

Read E 6:10-20

Terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, criminal networks in faraway countries, rogue nations with deadly weapons, suicide bombers, homeland security, ground zero, full body scans, jihadists and fear. Our lives and world have changed drastically in the last 10 years due to the unveiling of the reality of hatred and evil that has come to be known as 9/11. We are now known as a people at war against terrorism.

While trying to avoid paranoid conspiracy theories we recognize our duty as citizens to be prepared, stay alert, make sacrifices, support those actively fighting and practice more than just common sense. We know there are hate filled, well organized, highly intelligent and powerful enemies who would completely destroy this building and occupants with great joy and celebration. Life is quite different when you know that you have an enemy.

But terrorism is only one expression of the reality that we live in. Reflect on the concern you invest to protect your children, money, credit cards, computers, cars, homes, health and stuff. Fear is real. Unpleasant realities cannot be denied. Thieves, random mass murderers, kidnappers, drug dealers, gangs, sexual predators and all types of bullies are continually in the background of our thinking. There is something wild and on the loose out there that must be opposed and defeated.

The Bible teaches that the church, the body of people saved by God, is under attack by the prince of darkness, the god of this world – Satan himself. The purposeful intent of all evil is to misrepresent the goodness of the creator God and separate people from his great love. The church's highest calling is to declare and demonstrate the trustworthiness of God and point people to God's great love demonstrated in Christ's sacrificial death. Thus, a war exists between God's people and Satan for the glory of the one true God.

The heightened tension, preparation and lifestyle adjustments that we have accepted as normal in the world we live in become a learning device as we see in our Bible text today the command to live every day as if you are at war. The church and everyone in it is at war. All of us are soldiers assigned to front line duty to resist and oppose Satan's attacks on our churches, marriages, families and testimony.

As we approach our text this morning we find the clear commands to be strengthened in the Lord, stand, withstand, put on and take up God's armor. The multiple commands and descriptions in this passage clearly declare two guiding principles regarding doing battle with evil: one, the devil and his host of helpers can be defeated by the follower of Christ and two, you have everything in Christ that you need to be strengthened to experience that victory.

Our focus this morning falls on verses 14-15 as we begin to learn in practical terms what it means to strengthen ourselves in the Lord with his strength. We can make his strength our strength as we put on the armor that God both uses himself and provides for us. We can stand against evil forces and withstand deceitful schemes only by attentively and alertly preparing ourselves daily for battle.

Evil forces are presented in verses 10-12 as personal, powerful, dark, wicked, numerous and authoritative. The presence, activity and power of these enemies stimulate a response of preparation and effort so they will not accomplish their objective of separating you from God. Seven aspects of God's armor are explained and made available. Let's look at three this morning.

**Deliberately prepare for your enemy by . . .**

Stand therefore . . .

**1. Putting on truth.**

6:14

*having fastened on the belt of truth*

The first aspect of preparation for battle is cast in the language of getting dressed for action. This is the old KJV phrase, 'gird up your loins.' This step is basic to the success of all other pieces of armor or preparation. Get dressed for action with truth.

Truth has various applications or manifestations in your life but essentially it means that which is in accord with the facts of a matter. That which corresponds with reality. Truth and the gospel are used interchangeably because the gospel of Jesus Christ is the greatest expression of reality that exists (Gal.2:5; 5:7; E 1:13; 4:21).

The devil is particularly anti-truth. It is his highest aim to attack and destroy truth. Jn.8:44-45

The Holy Spirit is called the spirit of truth; he exposes facts and brings issues into the light. Jn 14:17

Three basic commitments you make regarding truth because of your union with Christ:

- Genuineness.                      You are the real thing.                      Being true.                      E. 5:8-9
- Veracity.                              You represent things as they really are.                      Tell truth.                      E. 4:25
- Faithfulness.                      You stay real under stress.                      Prove to be true.                      E. 4:15

Compare                      2Cor. 4:2 (965)

Psalm 51:6

**2. Putting on righteousness.**

6:14

*out on the breastplate of righteousness*

The breastplate covered/protected the soldier's heart and vital organs from attack. Again we learn this basic step of preparation this has consequences for all other armor. Your heart and vital life systems must be protected in battle at all costs for obvious reasons.

This command essentially expects you to put on the protection of your right standing with God regularly and keep putting it on. Righteousness is applied holiness. God is perfect and unique by nature; therefore everything he does is right. Unright happens when anything or anyone is not aligned with the holiness of God expressed in his laws and commands.

