

# Prepare for War: Stand Firm

By Jess Arnds

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**Providence Church**  
2146 Buford Hwy  
Buford Hwy, Duluth, GA 30097

**Website:** [www.providenceduluth.org](http://www.providenceduluth.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/providencechurch](http://www.sermonaudio.com/providencechurch)

Please turn in your Bibles to the book of Ephesians 6 and we'll read verses 10 through 20.

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, 19 and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Today we will finish our short series on spiritual warfare. We've entitled this series "Prepare for War" and with this passage, Ephesians 6:10-20 as our guide, we've explored three reasons to prepare for war. The first is the reality that we have an enemy, Satan. That enemy, number 2, is coming. He will attack. And number 3, we have been commanded to stand firm. The first two weeks in this series, we've covered those first two reasons, today we will cover our commission to stand firm. To put this another way, Ephesians 6 tells us that we have a powerful enemy who is actively scheming against us and in order to resist this enemy, we must do everything that we can to hold our ground and we must prepare for war.

You know, it is a sobering thing to consider this topic and to look up from the words on my screen here and to scan this room and to realize that each one of you is engaged in a spiritual war. You're involved in combat with the enemy whether you realize it or not and

whether you feel it or not, and many, more than I would be happy to say, are faltering and failing in this war. Many are giving in to the devil's schemes. Many are believing his lies. Many are finding petty reasons to divide with one another and many are distracted from the reality of this war. Our eyes are on the things of this world, both sinful things and non-sinful things that have become idols, that are controlling us. We are giving ground to our enemy, the devil, and in so doing we are dishonoring Christ.

The context of this war is something that we don't often think about. You see, the Christian life is not just some way for you to feel good about yourself, it's not just a way of life, a happy way of life, it's not just a nice culture and we don't realize that when we don't follow Christ, that we're not just failing to be all that we can be, we're not just failing a test like in school, that we are actually dishonoring Christ and giving room, giving a place, giving a foothold for the enemy to hinder us in what God has called us to do. And what is it that God has called us to do? He has called us to stand firm and this passage, this Greek word means "to remain stable; to hold one's ground; to resist." Some form of this word "to stand" is used three different times in this passage and it simply means to stand.

And the reason that we are called to stand is because, verse 12, we are in a struggle. This word for "struggle" means "to wrestle." It's almost always used in the context of a wrestling match. This is kind of interesting because the context is a military context. Paul could have used many different words that are typically military words like words for battling, for war, for fighting, but he uses a wrestling term and the idea is this, that this is a mortal combat, this is an intense fight in close quarters between heavily armed participants, okay? It's like a wrestling match between two soldiers who have found themselves face-to-face on the battlefield. You see, this kind of a fight requires skill and precision and it's an intense fight. There is an intensity to that. It's not like sling and arrows from a distance where you're not really in the throes of battle. You're actually right in the trench and your enemy is in the trench with you and it's hard and it's difficult and the stakes are high. You see, in a wrestling match the aim is to stand, to not be thrown to the ground, to not be pinned down. You're to stand up, to stand firm. You see, you're not just standing there, you are in position with your feet firmly in the ground and you're balanced and you're poised and you're ready for the move of the opponent.

Now, what would it mean to fall in this kind of a situation? The worst case scenario is to fall away from the faith. You can't lose your salvation if you're genuinely saved, but there are many who give lip service to the faith and even believe for a while but when time of testing comes, they fall away. They make shipwreck of their faith. They give up. Hebrews 3 says to, "Take care, brothers, lest there be found in any of you an evil and unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God." So what is needed in this fight is perseverance. What's needed in this fight is to resist the schemes of the devil because his chief aim is to cause your faith to fail and as 1 Peter says, these trials, these temptations that he brings upon you are an opportunity for you to prove the genuineness of your faith, that it is real, and if your faith is real, it will persevere, you will persevere through the temptation.

It's intense, isn't it? It's not this stroll through the park. This war is not how we want life to be. We want our American dream. We want our nice house with the white picket fence with plenty of room for the kids to play and for no one to bother us and for nothing to be difficult and for us to have perfect health and perfect relationships. What we want is heaven but that will never exist in this life and if you are looking to establish that in this life, you will be discouraged and you're set up for a fall.

