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***The Armor of God***  
***Ephesians 6:10-20***

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For our<sup>[a]</sup> struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup> Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. <sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. <sup>15</sup> As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> With all of these,<sup>[b]</sup> take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. <sup>18</sup> Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.*

This imagery of a ***Roman soldier's armor*** would have been familiar to the early Christians who received this letter from Paul.

They were a persecuted minority under Roman rule.

And Rome ruled by the sword.

They were surrounded by militarism, so Paul uses images that are familiar.

But--he gives them whole new meaning.

He's talking about warfare—but not a physical kind.

He's talking about ***spiritual warfare***.

when good comes up against evil.

He's saying that the world we live in is full of powers hostile to God, and

We need to stand firm—with God's power—and God's armor.

Whether you think a lot about spiritual warfare or not,

We all know what it's like to ***come up against evil, right?***

Ever feel like you are ***fighting a battle*** in your life?

Maybe with financial adversity, health problems, family feuds, stresses with kids or parents, or jobs...haven't we all faced serious battles?

I think if we were to all be honest, we'd say that each one of us is facing a serious battle of some kind—right now.

Often it seems like there's a lot happening behind the scenes, things we can't even see or touch.

Do you believe in something *beyond the physical* world?

—a spiritual realm of angels and powers that oppose the goodness of God?

If you do, you're not alone.

Some Gallup polls reveal that at least 75% of Americans believe in spiritual beings like angels and the Devil.

<http://www.gallup.com/poll/1690/religion.aspx>

The *Bible* says that the spiritual world is real.

We may not completely understand it,

but the Bible is very clear about the *existence* of it.

Paul says in Ephesians 6:12

*For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the **spiritual forces of evil** in the heavenly places.*

1 Peter 5:8 says *Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your **adversary the devil** prowls around, looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering.*

*Angels* are mentioned in 34 of 66 books of the Bible.

They are real, holy, personal spiritual beings created by God, for God's purposes.

*Psalm 34:7 says, the **angels** of the Lord encamp around those who fear him...*

*Psalm 91:11-12 "For He will give **His angels charge** of you, to guard you in all your ways.*

Seven Old Testament books,

*every* New Testament writer,

and *Jesus* himself mentions *Satan*.

Satan is known as a liar, an accuser, a slanderer,

a spiritual being who tempts people to sin, to discouragement, to hold grudges, to false teaching, and to dissension in the body of Christ.

Demons are mentioned many times throughout the Bible, promoting pain, anger, bitterness and suffering.

Jesus *heals people* who are suffering from demon possession.

Does all this talk of *angels and demons* make you squirm?

It does most Presbyterians.

We don't talk a lot about spiritual warfare or Satan.

Some say there is no Devil.

I don't believe that, but I understand the hesitation in talking about it.

I personally think that C.S. Lewis had it right when he said in The Screwtape Letters. "*There are two equal and opposite errors into which [we] can fall about the devils. One is to **disbelieve** in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy **interest** in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist and a magician with the same delight. This is certainly true about Satan. Some people totally **dismiss** him as an impersonal force or somebody in a red suit with a **pitchfork**. On the other end of the spectrum, many people attribute too much power and importance to Lucifer. They feel he is God's equal.*"

There is ***no equal to God***. Evil is not as powerful as Good!

And it's not healthy for us to become  
too wrapped up in angels and demons,

But it's also ***not healthy for us to deny*** the existence of the spiritual world,  
Because it exists whether we acknowledge it or not!

***So what do we do?***

Paul says, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power.  
***stand firm.***

He says stand 4 times.

We're not told, even when putting on armor,  
that we are supposed to go out and wage war against other people.  
We are told to stand firm against the powers and principalities of evil.

This is an important ***distinction***.

Many times in the history of Christianity

The Bible has been used as license to wage war against non-Christians,  
or heretics who claim to be Christian.

We need only remember the Crusades, and Reformation battles,  
to realize that ***Christianity has been used to justify violence.***

Some people erroneously think that Islam is a violent religion,  
and Christianity is one of peace.  
But our own faith has been used to wage war.

So what does it mean to stand firm in your faith?  
What does that mean in *your life today*?  
When have you been led to stand firm on something that you know is right?

It's *not easy* to stand for what's right.  
Many of us have lost a lot in standing up for what was right.  
It's not easy.

As I was reading and re-reading these verses I realized that  
Standing firm in the Lord,  
standing up for truth and righteousness  
is NOT the same thing as just *speaking your mind*, and *standing up for yourself*.

Speaking your mind is popular right now.  
Americans have a strange '*respect*' if you can call it that,  
for people who *speak their mind*—  
no matter how hurtful, rude, or outrageous.  
We say we are tired of folks being too politically correct and careful about  
offending people.  
People should just speak their mind.  
But is that a *good* in and of itself?  
Is that anything like what Paul is saying?  
Probably not.

*Speaking out* is not necessarily synonymous with speaking  
truth, and justice, and righteousness.  
The Christian's calling is to stand firm—in Christ.  
*In God's power, with God's Word, and God's truth.*  
Not our pride, our way, or our opinion.  
There's a big difference!

So how is Paul envisioning our standing firm?  
We need to remember the first 5 chapters of Ephesians to answer this.  
We stand firm in *humility*.  
We stand firm in *Christian unity*.  
Because we are *rooted* in the *body of Christ*,

and grounded the *love of God*.

