

In a SPIRIT *of*
PRAYER

Sermon Growth Guide

June 8, 2025

In the Battle



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Ephesians 6:10-20

Key Verse: Ephesians 6:10, 11, 18

“Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power...put on the full armor of God...and pray in the Spirit on all on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.”

Foundations

Prior to verse 18, “pray in the Spirit”, Paul lays out the keys to powerful and effective prayer. He begins by saying “be strong in the Lord and in his might power.” You and I are inherently weak in and of ourselves. It is only when we are “in Christ” and not “in our fallen selves” that we even begin to open our lives to the power God has for us. It is the power Paul spoke of earlier in Ephesians when he said, “I pray that you may be strengthened with power in your inner being by the Holy Spirit.” Paul says there is a battle going on in which the devil wants to disable our spiritual power and our prayers. Paul says, “put on the whole armor of God, that you may take your stand against the devil’s schemes.”

In effect Paul is saying that putting on “the full armor of God” is putting on Christ and all that he has done for and given to you. Put on “the belt of truth” – Jesus is “the truth,” the “breastplate of righteousness” – Jesus is our righteousness, and “feet fitted with...peace,” Jesus is our peace. “take up the shield of faith” – our faith is faith in Jesus Christ and not faith in our faith, “take the helmet of salvation” – Jesus is our salvation, “take up the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God” – The word of God is the gift the Holy Spirit inspired the authors of Scripture to write. All of this is but the prerequisite to “praying in the Spirit at all times”. The only way our prayers will be effective and have power is by “putting on the whole armor of God” because the enemy wants to attack our minds, our hearts, our everyday walk, our confidence and assurance.

Understanding God’s Word

Together read the Ephesian passage many times in various versions. List for yourselves the various parts of the armor of God. Then list how that piece of armor is specifically designed to protect a specific part of your being from the enemy’s attacks.

Applying God’s Word

After a time of personal prayer, please list people in your life, areas of your life, and arenas in this world where you need to “pray for in the Spirit at all times with prayers and requests.”

Witnessing God’s Word

What steps do you need to take in order to demonstrate in your everyday life that you are at peace at all times...demonstrating God’s heart for those for whom you are praying...demonstrating to those around you that you are a man or woman of faith and not of sight?

So, there used to be this thing called waiting. Does anybody remember that? I belonged to a music club as a teenager. I decided what tapes I wanted to listen to in my Walkman. I ordered those tapes by mailing a check. Then I waited, weeks, a month, until the tapes came in the mail. Then I heard the song. Can you imagine? Waiting. We need to talk about waiting a little today, because without understanding that phenomenon we can't really understand why all of God's promises are not realities yet, why all our good prayers for the good Kingdom of our Good Lord have not been answered yet. The war is over. We sing that in one of our worship songs. The war is over, but the battle rages on. Jesus has secured the victory, but we wait for the final resolution. We are In the Battle. Waiting.

Sometimes I talk about shifting our mindset in church from cruise ship to battleship. In a church like this, it's easy to think "I pay my ticket, and I get my services." But that's not church. We all know that; we just get hung up sometimes. Church is being engaged together on mission for the Lord. Some folks don't love the militaristic language. I'm not trying to be militaristic. It actually came from me sharing at one point, "I feel like the captain of a cruise ship driving the boat into combat waters!" The worst part of being in a battle is not knowing you are in a battle. Warfare in our times is so terrible partly because there is so much civilian involvement. Remember the old firing lines of the Revolutionary War? Soldiers just lined up across from one another on the battlefield and let volleys fly. It always seemed so silly to me. But at least you knew where the battle was and when you were in it. Spiritually, we are often unaware. You say, "Man, it just feels like a battle sometimes." It is. You are in the battle. You don't need to panic, but you don't need to be naïve either. There is a battle raging. We win this battle on our knees! Let's look.

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power." (Ephesians 6:10) If it just said, "be strong," I might despair. How does that feel when you are told to just

be strong. One of my boys has a coach who tends to just yell, "Do better!" But it doesn't just say "be strong" but to be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. You have God in you. The Lord is within you. "Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." (Ephesians 6:11) The devil is out there. Satan is alive and active, scheming and planning against you, against your family, against this church. His trade is deception and division. Lies. Confusion. Shadows. Darkness. If you are in Christ he can't gain your soul, but he still wants to mess up your life and limit your impact. Maybe you have heard this before, "The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist." Step one is to know you are in a battle. You have an opponent. Don't fear, but don't be unaware. Remember we are still waiting. The war is won but the battle still rages.

The battle we wage is not against flesh and blood. The battle we are in is not against one another. The battle we are in is not even against other people who are our ideological opponents, non-Christians, secularists, other religions—people who are deceived are victims not enemies. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." (Ephesians 6:12) If that's true, how do we engage the battle? If the battle you are in over your son's soul, over your grandkids' future, is not a political battle, not an ideological battle, not an economic battle or philosophical battle, but is, primarily, essentially, a spiritual battle, how do you engage that battle? Prayer. Prayer. Once the disciples were trying to free a boy from a spiritual power that was wrecking his life. They couldn't. Jesus did it. They asked Jesus. "He replied, 'This kind can come out only by prayer.'" (Mark 9:29) We'll come back to that.