Now, so how do we stand firm? Okay, that's the question, how do we do that? I'm going to give you five steps to standing firm. I typically hate that kind of an outline but standing firm, I'm going to give you five steps to standing firm against the devil from this passage.

The first step is to know your enemy, which we have covered in the past two weeks. Two weeks ago we described Satan as a personal, spiritual, ancient, powerful, evil being who hates God, hates Jesus, is jealous of the glory due to Christ, and is doing everything he can to bring shame on the name of God. He opposes God's will and desires that your faith would fail and he seeks to hinder the spread of the Gospel.

Last week we talked about his schemes. We need to stand firm against his schemes. He's actively scheming to bring temptation to bear upon our fleshly desires and he brings this temptation to bear upon the sinful desire that already is existent in our heart. You see, we have been saved, we've been set free and yet we are still tempted by the flesh, still tempted by pride, and Satan seeks to exploit that by bringing temptation to bear and the chief means by which he does that is through the world of unbelievers who he has blinded, who are held captive to do his will, and he through them brings pressure, temptation, lies, deceits, deceptions, divisions and distractions to lead you away from Christ, to get you vulnerable to give in to his schemes and thus either your faith fails or you are no longer faithful to the Gospel that he has given you, meaning you will not boldly proclaim it when you ought to.

There is one other way in which the devil brings these schemes and these temptations and it is through persecution and suffering, and I believe that the evil day, the quintessential evil day is the day in which persecution is brought to bear upon your life, and what happens in that moment of persecution is that the things that you truly love will be exposed. If you love money, you will deny Christ for the sake of money. If your money is threatened because you are a Christian and the world wants to bring economic pressure to bear upon you, you will be tempted to deny the name of Christ. If you are already involved in covetousness, if you love the praise of man, if you love comfort, all of that will be exposed in the moment of persecution and you need to be ready for that moment. You need to recognize what is it that will tempt you the most to deny Christ in that moment of pressure and many of us don't even need that much pressure to fold. It just takes a coworker looking sideways at us about the Bible on your desk. If you love the praise of men, if you love money, if you love comfort and those are your gods, those are your idols, those are what control you, then you are not prepared to face the schemes of the devil on the evil day when that pressure is brought to bear.

So you need to understand, you need to know your enemy. 2. You need to understand your orders. It says in verse 10 to be strong, to be strengthened. Three times in this passage we are commanded to stand firm, to put on the armor. What is it that we are to stand firm in? Look at Ephesians 1:3-6. It says,

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

His desire is that you be holy and blameless. Those are his commands for you, to walk in a way that is upright and godly. You are to stand firm in what God has called you to do. Verse 5,

5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace,

Your purpose is to bring glory to this God, to praise the glory of his grace.

1 Peter 2:9 says,

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

So you're called to walk in holiness and you are called to be a holy nation for the purpose that God would be glorified and that you would proclaim his excellencies. This is your commission. These are your orders.

Matthew 28:18-20,

18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

We are to be making disciples. If you love Christ, then this is what you will be about. This is your commission. That is known as the Great Commission.

You see, you can check off all the theology that you want, you can sign any doctrinal statement that you want, you can boldly proclaim it on Facebook among everyone that already agrees with you all you want, but if you're afraid and unwilling to take the Gospel to those that need it, those that are perishing, are you fulfilling the call that God has

called you to? Why not? Why do we not do this? Why are we afraid? We are to be imitators of God, Ephesians 5:1.

Titus 2:11,

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age [right now], 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, 14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

So in short, God's commission, our command, our orders are these: believe the Gospel; 2, live the Gospel; and 3, proclaim the Gospel. These are our orders.

You know, it's simple but it's a tall order, isn't it, to every day believe this truth and not just believe it but walk worthy of this truth, to walk worthy of the glorious Gospel of our salvation. What does it mean to walk worthy? That is beyond our strength, our ability to do this day in and day out. It's hard enough dealing with our own flesh, let alone this world that is influenced by the devil bringing pressure upon us. And we saw before, Satan is powerful, yes, but he's not omnipresent but he's got a whole lot of other powerful angels on his side and he is working in the sons of disobedience and we're surrounded by this. How can we fulfill these orders?