The state or condition of being right with God is possible through union with Christ and always is expressed in righteous or aligned behavior.

	Deliberately prepare for your enemy by . . .	Stand therefore . . .
1. Putting on truth.	6:14	<i>having fastened on the belt of truth</i>
2. Putting on righteousness.	6:14	<i>out on the breastplate of righteousness</i>

Three basic commitments regarding righteousness because of your union with Christ:

- Renew your awareness of who you are in Christ. E. 4:23-24 Gen. 18:25
- Rejoice in the gift of righteousness from God. Rom. 3:21; 4:22-25
- Behave right in response to God's grace. E. 5:8-9; Rom. 6:13

Cmp. Psalm 19:8-9 Jer. 9:23-24 Matthew 5:13-16

**3. Putting on the gospel.** 6:15 *put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace*

Fastening shoes or sandals on your feet is the idea here. Stand prepared with sandals or boots on your feet. The sandals that you are to put on are referred to as the preparation or readiness of the gospel that promotes peace. Stand fitted or having fastened on your feet the readiness to announce the peace that comes from receiving the good news of Christ.

This is a bit awkwardly worded but absolutely beautiful principle of warfare. You are responsible to put this preparation on your feet. This preparation involves being familiar enough with the gospel that promotes peace that you can and will announce it while under the fiercest of enemy fire. All of this is produced by the gospel itself as it is embraced by the church. This is a state of perpetual readiness to proclaim and announce the message of peace through the good news of Christ.

Three basic commitments regarding the gospel because of your union with Christ:

- Remember that you heard and believed the proclaimed gospel. E. 1:13
- Remember that Christ purchased and proclaimed the gospel of peace. E. 2:14-18
- You prepare yourself to announce the gospel that promotes peace. E. 3:6-10; 6:19

Cmp. Isa. 52:7-10; Rom. 10:15 beautiful feet/'Your God reigns' Isa. 40:9-11 Col.4:6

Prayer list; gospel presentation; personal story Are you ready to announce peace?

Being truthful, living rightly and ready to announce peace . . . done because of Christ and in union with him . . . wins the battle of staying connected to the incredible love and goodness of God.

Are you ready for battle? Can you strengthen yourself with the strength of Christ? Strength from Christ comes in the form of power to live truthfully, righteously and proclaim the gospel.

Illustration of preparing for airport security process.

1. Do you delight in truthfulness in the deepest part of your life? Christ has set you free from having to cover up, misrepresent, exaggerate or protect yourself. His love and grace allows you to live at a level of authenticity that is refreshing and satisfying. Your life is based on truth, Jesus Christ himself.

2. Do you act and talk right? Your new life in Christ releases you from the slavery of unrighteous and unsatisfying behavior. Right living from the heart causes the enemy to flee.

3. Are you ready to proclaim peace to your friends and family? The church does battle and resists the devil by announcing peace to everyone it encounters. Your new life in Christ has brought you the joyful opportunity to tell others of Christ.

### **Study Questions**

1. Read together Ephesians 6:10-20. What observations, unusual or repeated terms or questions does the reading bring to your attention?

2. Have group members share their experiences in growing personal awareness of resisting the opposition of evil in their lives, marriages, families. What are the practical efforts being used to strengthen yourself in the Lord?

3. Discuss and review the three basic commitments of living truthfully. What are some of your greatest challenges in living truthfully? How does not living truthfully give the enemy an advantage in your life?

4. Review 2Cor.4:2 and Psalm 51:6. How do they contribute to your strengthening yourself?

5. Discuss what it means to be or act right. How does your union with Christ equip you toward righteousness? Why is righteousness such a crucial issue that it is connected to the role of the breastplate?

6. Review Psalm 19:8-9; Matthew 5:13-16 and Jer. 9:23-24. How do they inform your commitment to strengthening yourself in the Lord this week?

7. Have the group listen as you tell your story in less than 3 minutes of hearing and responding to the gospel. What are the 3-5 absolutely essential points that must be made without which you do not have the gospel?

8. What would a prepared, ready church or individual look/sound like as they proclaimed the gospel of peace in the midst of the battle? What does the enemy typically do to keep you from proclaiming peace?

9. Review Isa. 52:7-10; 40:9-11 and Romans 10:15.

10. What are you going to do, use or remember from this study?