

To Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 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 firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the Gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Text: Ephesians 6:10-20 SS E Bay 8/30/15 Deut. 4:1-2, 6-8 Mk. 7: 1-8, 14-15, 21-23 Ps. 138

Hymns: 447, 449, 451, 444

WITH GOD'S HELP WE CAN DEFEAT SATAN'S ATTACKS!

Stand up! – stand up for Jesus!
Stand in His strength alone;
The arm of flesh will fail you,
You dare not trust your own.

Put on the Gospel armor,
Each piece put on with prayer;
Where duty calls or danger,
Be never wanting there. (TLH #449:1-2)

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

“Know your enemy.” If we must do battle with someone, the better we understand him and the kind of fight we’re up against, the better our chances of defeating him. The Bible says, “*Your **enemy** the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour*” (1 Peter 5:8). The world doesn’t even know it has an enemy: Satan. In fact, many people don’t believe Satan even exists. But Satan is real. Jesus warns us that Satan “*was a murderer from the beginning*” (John 8:44). Satan is happy to keep people in the dark as he leads them to eternal death.

We’re told, “*We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*” We’re engaged in is a “*spiritual*” battle against a “*spiritual*” enemy: Satan and his demons. Human wisdom and strength and righteousness don’t have a chance against Satan and his demons. We have no hope of defeating this enemy by ourselves.

The Bible assures us, “*Greater is [Christ] Who is in you than [Satan] who is in the world*”(1 John 4:4). Satan is strong, but God is stronger. Our success against Satan doesn’t depend on how strong we are, but on how strong **God** is. We’re urged, “*Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.*” “*Be strong in the Lord*” in the original is literally, “***Be strengthened in the Lord.***” When we rely on God for strength, we can defeat Satan! James says, “*Submit yourselves ... to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and*

He will come near to you” (James 4:7-8).

A soldier would be foolish to go into battle wearing only some of his armor. We’re told, “*Put on the whole armor of God.*” God has all the help we need, if we’ll use all the help God has to give us. The Bible warns us, “*Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall*” (1 Corinthians 13:9). Peter vowed to remain faithful to Jesus until death. But he was relying on himself and how strong he thought his faith was instead of relying on Jesus, and Peter failed (Luke 22:31-34, 54-62). We may have the best of intentions to serve our Lord, but we’re in trouble if we’re relying on how strong and experienced and gifted we think we are. Satan is very intelligent and observant. He understands human nature. Starting with Adam and Eve, he has tons of experience and success in spiritual warfare. That’s why we need to “*put on the whole armor of God.*” The less we rely on ourselves and the more we rely on God, the stronger He makes us! Like Paul, when I realize my own weaknesses and instead rely on God for strength, “*then I am strong*” (2 Corinthians 12:10).

“*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 firm.*” God promises us that with His armor on, when Satan attacks us and tempts us we **will** be able “*to stand firm*” against him! We’re all sinners. We all have weaknesses. We’re all tempted. But in Jesus, we’re not **slaves** to sin, weakness, and temptation. Relying on Jesus, someone who is gay doesn’t have to live a gay lifestyle, a drug addict doesn’t have to have that drug, a worrier doesn’t have to live in constant fear, and on and on. With Paul we say, “*I can do all things through **Christ** Who strengthens me!*” (Philippians 4:13).

“*Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth.*” In Bible times men wore long robes. They would “gird up their loins” by lifting up the bottom of their robe and tucking it into their belt in the front so

that it was like long shorts. In this way, soldiers could move and fight more easily. They would wear a leather belt around their middle to help deflect weapons. In our battles with Satan the first thing the Lord tells us He gives us is *“the belt of truth.”* Jesus prayed to His Father on our behalf, *“Sanctify them through the truth, Your Word is truth”* (John 17:17). The Word of truth is the most important part of our armor. God’s Word is our strength and defense. In the wilderness Jesus resisted every one of Satan’s temptations by turning to the Word (Matthew 4:1-11). When the devil tries to tempt us and put doubt in our minds (*“Did God really say [that]?”* – Genesis 3:1), we resist him and defeat him by opening our Bible and putting God’s Word in front of our eyes and asking God to help us to believe it and do what it says.

“Stand therefore, ... having put on the breastplate of righteousness.” A breastplate went from the neck down to the waist, protecting a soldier’s vital organs, in particular his heart. Our confidence before God isn’t found in the good things we do for Him, but in Christ’s perfect life and death for us. Our confidence for our salvation is the same as Paul’s: *“That I may be found in [Christ], not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith”* (Philippians 3:9). Satan will attack us with feelings of guilt over sins in our past, of discouragement over past failures, and of unworthiness of God’s forgiveness and love and help. We take comfort in knowing that, covered by Jesus’ righteousness, God declares us sinners to be righteous in His sight. *“Who will bring **any** charge against God’s elect? It is **God** who justifies”* (Romans 8:33). We protect our hearts with *“the breastplate of righteousness.”* We trust in Jesus’ righteousness covering us, and Satan’s attempts to condemn us fail.