Okay, that's the reality of the battle, the characteristics of the battle, now what is our combat gear? What is our battle rattle? I remember having a Soldier

come to Vacation Bible School one time. Here's my helmet. Here's my Kevlar vest. What's our battle rattle? "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." (Ephesians 6:14-17) Truth is the belt; it holds everything up. Ever worn a loose pair of pants without a belt? It takes a lot of energy! Lies actually take a lot of energy. The only real power the evil one has is deception. The devil traffics in lies; we live in truth. The breastplate is righteousness. It protects the heart. Your heart is vulnerable when you are accused of your sins, but we have a righteousness not our own, purchased for us by Jesus Christ. The accuser cannot penetrate to the heart. Our boots are readiness to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We have feet leaning forward, ready feet, poised to move toward any and all to share the good news of what God has done in Jesus Christ his Son to restore our relationship with Him and bring us into eternal life. The shield is faith. When the accuser slips into your consciousness, rest on faith in Christ. Martin Luther said, "So when the devil throws your sins in your face and declares that you deserve death and hell, tell him this: 'I admit that I deserve death and hell, what of it? For I know One who suffered and made satisfaction on my behalf. His name is Jesus Christ, Son of God, and where He is there I shall be also!'" The helmet of salvation protects the head, where your knowledge is kept. Do you understand your salvation? Do you know and can you articulate how Christ has saved your soul? Finally, the sword we carry is the Word of God—the Bible. Not just read but believed. Not just spoken, but taken in, trusted, leaned on. All of these, as is often pointed out, are worn on the front of the body. These things are effective

when you are facing your enemy, not when you are running scared. Stand strong.

That's the armor of God. The battle, the characteristics, our equipment, but what's our strategy? What is our action plan? We win this battle on our knees. Prayer is how this one is won. "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 Lord's people." (Ephesians 6:18) Pray at every opportunity. Pray in every way possible. Pray at all times with all kinds of prayers. Pray all kinds of requests. Pray. Keep alert and pray. Pray for the church, for the people of God around the world. Pray. "Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, 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." (Ephesians 6:19-20) Pray for your Pastor and for your teachers, for any who are bold to stand up and speak the truth of the Gospel in our times. Pray.

Today is Pentecost. Pentecost celebrates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the church. "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." (Acts 2:1-4) This is a remarkable moment. It still applies to us today. The Temple was the physical manifestation of the presence of God on earth. The ark in the Temple also. Now God dwells with us. God is in you. Wherever you go, you convey the presence and power of God—if you have opened your heart to Christ. You are the ark. You are the Temple.

You don't find a lot of Dagon

worshippers these days. There used to be a good pile of them. Dagon had a nice idol statue in a Temple in Ashdod. You can read about this in 1 Samuel. “Then they carried the ark into Dagon’s temple and set it beside Dagon. When the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the Lord! They took Dagon and put him back in his place. But the following morning when they rose, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the Lord! His head and hands had been broken off and were lying on the threshold; only his body remained.” (1 Samuel 5:2-4) The Ark knocked him down. If a box full of relics has that kind of power, what about a soul where the Holy Spirit of God Himself resides? We have been doing prayer walks around the city over this 40 Days of Prayer. I am so happy that our Pastors wanted to not only teach on prayer but lead us in practices of prayer. It has been wonderful and forming. Pastor Ellen taught a few classes on prayer walks. One of the terms in the class was parking the Ark. Park the Ark. Just like how the Ark conveyed the presence of God wherever they carried it, now you are the Ark, you are the Temple, and wherever you go the presence of God is conveyed in power. Demons run. Idols fall. I know a mother who is known to sit in her kids rooms from time to time when they are at school and pray for them, fervently. Just parking the ark, right there in the bedroom!

We have learned a few practices of prayer. A moment of silence. Praise and thanksgiving prayer. ACTS prayer: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication. Interior/Exterior praying. Last week, the Prayer of Examen. Today, last one, Park the Ark! After church, at 12:30, we are going to take hands around the church building and park the Ark right here, the presence of the Lord, in the heart of our city. Demons run. Idols fall. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was not just for the first Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is here today to arm us

in spiritual places to see victory against dark spiritual powers. Put on the full armor of God and be strong in the Lord. Pray for spiritual victories. But what if I don’t see them? What if the prayers are not answered? We wait. We wait. The war is won, but the battle rages. We wait for the fulfillment of all good things.

Tyler Staton in *Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools* says no prayer goes lost or forgotten by God. Look here in Revelation: “...the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God’s people.” (Revelation 5:8) The elders are holding bowls of your prayers. Not spilling one. But then what happens? “The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God’s people, went up before God from the angel’s hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.” (Revelation 8:4-5) How does the end of the world come? How are all things set right in the end? It’s when your prayers are hurled down on the earth like a firebomb and everything wrong is put right, and everything crooked is made straight, and every injustice, every ounce of horrid suffering, every sickness, every broken relationship, every broken thing is fixed—by your prayers. They’re not lost. They’re not forgotten. Jesus wins. Wait. Even while you are in the battle, wait. The victory is coming. When Jesus said, “It is finished,” He meant it. Keep praying.