



Ephesians 6:10-24

"Standing Your Ground"

Bible quotes taken from NIV (2011)

BIBLE READING: Ephesians 6:10-24

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armour 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. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

²¹ Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. ²² I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.

²³ Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.

INTRODUCTION: PARTING WORDS

Well it's September, and that means it is footy finals time.

Now I'm not a big footy fan, but even I know this is an important time of the year in Australian culture, because sport is such a big part of our national life.

In September, the players and their coaches are under the pump.

If their team has made it through to this point. . . the stress is up. The stakes are high.

It all comes come down to this.

And so before the team runs out onto the field, the coach has got to come up with something to say.

He's paid the big bucks - so he's got to come up with something **inspiring**.
Something that will motivate them.

The coach might say "OK boys. You've got this." "You can do it' "Believe in yourself."
"Give it everything you've got."

Before the team runs out to face their opposition, the coach has got to say something that's going to help them.

And that's what we find this last section, of Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

Like a spiritual coach, these are Paul's last words of instruction in this letter to "team Jesus" in Ephesus.

After these words are done, he's told them all he can tell them.

Now it's time to get out there in the game.

But the issue is . . . **it's not a game.**

Being a Christian in world where most people reject it is, is not at all like playing in the final of any sporting code.

Because at least, when you play in a semi-final game in Sydney, nearly half of the people in the stadium will be cheering for you.

But for the Christians in first century - and especially for the Christians in the twenty-first century - *not many people are cheering.*

And then you look around at the state of the church in the world, you see the church isn't doing so well.

You see so many churches where rubbish is preached, that doesn't match up with the Bible.

So many churches, are adopting the values of the culture. Some churches are divided, and cold and unloving – with people being betrayed or disappointed.

So many drift away drift from the church. And never come back.

And then, if we look in our own hearts, we know about the doubts and struggles we have.

The bad habits. The unhelpful ways of thinking. Temptations. Discouragement.

See. *This is no game.* And the Apostle Paul knows that.

Which is why, in this last section of his letter, he speaks of the Christian as being in a spiritual battle.

Paul says . . . verse 12

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

When we wake up in the morning and go about our business, Paul says there's a struggle going on.

A war.

Behind the world we see. A battle is raging.

A struggle between **good and evil**.

In the wider world.

And in *your* world. *Your life*.

There's a battle being waged, and most of it is unseen. And subtle.

And yet, it's very real.

Life isn't a game - especially for the Christian

And what Paul writes here, is all about helping us on 'the field.'

To be prepared. To last the distance, and not become a casualty.

What do we need to remember as we run onto the battle field?

1. BE STRONG!?

Well, as he wraps up this letter, he says . . . **you'll need to be strong.**

Look at verse 10 . . .

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

"Finally," Paul says . . . as we wraps it up . . .

"As you head out onto the **battlefield, be strong.**"

That's a command.

And I reckon if life **is** a series of struggles and battles.

You *do* need to be strong.

But when you first read this command - it doesn't make a lot of sense; because we know that in this big scary world we're not all that strong.

We're aware of our sin, and weaknesses, and struggles; and now Paul's commanding us to be *something we're not!*

But you can see in this verse, that's not what he's doing.

He's saying . . .

be strong **in the Lord** and in **his** mighty power.

So the first thing we realise is that the source of power to keep going as a Christian is not us.

If I'm going to do this 'being a Christian' thing, I can't do under my own steam - as a stand alone project.

If I do, I will in some way *fail*. Maybe even drift away.

The strength we need **comes from the Lord**.

And it's because we are **in** the Lord - that we have direct access to his resources.

Paul said back in chapter 1 that we've been blessed with every spiritual blessing, in Christ. Through faith, **the story of our lives, is now caught up with story of Jesus** . . . in his death for our sin, and his victory over death and evil.

Because of him we are no longer **outsiders**. But **insiders**.

We're his people - his **children**.

