

Ephesians 6:10-18

Theme: Stand in Christ

Sun Tzu, a general, military genius, philosopher, and prolific writer was born about 544 B.C. during the Eastern Zhou period of 771-256 B.C. Sun Tzu is most closely associated with, “The Art of War.” In this compilation of his thoughts, he says things like, “All warfare is based on deception,” “Do not repeat the tactics which have gained you one victory, but let your methods be regulated by the infinite variety of circumstances,” and, probably what we know him for best, “If you know the enemy and know yourself, your victory will not stand in doubt.” This thought is an interesting one and very much pertains to what we’re talking about today in Ephesians 6 as Christians in an unseen battle, but no less dangerous.

Paul spent the previous chapters explaining how richly God has lavished grace on us in Jesus and what that means. There aren’t divisions in the Lord Jesus. If you believe in Jesus, you are one in the Lord Jesus Christ! This central thought is crucial for the spiritual war in which followers of Jesus are engaged. All of God’s people are told to stand in Christ, to be strong in him. This is the final thought Paul writes to them, “*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.*” (**Eph. 6:10**) Being strong in the Lord means knowing how much you need him! It means knowing you’re a sinner and that Jesus is the friend of sinners who takes away sins. It means knowing nothing is beyond God’s control.

Being strong in oneself is a one way ticket to disaster. Paul knows this, so he presents God’s people with a better option: to not look to themselves for strength, but to Jesus and to how Jesus prepares and protects us. Paul orders, “*Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.*” ¹² *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.*” (**Eph. 6:11-12**) We armor up to take our stand against the schemes of the devil, our ruthlessly cunning enemy, not against flesh and blood. This means that your enemy is no one in here. The nominee of the party you consider “the opposition” is not your enemy, nor are the people in party you don’t choose your enemies. The person who supports a social stance or lifestyle you don’t or who does different sins than you is not your enemy. The person who contributes nothing to society, who is consuming everyone else’s resources but never resupplying them, is not your enemy. The person who has a different doctrinal position is not your enemy. The person who seeks to live in this land for whatever host of reasons but does so not through the proper channels is not your enemy. The person who vehemently hates you because you love Jesus is not your enemy.

All of these people are not your enemies, even if feels like they’re against you, because these are people for whom the Lord Jesus shed his blood to purify and redeem. Jesus died on a cross for each and every one to purchase a robe of righteousness, just like he did for you, the only difference is that you, only by grace, believe it! These are lost sheep, objects of mercy, people to be loved, who need to be won over through the saving gospel of Jesus. Another way to say all this is that we don’t have enemies who are people because our actual enemy doesn’t have flesh, bones, and blood. We get this wrong, a lot, with the result that the very people Jesus tells us to seek and find and help save – we fight against! In doing so, we defeat ourselves because we’ve forgotten our true enemy.

Our actual enemy is the devil and his spiritual forces of darkness at work in this world. Our enemy is beyond us, so without the armor Paul describes here, we’ve not a hope to do anything. Focus on that. Don’t let projected fears which display themselves most often as anger cause you to lose focus this focus because that plays right into the enemy’s hands! He’s sneakier and craftier than anything else and he wants you dead. He prowls around like a roaring lion seeking to devour! And, “With might of ours can naught be done, soon were our loss effected,” Luther sang in “A Mighty Fortress.” Don’t look to your might, be strong in the Lord an in his mighty power and then, after you have given it everything you have,

expended your last calorie of energy, you will stand because God has saved you, made you a victorious conqueror in Christ who's conquered all, and equips you accordingly.

With this armor on, the devil will find *you* a formidable opponent, "*Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*" (**James 4:7**) When you wear the armor of God, you will stand through whatever it is as a champion. So, for all the things we're about to list, put these things on for everyday use! Don't leave it to collect dust like all the hockey stuff you've been saying you're totally gonna use since college but totally haven't. In a state of readiness only the Spirit can give, keep your spiritual armor on all the time.

"*Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place.*" (**Eph. 6:14**) Our enemy is the father of lies. When he says you aren't loved by God, aren't forgiven, that none of what you believe is even real – it's a lie – run to the truth of Scripture which makes you holy! That's what Almighty Jesus says, so that's the truth! The truth of Christ crucified saves and Jesus has wrapped this truth around your waist! Put on the breastplate of righteousness. Your heart, your inner self, is protected by the perfection of Jesus who did everything right and, by faith from his Word, credits his righteousness to you! Jesus gives this to me, no lie will ever change that. **Romans 8:33-34**, "*Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies!*" ³⁴ *Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.*" For traction to hold the battle line, "*and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.*" (**Eph. 6:15**) Without the readiness of peace from the gospel, you aren't prepared to do anything. The gospel is your traction to spring into action at a moment's notice. The good news that Jesus lives keeps you grounded. "*In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.*" (**Eph. 6:16**) With faith as your shield, when the enemy shots flaming arrows at you, they fall harmlessly to the ground! Faith comes from the Word, so be in the Word! Last piece of armor, "*Take the helmet of salvation.*" (**Eph. 6:17a**) Whatever you're thinking about externally, whatever you're thinking about introspectively, you think it with a mind encircled and protected by the knowledge that salvation is yours! Everything you ponder is pondered through the joy of salvation!

God gives you a weapon too, "*The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*" (**Eph. 6:17b**) Wield God's Word, a weapon glorious, and when you do, against the foe you'll be victorious! The sword of the Spirit, the Word, is powerful and effective, the only thing which defeats and breaks down all other arguments, which can make people alive in Jesus by freeing them from the dark dungeons of unbelief.

Finally, pray. Just because this is the final instruction, doesn't mean prayer is the last resort! Far from it! Pray as a matter of instinct. Pray all the time, for everything, and on behalf of everyone. Ask God to take into his counsel all the hurts and burdens of yourself, your loved ones, your neighbor. In any situation, ask God for help, protection, thanking him for the blessings he gives, the salvation he delivers in Jesus. Pray that God would armor up his saints and grant them constant vigilance so we all watch for the enemy's schemes and protect each other. Pray that God's people here and the world over would better know the truth of the Bible and advance the gospel's cause by swinging the sword of the Spirit so people will be rescued and built up by Christ's saving love. Thank God for Jesus who lives and who, on the last day, will stand upon the earth and you will stand beside him in glory forever. Amen.