“Stand firm ... and, as shoes for your feet, ... put on the readiness given by the Gospel of peace.” A soldier may be covered with body armor, but he’ll still be very vulnerable if his feet aren’t also protected.

We know that because Jesus died for us on the Cross, our sins are all forgiven. God loves us. God is at peace with us, and we are at peace with God. The Gospel of peace in Christ is our “footing” – our firm foundation on which we stand in all of our battles with Satan. Romans 5:1-2 says, *“Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now **stand**.”*

“In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.” The shield pictured here in the original was four feet high and two and one-half feet wide. A shield protects a soldier from being hit. Satan will try his best to tempt us and hurt us. But when we place our trust in Jesus and His Word He “shields” us, turning Satan’s blows away. When Satan tries to beat you down and wear you out and tempt you to give up, keep turning to Jesus and His Word. Placing our faith in Jesus and His Word, He promises we can *“extinguish **all** the flaming darts of the evil one”* – **whatever** the devil throws at us!

“Take the helmet of salvation.” A helmet protects a soldier’s head, the most important part of our body. Jesus protects us from Satan and eternal death in hell, and gives us eternal life in heaven. Jesus is talking about our *“helmet of salvation,”* so to speak, when He assures us, *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone pluck them out of My hand”* (John 10:27-28).

A soldier needs a weapon. *“Take the ... sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”* Hebrews 4:12 says that *“the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword.”* A soldier used his sword to defend himself and attack his enemy. Jesus didn’t only use His Word to defend Himself against Satan’s temptations in the wilderness. He kept attacking and defeating Satan’s lies with His Word, and finally

Satan had to leave Him (Matthew 4:1 ff.). We can use God’s Word not only to defend ourselves from Satan’s attacks, but also to defeat Satan’s attacks. Whatever temptations or doubts Satan tries to put into our minds, we keep turning to God’s Word. The devil **cannot** stand against God’s Word. The hymn writer urges us, “Wield God’s Word, a weapon glorious! Against each foe you’ll be victorious.” (TLH #444:2b)

“[Be] praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication” (requests). Prayer is a very powerful weapon God has given us with which to defeat Satan. Our Heavenly Father is always there for us, willing to listen and able to give us just the help we need. The psalmist says, *“The righteous cry, and the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles”* (Psalm 34:17).

To help us defeat Satan, our Lord tells us, *“Keep alert with all perseverance.”* Satan never relaxes in his mission to bring us down to hell. He may be direct, or he may be subtle. He may hit us very hard all at once, or he may keep chipping away at us to try to wear us down. We stay on the alert against the devil by staying close to Jesus. We stay close to Jesus through prayer and continually hearing and studying His Word. Jesus tells us, *“Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation”* (Matthew 26:41).

Paul told the Ephesians, *“[Make] supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.”* Paul was put in prison for preaching Christ crucified for the world. Paul was tempted to be discouraged and afraid and to shut his mouth. He needed the prayers of his fellow believers on his behalf that God would strengthen him.

A soldier doesn’t fight alone against the enemy. He and his fellow

soldiers depend on each other and support each other. Paul told the Colossians that their fellow believer, Epaphras, “*is always **wrestling in prayer for you***” – Colossians 4:12. Through prayer, we fight alongside each other against our enemy, Satan. Remember each other in your prayers. Pray also for our pastors and our teachers in our Christian schools; especially those who are in difficult circumstances. Rely on God’s strength. Tell people about their Savior. The world is so troubled, and we have what people need in Jesus Christ!

We all have areas in which we’re especially weak. Our Lord has all the help we need! Put on the **whole** armor of God! Rely on **God** for strength. Pray. Place your faith in the Gospel, and proclaim it. **WITH GOD’S HELP WE CAN DEFEAT SATAN’S ATTACKS!**

Rise! To arms!
With prayer employ you,
O Christians, lest the Foe destroy you,
For Satan has designed your fall.
Wield God’s Word, a weapon glorious!
Against each foe you’ll be victorious;
Our God will set you over them all.
Is Satan strong and fell?
Here is Immanuel. Sing hosanna!
The strong ones yield,
With Christ our Shield,
And we as conqueror’s hold the field. Amen. (TLH #444:1)

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