Well, we not only need to understand our enemy and understand our orders but we need to grasp our power. You need to know where your power comes from. It says, look at Ephesians 6:10, "Finally, be strong," literally it means to be strengthened, you're being strengthened by something else, it's not within your own strength, "be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." He doesn't say get tough. He doesn't say figure it out. He doesn't say, well, if you're weak, I guess it's over for you. He says be strong in the strength of the Lord. It literally means his mighty strength.

Now how strong is the Lord? How strong is the God of the universe? How strong is the Almighty One? We know that he's strong. We know that with a word he created the heavens and the earth, he orders all things after the purpose of his will, and by him nations rise and fall. He upholds even now the universe by the word of his power. So God is strong and we need his strength and this is not the first time that our need for strength has been mentioned in this book of Ephesians. It says in chapter 3, verses 14 through 19, Paul prays for them,

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,

So Paul is praying that they would be strengthened in their inner man through the Spirit of God, for what purpose?

17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

We need strength to comprehend the love of Christ. For him to dwell in our hearts through faith, we need supernatural strength that comes from outside of us to know the love of Christ and to be filled up with the fullness of God and just briefly, to know the love of Christ is to walk in his love. You don't know the love of Christ until you walk in his love, until you love as he loved. It's in imitating him that you know his love. It is an experiential knowledge. When you love as he loved, you understand Christ better. You know him and it is in knowing him and being filled up by his love and by the fullness of God that you are able to do the things that he has called you to do which in chapter 4, verse 1 is walk worthy of this calling. You cannot do it without supernatural strength within you, to be able to do this. And by the way, what he says there, "to be filled with the fullness of God, to know the love of Christ, to walk in his ways," is just another way of saying put on the armor of God. He just turns to another metaphor to explain what's happening. He puts it in a spiritual war context.

So how can we be strengthened in the Lord and in the strength of his might? Look back at chapter 1, verse 15. Paul prays again,

15 For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.

Okay, God's power is not just power in general, it's not just potential power, it is power toward us. It is power that is effective for us. It is directed to us and made available to us. And how?

These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might

Okay, that strength of his might, it's the exact same phrase used in 6:10 where he says, "be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." Everything that God has done for you, the surpassing greatness of his power, the riches of his glory, the hope of the

calling, are in accordance with the working of the strength of his might, his power that is working for us. And how did he do this? Verse 20, he says,

the working of the strength of His might 20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

So when Christ was raised from the dead, that was God's power, the strength of his might working for you to produce an inheritance for you and hope in your calling. That was hope for us and he was seated at the right hand in the heavenly places, and notice verse 21, he is seated

21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named

Do those words sound familiar to you, rule and authority and power? These are the exact same demonic forces that are mentioned in chapter 6, verse 12, the ones that we wrestle against. We wrestle against these demonic forces but Christ by the working of the strength of God's might when he was raised from the dead has been seated far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

Christ is far superior, far above all of these demonic forces. He is far greater than any enemy that we could ever face. They don't stand a chance against him, in fact, they are terrified of him. You see this in the Gospels when he would come across a demon-possessed person, they would shriek out because they had no power against Jesus. They would beg him not to throw them in the abyss. That's the kind of power that our Savior has and that power was confirmed and even elevated when he was raised from the dead. Why? Because he broke the power of sin and death when he was raised from the dead. Hebrews says that Satan held the power of death and through the fear of death he held us in bondage. That was broken when Jesus was raised from the dead and ascended into heaven.

Verse 22,

22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

So Jesus is not only powerful and he was not only raised above all rule and authority, but he has been given to us, the church. We are his church. We are his people. He is our Captain. He is our General. He is our Lord.

So Paul's prayer is that the Ephesians would be enlightened by God to know the greatness of the power that worked for us when Christ was raised from the dead, and in Christ we are far more powerful than any devil or demon. It is in his mighty strength that we are to

be strong. We are to be strengthened by his mighty strength, the strength that raised us up with Jesus also and seated him at the right hand of God. That strength that raised Jesus up and seated him there is the same that has raised us up and seated us with Christ.

