of our most deeply rooted convictions ...* things don’t work out the way we want them to in the church, we can overreact and so make ourselves very vulnerable to Satan’s attack. It is here, at church, that our feelings are the highest, our expectations the greatest, and our convictions the deepest ...where we are most prone to overreaction and anger, providing Satan “an opportune time.” [Look at Eph 4:26] “*Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity*” ... Anger allows Satan the opportunity ...’⁶

The way we resist the devil in 4:26 is by not dwelling on anger, by not getting all bent out of shape with someone in your church or in your life, by not letting ourselves get all worked up, but instead by getting ourselves pushed down, by humbling ourselves, casting all our anxieties and frustrations on Him who cares for you.

That's the way James and Peter say we resist the devil, so that rather than him getting a foothold that can turn into a stronghold, the devil will flee

Look back at how v. 2 starts: *with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love ...*

Verse 31 expands on and explains further: *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.*³² *Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.*

If this is your struggle, if you're not humble, you need the gospel, you need to meditate on grace, God's undeserved unmerited favor and forgiveness to you who deserved His wrath. Some of you here maybe have never understood that gospel or submitted to Jesus as Lord and commander of your soul. If so, today is the day to repent, and trust Christ alone to deliver you from this battle with sin you have no hope of winning on your own. Commit, enlist under Him.

For the rest of you who are already in the Lord's army, Eph 6:14 is the first application and armor piece we'll study next time, the belt of truth that helps us stand against the devil's lies. Let's pray.

¹ Kenneth W. Osbeck, *Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1996), 308.

² See the book by Ken Ham with that title *Already Gone*, for more on this.

³ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*.

⁴ Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, p. 834.

⁵ Steve Lawson, *Faith Under Fire: Standing Strong When Satan Attacks* (Crossway Books, 1995), p. 192-99.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 201-202.