When Paul speaks of putting on the whole armor of God and standing firm, think of *Martin Luther King, Jr.* who stood firm for non-violence.

Or *Margaret Sanger* and the women's suffrage movement.

Or *Nelson Mandela* and his fight against apartheid, even through 27 years of imprisonment!

How can we stand firm, *as they did?*

*What do we stand for*, in our lives?

Are we standing for *truth? Faith? Righteousness?*

And if so, do we realize the *battle is already won?*

We have *hope!*

We know the outcome!

*What if we lived like we knew that victory is ours?*

Wouldn't that change our attitude on the battles we face?

On Wednesday nights we are studying the Book of Revelation.

It is a book full of *already and not yet* about the battle between good and evil --- here's the spoiler alert: *good wins*.

God is victorious. Jesus Christ is the Victor!

However, we are *not yet* through all the battles.

We are still dealing with evil, and powers and principalities.

We are in a spiritual *battle*.

Evil cannot win, even though it looks like it will.

Seems like evil people seem to have it better than the good guys, right?

The Psalms talk about this a lot:

*Psalms 94* says *How long, O Lord, will the wicked be jubilant?*

We've all felt the unfairness of evil seeming to win, for now.

We are called to stand firm in the face of that.

In John Bunyan's "*The Pilgrim's Progress*".

The main character, Christian receives the armor in the armory of the House Beautiful. He was to use it against Apollyon in the next stage of his journey.

Bunyan made a point of noting that there was *no armor for the back*.

Christian would not be able to run.

His only option was "to ...*stand his ground*". □ ["The Whole Armor of God,"](#) Rev. Bryan Findlayson, Lectionary Bible Studies and Sermons, Pumpkin Cottage Ministry Resources.

When faced with challenges we don't understand,  
when in the face of enemies or evil...  
What if we stood our ground,  
What if we were *strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power?*

Paul says that *we have all the power that we need.*  
This is why he tells us in. *6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

Notice that Paul takes that familiar sight—*a Roman soldier's armor*—and gives each piece a completely *new meaning*.

### **First The Belt of Truth.**

The belt was a very important part of a Roman soldier's uniform.  
It was used it to gather up his clothes.  
And had many different loops to hold weapons.  
Regardless of how he moved, or fell, or climbed.  
If the belt were not on straight,...it could cost him his life.

How do we cling to truth, in a world that doesn't value truth?  
Lying is no longer even considered lying...  
But as Christians, we're called to *stand upon the truth.*  
The truth of God's Word.  
The truth from the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

### **We also wear the Breastplate of Righteousness**

The breastplate was used to protect the warriors' vital organs--especially the heart.  
Same is true of our spiritual lives--  
Are we giving thought to what goes in and comes out of our hearts?  
Are we allowing God to guard our hearts?

### **Next we put on shoes to proclaim the gospel of peace.**

Some historians credit *footwear* as one of the greatest reasons why the Romans were so victorious over their enemies.  
The Roman Soldier was equipped with hobnailed sandals,  
which provided them a strong stance and balance to gave them a superior posture in battle on hills and uneven terrain.

Our sure footing comes from the gospel of peace.  
 The peace of Jesus Christ.  
 That peace has power in a world without it!  
 Are we standing up for peace?

***Next it's the shield of faith,***

Roman soldiers had two kinds of shields.  
 The larger was a 2 and ½ foot by 4 foot shield that virtually covered the front of the soldier. It was made of inch thick wood, was wrapped in leather, and edged with metal. It could be soaked in water before battle, so that it would extinguish flaming arrows shot by the enemy.  
[http://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/proper-16b/?type=lectionary\\_epistle](http://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/proper-16b/?type=lectionary_epistle)

What about our faith?  
 Is it more than just belief in Jesus,  
 Is it something *we do*?  
 How are we living out our faith?

**Paul says we wear a Helmet of Salvation.**

The helmet protected the head in battle.  
 Putting on our helmet of salvation means that we know—  
 that Jesus Christ died for us, and has saved us from our sins.  
 Does that knowledge helps us live in a new way?  
 Do we hold our heads high because we have God's power?

***Finally, our sword of the Spirit, is the word of God.***

The sword is the only offensive weapon in this armor.  
 God's Word—How do we use it?  
 Do we spend time to know it, learn it, and memorize it?  
 Is it in our hearts and heads?  
 When we are faced with an attack,  
 Do We rely on God's Word?

Putting on the armor of God is not about hurting others, or waging war.  
 They are tools for the battle when evil comes knocking:  
***truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and the Word!***

And just like we *each have spiritual armor*, so does the *church!*  
The whole letter to Ephesians is about unity  
in the body of Christ, the church.  
We are one through the power of the Holy Spirit.

So when we take up the armor of God, *we do it together.*  
And together we are *stronger* than any of us ever could be, alone.  
We stand shoulder to shoulder against the enemy,  
just as Roman soldiers would do.  
And together we make a stand that is stronger and even more effective than each of  
us doing it alone.  
What do we stand for?  
What are we standing up against?

Friends, hear the **Good News** of the Gospel.  
There's a whole spiritual world hostile to God,  
But we have God's power, and the tools we need to stand firm.  
May we put on that armor, and rely on God's power. Amen.