

Sermon - 9 November 2025

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Date: 09 November 2025

Preacher: Ife Ojetayo

[0:00] O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen. Please be seated. In the closing chapter of Ephesians, in verse 10 to 20 of chapter 6, we have here St. Paul's final exhortation to the church.

Paul's urging for them is to walk in a manner befitting their identity in Christ. And that urging now shifts to a command to stand. A command to stand firm.

To be ready for the constant onslaught of the enemy who is against us. And I think it may help us to frame our mind. It may help the frame of our mind to see these verses that Paul writes in verse 10 to 20 as a general's rousing call to his soldiers.

And it's not actually far-fetched to think of St. Paul as a general. And so we should see this as a general's rousing call to his soldiers.

To prepare them to meet the enemy in battle. Think of those stirring war speeches you've seen or read about. William Wallace in Braveheart. That's one of my favorite movies.

[1:31] Or Henry V. St. Crispin's Day speech. Or perhaps Churchill's speech, famous speech, We Shall Never Surrender. Think of those.

All arousing words meant to give courage to men facing an overwhelming foe. And I want us actually this morning to hear Paul's words in the same way.

If you are in Christ, whether you are a man or a woman, an adult or child, you are necessarily a soldier in Christ's army.

So Paul tells us we need to be ready to stand. To put on the armor that God himself provides. But he also tells us as a battle-worn veteran himself.

He tells us about the nature of the world we're in. And the kind of enemy that we face in this warfare. First, he tells us that we ought to know the setting of this warfare.

[2:36] It is no accident, if you're reading through Ephesians, that Paul moves from chapter 5, where he had been just speaking about the household instructions. About how we should deal with one another in a domestic setting.

In our daily relationships. In husband to wife. Father to children, children to parents. Employers to the employee. Slave to master. He moves from that to a picture of warfare in chapter 6.

And I don't think that's an accident. Because we're mistaken if we believe that spiritual war. The kind of spiritual war that we're in as soldiers of Christ. Must only be undertaken in the midst of extraordinary circumstances.

And extraordinary moments. No. Paul wants us to see that the battlefield that we're in. Is in the setting of our everyday life.

In our homes. With our families. At our workplaces. See, once you entrust yourself to Jesus Christ.

[3:43] You become an enemy combatant. To the world and to the devil. You have transferred your allegiance. You now live in enemy territory.

As a follower of Jesus Christ. William Gunnell. He's an author of this wonderful book. The Christian in Complete Armor. The whole book is pretty in depth.

And it's really just an exposition. Of this passage that we read in Ephesians. But in that book he writes that in heaven we will all appear. Not in armor.

We will appear in robes of glory. That is inevitable. That is our future. We will appear in heaven in robes of glory. But he adds that here in this world.

We must wear our armor. We must wear it night and day. We must walk in it. We must work in it. We must sleep in it.

[4:42] That's what Gunnell says. Otherwise we are not true soldiers of Christ. The warfare we are in is not an on and off battle.

It is constant. And it is unending until Christ returns. Or calls us home. To our eternal rest. So we must be aware of the constancy of the conflict.

We must be aware of who our real enemy is. Paul tells us in verse 12. Now it's easy, isn't it?

It's very easy to forget who the enemy really is. And the devil is pleased when we do. That's one of his strategies. If he can distract us into attacking one another.

He may freely prey on us. Or we will ignore him. The true adversary. And this is the truth, brothers and sisters. If we misidentify the enemy.

[5 : 56] The battle is already lost. And so, your unbelieving spouse. That dishonest co-worker that you have. That resentful neighbor.

That difficult family member. They are not the true enemy. Underlying and influencing them is the devil.

Satan himself. He's the same enemy named in Genesis 3.15. When God declared the war. The onset of the war. God says, I will put enmity between you and the woman.

And between your seed and her seed. He shall crush your head. And you shall bruise his heel. The enemy has been known from the beginning.

So how do we deal with those difficult people that we mentioned, named earlier? How are we to see them? We see them. We see them. We see them. As captives. Of the enemy.

[6 : 55] We pray for them to be freed. Just as God has freed us. Brothers and sisters. If we are to be effective. In preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. We must know who the enemy truly is.

Our weapons must be aimed. At him. And our compassion. And our prayers. Must be aimed. At those still in bondage to him. And I'm afraid we sometimes get this wrong.