Look at chapter 2, verse 1,

1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ... 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places,

That when Christ was raised from the dead, we who believe were raised with him. Christ is seated far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and you and I are seated there with him. How angry must this make the devil. He is jealous of Jesus' glory. He wanted it for himself but look who Jesus chose to share his glory with, lowly human sinners, redeemed sinners. We are partakers of his glory. We are seated with him and we will inherit, we are co-heirs with Christ. Amazing. We will inherit everything that he inherits.

So this power is ours by the grace of God, not by works of righteousness that we have done, Ephesians 2:8-10, and by his grace and by his power, we have been recreated to be capable of doing good works that please God, verse 10,

10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works [we have been designed for them], which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

It's like a train that has been made for the train tracks. We are created to do good works and God has laid the tracks out in front of us to do them and they are right there plain as day. He has told us what they are and he's designed us to do them.

He has broken, see that? We were formerly dead in our trespasses but God made us alive. You see, we were held captive by Satan to do his will. He used to work in us as the sons of disobedience and we used to live formerly in the lusts of our flesh and indulged those desires of the flesh and the mind and we used to be by nature children of wrath, but when Christ was raised from the dead and we were united with him in faith, we were forgiven of our sins, we were made alive with him and we were raised up, and so we've been set free from all of that, from the condemnation and the power of sin. One day there will be no more sin but between now and then, we deal with the temptations of our flesh though they no longer have dominion over us.



So our strength comes from the Lord. He has already won this victory and his power is available to you. Romans 8:31-39 says this,

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. 35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 Just as it is written, "For your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

If you have truly been united with Christ in faith, you will never be separated from him and you will overwhelmingly conquer all of the schemes of the evil one. Satan cannot overcome a believer who resists him. James 4:7 says this,

7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

It doesn't say conquer the devil. It doesn't say stomp out the devil. It doesn't say cast out the devil. It says resist him and he will flee. Christ has already done what is necessary to defeat him. All you need to do is resist and obey God. 1 Corinthians 10:12-14 says that there is no temptation that is too strong for you. 1 Corinthians 10:12,

12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. 14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

Do you realize that if Satan himself brought the temptation directly to your doorstep, he cannot make you submit to his will because you belong to Christ. He could take it upon himself directly to bring as much heat on you as possible and because you are in Christ, all you must do is resist him firm in your faith and he will flee. Therefore take up the full armor of God so that you will be able to resist in the evil day. Jesus has promised that Satan will not overcome the church. Matthew 16:18, "on this rock I will build my church, the gates of Hades will not overpower it." Then Romans 16:20, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet."

So how do we do this? How do we become strong in the Lord and in his mighty strength? Well, we must use his weapons. If you were to during the planning of D-Day, if you were to decide on your own to invade Normandy beach at a time that was not directed by your commanding officer, would you stand a chance? No, you would be cut down. It's foolish. It's crazy. Okay, there is overwhelming force with God, right? God is overwhelmingly powerful. His weapons are irresistible, impenetrable, but if you don't put them on, if you don't use them, you are vulnerable. If you try to force your own way by your own wisdom to defeat the schemes of the devil, you will fail.

So we are to put on the full armor of God. We're to be strong by putting it on. That's essentially how this passage flows. Be strong in the strength of the Lord and in the strength of his might. How do you do that? By putting on his armor. This armor comes from the passage that Ted read earlier in Isaiah 11. This is the armor that the Lord himself wore to bring about our salvation, to bring about justice and righteousness. Isaiah 11:5, I won't read it again, but it talks about his righteousness wrapped around him like a belt and faithfulness, the belt about his waist. Isaiah 59:9-21 elaborates more. It says, let's start in verse 15, Isaiah 59:15,

15 Yes, truth is lacking; And he who turns aside from evil makes himself a prey. Now the LORD saw, And it was displeasing in His sight that there was no justice.

And there is much more descriptive terms but he basically looks at Israel and says, "Look, there's no justice in the land. No one does what is right." Verse 16,

16 And He saw that there was no man, And was astonished that there was no one to intercede [there was not a righteous person that could deal with this]; Then His own arm brought salvation to Him, And His righteousness upheld Him. 17 He put on righteousness like a breastplate, And a helmet of salvation on His head; And He put on garments of vengeance for clothing And wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle.