In Christ.

That's how God sees us.

The more we understand *our identity in Christ*, the more we'll be strong for the battle.

When the temptations come; and the distractions of the world; and opposition of the devil; when those things come we **CAN stand**. If we're strong in the Lord. . . .

We are strong, **IF** our sense of self is shaped by what God says is true about us: that we are blessed; saved; given grace and love; and hope and peace. We are made for good works; made for community; made for self-giving love.

All in Christ.

That's why we've been looking at Ephesians this term, and thinking about **Christian identity**. Because we are being called to centre our **self on Christ** and **all** that he's done for us.

The more we do that, the stronger we will be. In the battle . . .

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

And the great news is *God has given us weapons and equipment* for the battle.

2. THE ARMOUR: SOME DEFENSIVE WEAPONS

Paul says in verse 13 . . .

¹³ Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

If we want to be **strong** in the Lord, we need the **armour** of the Lord.

We need the equipment that God gives us, to follow Jesus effectively, and to stand our ground. And not cave in - but to go forward.

Are you going forward in the Christian life?

Are you making some kind of progress?

If the answer's "no" it might be the case that you're not standing your ground, because you're not making use of the weapons God has given us.

What are these weapons? Well, let's look quickly at the **defensive** weapons first.

From verse 14 . . .

¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. . ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation

I think Paul is picking up the imagery of a Roman soldier, ready for battle.

And Paul says - **this is what you need to stand firm.**

You don't have to 'win' everywhere you go, in life.

You just have to stay in the battle.

You just have to hang in there. Be brave.

Christ has won the victory over sin and death and evil; we enter into that victory through faith in him.

How we *express that victory and live in it*, is by putting on the full armour of God.

We see this **defensive** armour and equipment. All of these things relate to truths that Paul has already explained in the letter.

So. **The belt of truth.**

Picks up what we saw in chapter 1, where Paul said the message of truth, is "the gospel of your salvation." (Eph. 1:13)

What do you do when the world, or the devil tries to blow you off the battlefield?

You deliberately choose to believe the gospel again.

You buckle it on. Like a belt.

You don't want your spiritual pants to fall down, in the middle of the battle!

It's not a good look!

Wrap that gospel around you tight.

The second thing here is **the breastplate of righteousness**.

And we know that righteousness is the gift of God through the gospel.

It's what he gives to us that we don't deserve.

This righteousness is a right standing with God, and a fresh start to begin to walk in God's right ways. (Ephesians 4:24)

I can have confidence, because I have been made righteous in his eyes.

Not that I'm righteous in myself. But Christ's righteousness is credited to me.

And therefore, in Christ I am accepted by God, forever.

That gives me great confidence for the future.

So I belt on the gospel; and find protection in the knowledge I am right with God through Christ.

Then you need to put some **shoes** on.

Paul links the footwear with 'the gospel of peace,' which I think means being ready to **stand on the gospel** in the battle; to let the gospel be what you take you stand on (Eph. 2:14-15).

The next bit of armour is in verse 16.

The shield of faith.

Faith is that casting of yourself onto God. It's the empty hand that receives his life and love.

Faith is the deep soul connection we have with all that God offers us and gives us.

So if we're going to know God's power at work, it will be by faith. A personal trust. (Eph. 3:16-17)

And the fourth defensive weapon is in verse 17.

Is the helmet of salvation.

This whole letter's been about salvation.

Back in chapter 2 Paul said, "It is by grace you have been saved." (Eph. 2:8-9)

If you take those five things together: truth. Righteousness. Peace. Faith. Salvation . . . you see, **the one thread that runs through all of them is the gospel.**

It's all about Jesus Christ who loved me and gave himself for me. . . .

Who rose again that I might share his eternal life, and know his power and presence in me by his spirit.

The key way to be strong - to stand in the battle - is to know the gospel more and more.

Let it go deeper and deeper into your mind, and your heart.