When we give in to the flesh. That's why we must follow the example of Jesus Christ our Lord. The great shepherd who leaves the 99. For the one lost sheep. The father who runs to embrace the prodigal son.

This is the love. This love of Christ. Is the love that overcomes the world. And we must walk in that love.

We must not give in to the flesh. It's so easy to fight. Those who mock us. Or deride us. Or tell us we're fools for following Jesus Christ.

[7 : 58] And identify them as the real enemy. But we must resist. And understand who the enemy is. We must respond in love. And in prayer for them. For them. Paul goes on and tells us.

That not only. Are we to know the battlefield. And the enemy. But we're also to know the weapons. God has given us. In the war. Christ himself.

Is our armor. That's what Paul is getting to here. Paul says in Romans 13 verse 14. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. And make no provision for the flesh.

And so. What he's saying here in Ephesians is. Each piece of armor. Listed in Ephesians.

Represents. The Lord Jesus Christ himself. Represents his work.

Represents his righteousness. His redemption. His truth. His peace. These weapons. Are not ours. By nature.

[8 : 56] They are God's gift to us. And only the weapons he provides. Are the only weapons that are effective. Against the enemy that we face. Christian history is full of tragic examples.

Of those who try to fight spiritual battles. In human strength. It always ends in compromise. And harm the church. And also ends up harming the gospel message.

That's been entrusted to us. And so we are called. In the words of that hymn. To love the captive.

To love the captive soul. And to rage. Against the captor. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 10. He says. For though we walk in the flesh. We are not waging war.

According to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare. Are not carnal. They are not earthly. They are not fleshly.

[9 : 57] But they are mighty. In God. For pulling down strongholds. Here is the truth. Brothers and sisters. The battle is already won.

Not by us. Not by us. But by Christ. In Ephesians 1. Paul reminds us. That Christ. Is risen. Enthroned.

And ruling. Over every power. And dominion. And that all things. Are under. His feet. We. Are on the victorious side.

Therefore. The strength. In this warfare. Is not ours. But the Lord's. He provides us. Provides the strength. The weapons. Are not ours. For his.

He provides them. So do you trust him. To keep you. And to give you. All that you need. In the warfare. Paul urges us.

[10:55] Twice. In verse 11 and 13. To put. The whole armor of God. To put on. The whole armor of God. A soldier. And by that. It means. The complete suit.

Of armor. Of armor. Not just one. Or two. But all of it. Not some of it. Not occasionally. But all of it. All the time.

And the Greek term. For. The full armor. Is. Is panoplia. And that word. Just means. A complete suit of armor. That's actually. What. It's a technical term. Meaning. A complete suit of armor.

A soldier. Putting on. Is panoplia. A panoplia. Of his armor. He's putting on. The complete suit of his armor. Nothing left off. And time doesn't allow us.

Into a full exposition. Of each of these. Different armors. But. Briefly. Let us go through the list. Remembering each piece. As he writes them. Paul says. Put on the belt of truth.

[11:53] Which holds. Everything together. It anchors us. In God's. Revealed word. He says. To put on. The breastplate.

Of righteousness. The breastplate. Of righteousness. Is Christ's. Righteousness. Not ours. It's Christ's. Righteousness. That defends us. From condemnation.

So. Put it on. He says. Put on. Gospel shoes. Which makes us. Ready. To proclaim. Peace. To ourselves.

And to others. Do you know. That's part of your. Job as a Christian. To preach the gospel. Not only to. To others. But to yourself. Brothers and sisters.

Be in the habit. Of preaching the gospel. To yourself. Remind yourself. That you are justified. By faith alone. In Christ Jesus alone. Not by your works. And your own merits.

[12:47] Because if you rely on yourself. You're always going to be discouraged. You're always going to come to the end of yourself. And knowing that you do not meet the standard. But if you preach the gospel to yourself.

That I am in Christ. Secured in Christ. Not on the basis of my own righteousness. But on the basis of his finished work. Remind yourself of that. Comfort yourself.

In that truth. And preach those same gospel to others as well. And he says. Put on the shield of faith. The shield of faith is used not only for personal defense.

But in unity. Have you ever seen those movies of like you know. The shield wall. Right. You know. A biking movie. And they all get. Shield wall. And they all get together. And they put the shield together.