And the result of all that is that he crushed the adversaries and then his children in verse 21 basically walked faithfully in the word of God. That's the result of the Lord putting on his armor. We're to put on the armor of light, Romans 13:12 says. So the armor that is worn here, the armor that we put on is the same armor that Christ himself wore to accomplish his goal, to accomplish our salvation.

Let's cover it from a high level here because we don't have time to get into all this. You could spend a week or more on every piece but you see in verse, let's go ahead and turn there, Ephesians 6:14,

14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming

arrows of the evil one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

These are your protection. This is what gives you confidence on the evil day. If you are wearing this and you have worn it, then it gives you confidence. It's like I used to return kick-offs in football. You know, everyone is wearing helmets and face masks and they'll wrap their arms and put something hard underneath this just to cause a little extra pain and they're flying down that field and you catch this football and there's 11 angry guys running at little old me and you're running that way, the opposite direction, major collisions, loud cracking sounds everywhere from the collision of the armor, the helmets and the shoulder pads. If I wasn't wearing any armor, if I wasn't wearing a helmet and a face mask, do you think I would have even tried to catch that football and run it back? No, I would have been terrified. Wearing that armor gives you confidence to dive headlong into the battle. I mean, you know, there's 250 pound dudes out there, 100 pounds heavier than me, I'm diving straight into them, right? Why? Because I had this armor. I knew that I wasn't going to get hurt.

This armor gives us confidence and so what is this armor that he lays out for us here? The first is the belt of truth. Truth, truthfulness, doctrinal truth and honesty. Christians are to be people of the truth. This is repeated over and over in Ephesians. In 1:13, you listen to the message of the truth. Ephesians 4:15, we are to speak the truth in love. Ephesians 4:21, if indeed you have heard of Christ and have been taught in him just as truth is in Jesus, talking about putting off and putting on the new man, put off the old man, put on the new. Verse 24, put on the new self which is in the likeness of God and has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. Verse 25, therefore laying aside falsehood. Speak truth each of you to his neighbor for we are members of one another. Ephesians 5:9, for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth. This concept of truth has been repeated over and over. This is your first defense against the schemes of the devil. Why? He's trying to deceive you. He's trying to trick you and he's trying to get you to become a deceiver yourself. He wants you to be trapped in your own lies. So put on the belt of truth. Be honest with one another. Seek what is real. Live in reality.

Not only that, listen to what this one commentator says, "Let not anyone imagine that he is prepared to withstand the assaults of the powers of darkness. If his mind is stored with his own theories or with speculations of other men," so you're not ready if that is what's in your mind, "nothing but the truth of God clearly understood and cordially embraced will enable this man to keep his feet for a moment before these celestial potentates, the demonic forces. Reason, tradition, speculative conviction, dead orthodoxy, are a girdle of spider webs. They give way at the first onset. Truth alone as abiding in the mind of the form of divine knowledge can give strength or confidence even in the ordinary conflicts of the Christian life, much more in any really evil day." Truth. Truth is a protection for you against the schemes of the devil.

The next is the breastplate of righteousness. What is this? Yes, it is trusting in the righteousness of Christ but trusting in it in terms of it being imputed to your account for

your salvation, that's one part of it, the other part is living and walking in his righteousness which is what he's been talking about in the book of Ephesians all the way up to this point. It is his righteousness that we strap on and it empowers us to do righteousness. If you want to stand against the schemes of the devil, do what is right. Believe what's true. Speak what's true. Do what is right.

Next is the shoes of the readiness given by the Gospel of peace. This concept of peace is repeated as well. Ephesians 2:12-22 talks about it. We once were separate from Christ, verse 14. He himself is our peace and he has united us together, Jews and Gentiles, and every believer. We've been united together in Christ. The Gospel of peace. Verse 17, and he came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. Through him we both have access in one spirit to the Father.

That reconciliation, that message of reconciliation makes us ready, it prepares us for the fight. How? How does it make you ready? Well, you know that you have peace with God and that gives you confidence. He has forgiven you of your sins. You are right with him and nothing needs to be added to that. You see, when God is no longer your enemy, it frees you up to turn your attention to the real enemy. If God is your enemy and you have to please him, you've got your back to the devil basically. When you are right with God, you are reconciled with God, you have peace with him, now you can turn your attention to the enemy, Satan, the enemy of your soul to deal with your flesh and to deal with the world. It makes you ready. Not only that, you are also reconciled in Christ to every other believer and you are one with them. You don't have to fight each other. You are one with each other so now we can link arms and face this enemy together.