And commit to seeing it work out, into your everyday life.

3. THE ARMOUR: SOME OFFENSIVE WEAPONS

Those are the **defensive** weapons for the battlefield of life.

But what about the weapons of **offence**? The weapons you can use, to get some **forward momentum . . .?**

There are two weapons we've not mentioned yet.

The first is some battle equipment, without which none of the fighting could happen.

Verse 17 . . .

¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

The word of the God – the Bible - is the weapon; and the Spirit of God gives it its cutting edge.

'The word of God' reveals to us the gospel message, which is at the heart of the story of the Bible - because the whole Bible testifies to Jesus.

Which is why this book is so powerful.

There are parts of the world, where if you get caught with one of these, you're probably going to die. Or be in some big trouble.

Don't tell me this is just another book!

And I am afraid for you, if you don't read it.

I'm not saying read chapters and chapters every day (that would be good), but I'm saying that in this battle of life you need to get into this!

When the person at school or uni tells you **you're rubbish**.

That's not what this book says!

When the person at work says **you're a failure**.

That's not what this book says!

When you tell yourself **you can't change**.

That's not what this book says!

When life seems to shout '**God hates you**'.

That's not what this book says!

We *need* this book, because it gives us the gospel.

And if you stand on gospel ground, and live a gospel life of faith, and repentance . . . when you stand firm in Christ's victory, nothing can move you.

Whatever the world, the flesh or the devil says, **we need to be gospel people**, through and through.

No compromise.

No dodging of all the things that don't suit our style.

Not standing in our own wisdom and strength.

No withdrawing from it all.

So we have the **defensive** armour and equipment.

And we have the **active** weapon of the **word of God**.

And he then adds one more thing in your arsenal . . .

From verse 18 . . .

¹⁸ **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.

In ways this isn't just another piece of weaponry - this is the basis on which all the others are to be used.

It's by prayer that the reality of Christ and the power of his gospel is brought to bear on our everyday lives.

Praying is simply opening the door of our needs to the Lord Jesus.

And it's prompted by the Holy Spirit, who's driving us on.

We need to be people to who pray every day.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Before the players get out on the field in the next two weeks, the coaches will say all those inspiring things: "You've got this." "You can do it."

But Paul is kinda saying - at the end of this amazing letter - "You *haven't* got this."
"You *can't* do it." At least, ***not on your own.***

But you can be strong in this dark and difficult world, in the gospel. In Christ.

By his Spirit, as you stand on the good news, you can face the battle and keep going.

This is who we are.

God's people. ***Gospel*** people.

Chosen. Saved by grace. Loved with an eternal love. Redeemed to grow. Brought into the company of his people. Called to love and live and share the good news.

And all hell can't stop us, because the victory has already been won!

No matter how hard it is.

No matter how many people tell us we're idiots for believing it.

The truth is that Jesus is Lord. He died, and now reigns forever.

And the church is to demonstrate his wisdom and power in the gospel, as he unites people from different background into a loving community of brothers and sisters.

And to keep us strong, we're called to put on that armour.

And to get into his word. And pray.

Let me ask you.

In the past week, how much of that armour and equipment did you use?

How much did the gospel factor into your thinking?

What about the word of God? And prayer to God?

Sometimes it's hard to be top of things spiritually.

But one thing is for sure.

We need to stop being so casual about God.

Because in this battle, casualness leads to casualties.

We need Christ sitting on the throne of our hearts.

We need to choose to trust him, and to centre all that we are and have, and hope to be on him.

Which is why this letter ends with this *beautiful* farewell from Paul:

²⁴ Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.

That's what strength, and standing firm, is all about.

It's all about a love for Jesus that doesn't die. But goes on growing. Goes on developing . . . focused on what he's done. Dependent on his Spirit's power.

And looking forward with hope to the day we stand before him.

As we do that, **God is calling us be strong in him.** And in his mighty power.