Right. That's the picture we're meant to be. That's being painted for us here. Take the shield of faith. It's not just for you alone. Actually what happens in those kind of movies.

[13:42] When it's just one guy. Holding his shield up. And there's a bunch of harrows coming. Right. He may cover the arrow here. But he doesn't cover here. And he doesn't cover here. And then he gets. You know.

Full of harrows. But if you. If you have. If you have a shield wall. Together. Putting the shield of faith up. What happens? You're covered on all sides.

So. Paul tells us. Take the shield of faith. Which shields interlocked. To protect one another. And he says.

Take the elements of salvation. Which guards our hope. And steadies our minds. In the gospel. And then he says.

Take the sword of the spirit. The word of God. That's what the sword of the spirit is. That is our offensive weapon. Everything so far has been defensive weapons.

[14:40] Now. Take. The sword of the spirit. The word of God. Which is our offensive weapon. To tear down strongholds. And to advance the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Our Lord. So.

After describing this. Panoplia. Of armor. That we're meant to take. Paul says. Put it all on. Don't just take one or two. All of it.

Put it on. And wear it continually. Absolutely. And he. And then Paul continues. He says. Pray at all times. In the spirit. With all perseverance.

And pray for all the saints. And he adds. This to the church in Ephesus. He says. Pray also for me. That I may boldly speak. The word of Christ.

The gospel. Even though I'm. I'm in prison. So Paul recognizes. That the weapons we wield. The weapons. That we wield. Are meant to be wield.

[15 : 35] In constant prayer. Paul says. All. Four times. Towards the end of that passage. He says. All. Four times. In one verse. He says. Praying at all times.

With all prayer. With all perseverance. For all the saints. This is how the early church lived. They lived. Devoted to prayer. And to the ministry of the word.

And as the early church. Prayed unseasonally. Remember that story. When they prayed unseasonally. For St. Peter. Who was in jail. And the angel. God sent an angel to free him. As the early church. Prayed unseasonally. So now Paul.

Asks. Again. For these brothers and sisters in Ephesus. To pray unseasonally for him. Knowing what prayer can accomplish. St. Paul.

In Ephesians. Shows us. That the Christian. Must be clothed. In Christ. The Christian.

[16 : 33] Clothed in Christ. Is then strong in God. Resisting evil. Upheld by prayer. And united. In the communion of saints. Do you see how the picture is painted.

In an organic way. We don't do the walk. We're not alone. We're not lone soldiers. There's no such thing in the Christian world. We're together. You're not in it alone.

You're together. You're together in this war. resisting the devil. Looking to Christ. Your captain. And then the gospel reading.

That we have this morning. Speaks of an early moment. In our Lord's ministry. When because of growing hostility. From the Jews. He left Judea. He had been in Judea.

And then he withdrew to Galilee. Near the borders of the Gentiles. And Jesus. Throughout his ministry. There's been two. A few things to note. Jesus was not only opposed.

[17 : 34] By many of the Jews. He was especially opposed. By the scribes and the Pharisees. But we notice that. Even among the Jews. Those who supported him. Apart from his apostles.

And his disciples. Those who. Given here to him. Those among them. Who did believe. Often did so. In a weak. In a weak.

And hesitant manner. For example. Nicodemus. Believed Jesus. But he didn't do it. In daylight. He came to him by night.

Secretly. And although he acknowledged. That Jesus must have come from God. His faith did not. Yet get beyond that. Right. And so we.

We have this contrast. In the gospels. Of those. Who come to Jesus. Exitantly. Cautiously. And then we have. Also a contrast example.

[18 : 28] Of those who. Old heartedly. Believed in Jesus. And proclaiming. And often times. It was the Gentiles. It was those outside. Who did so. Those whom the father. Drew to his son.

Without the weight. Of religious pride. And so. The account that we have. In our gospel reading. This morning. Is one of these Jewish. Exitant believers. This noble man.

That was told in John chapter. Chapter 6. Of our reading. Is an example of this. Sort of weaker. Exitant Jewish faith. He was likely. A man.

Definitely a man of Jewish descent. He would have been. Probably a ruler. In. In. In. In Capernaum. He was probably. He probably served. In the court of Herod. The king. And he comes to Jesus. Under the. The. The. The. Occasion. That his son. Was dangerously healed. On the point of death. So. Hearing that Jesus returned. From Judea to Galilee.

[19 : 26] He traveled to Jesus. It was about 20 miles. Or so. He traveled to him. And he begged Jesus. To come. And heal his son. And in distress. In distress.

This man. Turned to God. And this man. His. His. Suffering. Led him to seek Christ. That's not always a bad thing. Sometimes God brings such suffering.

So that we may turn to him. That was a good. In the case of this man. This is a good. Ultimately. Yet. You notice how his request. Differs from that of the.

The Gentile Roman centurion. Who also came to Jesus. In another part of the gospel. What did that centurion say? He came to him. With full assurance. Of who Jesus is. And the power. That Jesus has.

He says. Lord I am not worthy. That you should come under my roof. Only speak the word. And my servant will be healed. That's what the Gentile Roman centurion said. But this man. Came to Jesus.

[20 : 22] And he asked Jesus. To come down. 20 miles. From Cana. To Capernaum. To heal his son. He doesn't fall. At Jesus feet. Like the Roman centurion did.

He doesn't fall at Jesus feet. As the woman. That the seraphimician woman did. But. Jesus. Responded anyway. To him.

Nevertheless. And there is a gentle rebuke. In Jesus' response. Jesus says to him. Unless you see signs and wonders. You will not believe. Now this was the pattern.

Among the Jews. They continually sought miracles. As proof. Of God's power. They sighed. Over this many times. When they interacted with Jesus.

They called. They calling it a mark. And Jesus. Jesus. Rather. Jesus sighed many times. When he saw this among them. When they constantly call for miracles. And Jesus said. It's a mark. Of their hearts.

[21:17] Turned away from God. That's why they're constantly. Calling for miracles. Even. Herod. Remember. Later. At the end. Was asking Jesus. To do. Miracles.

Give me signs. As a sign of his curiosity. Not a believing curiosity. Just wanted to be entertained. And. And. As Paul will later say.

In Corinthians. The Jews demand signs. But we preach Christ crucified. So. God has shown them wonders. For generations. God has shown wonders.

To the Jewish people. Through Moses. Through the prophets. Through the judges. Yet now. When Christ appeared. To save their souls. What are they still asking for?

More signs. They will not believe. Unless more miracles. Were granted them. And so. The nobleman. Pleads again to Jesus. Says. Sir. Come down. Before my child dies.

[22:11] He probably thinks. Only of the urgency. Of his child's condition. I don't blame him for that. His child is at the point of death. But he does not think. Of who stands before him. And he doesn't think.

Of his own. Need of. Of mercy. From this. Man who stands before him. Yet. Even. In. His imperfect faith. The merciful Lord.

Hears him. And honors his request. By the way. This is just an aside. This is. This runs counter to the teaching. That you must have faith. And you must have your faith.

Fully sure. Without any doubt. In order for God to. To hear you. That is an anti-gospel. You must be like that man. Who says. I believe. Help my home believe.

Jesus said. Just a faith. As small as a mustard seed. It's not. The. The. The.

[23:07] The greatness of your faith. It is. The object of your faith. That matters. This man comes. This man comes. Exultantly. But the object of his faith. Is Jesus.

And Jesus honors him. Jesus said to him. Go your way. Your son lives. The Lord grants what he asked. And the more. The man.

And the more the man. Understood. As he goes home. The nobleman believed. Christ must come in person. But Jesus spoke a word.

And his child was healed. And as he goes on his way. He heard that indeed. The son is made whole. The word of God. Works where God does not appear visibly. And the man.

Still weak. In mind and in faith. Upon hearing what God has done. Believed the word that Jesus spoke. And became a believer. He and his household.

[24:05] Christ does not reject weak faith. Christ does not reject weak faith. Rather.

He grows it. He meets us where we are. And leads us further. So what does that mean for us? The gospel teaches how patiently.

And mercifully. Christ nourishes. Even the smallest spark of faith. He does not extinguish the smoking wick. Though not many of you are of noble rank.

Paul tells us. When he writes to the Corinthians. And though pride. Especially religious pride. Can make it hard for us to believe. Yet when suffering comes.

We call upon him. Even imperfectly. When we call upon him. He hears us. His ear is always open. His eye is always open to us. And this is important for us to know.

[25:02] In the context of the warfare that we are in. There are many times. We will feel weak. And dejected. And not strong enough to meet the enemy.

But we call upon him. Even in our weakness. And he hears us. So let's look back at St. Paul's teaching in Ephesians. When he tells us. To be strong in the Lord. And to put under whole armor of God.

We do not look for outward miracles. As this Jewish nobleman did. And why don't we do that? Because we are called to something far greater.

We are engaged in a spiritual battle. With spiritual enemies. Who move unseen around us. Day and night. Whether we sleep or wake.

Whether we are alone among others. Whether at prayer or at work. The enemy is near. Ever near. I don't say that to frighten you.

[26:00] It's just the reality. But if we could see them. If we would understand. How great the miracle is. When a Christian resists temptation.

When a Christian stands firm. Upon the word of God. We will see how great a miracle it is. If you can see the enemies. That are already against you. You will be able to see.

How great a miracle it is. That God is preserving you. By ourselves. We would fall. And we would fall often.

And many do. We would fall. Every day by ourselves. If we are to rely on our own power.

But we are not. Relying on our own power. We are to put on the whole armor of God. So that we may stand firm. In the evil day. Brothers and sisters.

[27:01] This then is our calling. To watch. And to pray. Prayer must be included in this. For without prayer. We cannot watch. And without watching.

We cannot pray. These two strengthen one another. And we are not to pray. Only for ourselves.

Paul tells us. We are to pray for all believers. Especially for those who preach the gospel.

And bear witness to Christ. In difficult circumstances. We are to pray. For our brothers and sisters.

Persecuted around the world. We are to pray. For our ministers.

As the early church prayed. For St. Peter in prison. And as St. Paul is asking the Ephesians. To pray for him. We are to pray.

For our leaders in the church. And Paul says. And Paul knows this. He knows. Even he knows. He doesn't do it in his own strength. That's why he's asking them. Pray that I may speak boldly.

[28:00] As I ought to speak. Even while in chains. So too. We must remember. One another in prayer. We are not alone. That's why we pray.

We're members of one body. We share. In this one warfare. We have one captain. And we advance. Not by our own strength.

But by the strength of Christ. Who lives in us. And so we can say. Along with St. Paul. I can do all things. Through Christ. Who strengthens me.

And if the word of God. Is the sword of the spirit. As Paul tells us. Then it is the gospel above all. That gives power in life. In scripture.

We hear Christ himself speak. His teachings. His promises. His commands. His mercies. These words must be in our hearts. The words of our Lord. We must have these words of our Lord.

[29:00] From the Holy Scriptures. Ready at hand. In this warfare. In the hour of temptation. There is no weapon. Like the word of God. Christ himself.

What is the weapon he wielded. At his temptation. It is the word. Of God. The sword of the spirit. He overcame Satan. True scripture. And so must we.

But the word is not enough. Unless the heart. Is awake. Therefore we watch. And watching is not enough.

Unless we pray. Therefore we pray. And we do not pray only for ourselves. Again. We pray for all the saints. For the strength.

For strength. When we are tempted. We pray for comfort. When we are sorrowful. We pray for the faith. That helps us. When we are doubting. And we pray for the courage.

[29:56] To those who witness. To the truth in the world. We pray for that courage. For ourselves. As we do so. And finally. Brothers and sisters. Notice this. Among this list.

Of armor. That we are to wear. There is no armor. That is given. For the back. That's because. There is to be. No retreat. No turning away.

No surrender. Our victory. In Christ. Is tied. To our perseverance. Just as the strength. To persevere. Is always from him.

For the enemies. We face. Are invisible. And they are powerful. They whisper. At our hearts. They press upon us. Even in the house of God. And so. Without God's strength.

We would fall. Every hour. Yet. With his strength. We shall stand. And we do stand. And when we stand. Christ.

[30:56] And Christ. Brings us. Through. Every battle. Securing the victory. He promised. So let us. Take up. The whole armor of God. Let us.

Bind truth. Around us. Put on righteousness. Walk. In the gospel. Of peace. Lift up. The shield. Of faith. Guard our minds.

With the hope. Of salvation. And old. Fast. The word of God. As our sword. Let us. Watch. And let us. Pray. And having done all.

Stand. Stand. Christian soldier. Stand. Stand in the victory. Of your king. Stand in the strength. Of Christ. Your captain.

In the name of the father. And of the son. And of the holy spirit. will you. Thank you. Thank you.

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