The Gospel of peace. If you're living out this truth in the body of Christ, the church, you as a church are ready to face the devil's schemes. You see, Satan doesn't just want one believer to fall, he wants entire churches to fall and he's successful at that often so we must stick together. If you don't, if you're not one with each other, then you are vulnerable. We are weakened and we're not ready to proclaim the Gospel because we're too busy fighting each other.

But there is one other way that I believe this Gospel of peace makes you ready to face the devil's schemes. Think about this, where does the pressure come from? Where does Satan bring the pressure on your flesh? It is through the world, through the world of unbelievers who believe lies and want you to agree with them and join them in their lusts, right? You see, if you rightly identify your enemy as not being flesh and blood but being spiritual, being demonic forces behind them, these are just puppets held captive to do the will of Satan, we have compassion for these captives though they are willing captives, though they hate God and they hate us, they are not the enemy and this Gospel of peace makes us ready to absorb the blows from them to reach out and proclaim the message of reconciliation to an unbelieving and lost world who hates us.

That's power because we have the power of God unto salvation in the Gospel. You can preach peace to the LGBT community, you can preach peace to abortionists, you can preach peace to atheists and racists and false teachers. Though we warn them of the

judgment to come, there is hope for you while there is still time to repent. We can preach peace and that makes us ready for anything and it is in those moments of persecution that the Gospel goes forth the most powerfully. You see it explode, the Gospel just exploded in the Mediterranean world when the church was persecuted. You see a lot of Muslims getting saved in the Middle East watching Christians be persecuted for their faith and seeing the hope that was in them, seeing the love that they showed for their persecutors.

So we are to take up the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit. The shield of faith, believing God, believing his promises. The whole Bible is about this. This is the crux of Satan's attack, to steal your faith, to make it fail. How do you defeat him? How do you defeat all of his darts? You raise the shield of faith. You believe God and you walk in that.

And the helmet of salvation, 1 Thessalonians 5:8 says this,

8 But since we are of the day [we are not of the night, we're not children of the night], let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.

Where you set your hope, the book of 1 Peter is about this. Where you have set your hope is crucial. If you've set it in heaven, then you are ready to endure the temptations and the persecutions of this world.

And the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. We're out of time but the word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. It is the word of God that we trust in. It is the word of God that we use in this fight. It is the word of God that cuts to the soul of every person and exposes their need of the Gospel.

So we must trust these weapons. We must trust them. Not only put them on, not only know that they exist, but we must trust them and it's not complicated. It's truth. It's righteousness. It's the Gospel. It's the word of God and it's hope in heaven. And not only that, now having put all these things on, stay alert. Stay alert. How do we do this? Look at verse 18 of chapter 6,

18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,  
19 and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,

You see that we are to be alert. We are to stay awake. We're to be watchful in prayer knowing that these temptations are coming, knowing that the evil day is coming, knowing our own tendency to relax in the things that would lead us down the wrong path, to relax in the things that would tempt us. You see, when you fall it's not because all of a sudden it came out of nowhere, it's because you started to relax a long time ago and started to indulge your selfishness a long time ago before it was even obviously sin.

Stay alert in prayer with all perseverance and petition for all the saints. We need to look out for one another. We're to be of sober spirit, 1 Peter 5:8 says,

8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. 10 After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

So stay alert for yourself and stay alert for each other. Stay devoted to prayer.

So we need to prepare for war. We need to prepare because we have an enemy. We need to prepare because he is coming to bring the evil day upon us. And we need to prepare because God has commanded us to stand firm. He has given us his power. He has given us his armor. He has given us everything we need and you can do this and you must and we need to do this together. Obviously there is much more to say but we need to pray because ultimately it's the Lord himself who will strengthen you for this task. So let's stick together and do that.

Let's pray.

*Lord Jesus, we recognize that this is a war zone, Lord. We recognize that this is not easy, that it's not always fun. We recognize, Lord, that you have called us to this fight and that we are weak in ourselves but you have called us to be strong and in you, in you we are overwhelmingly conquerors, Lord. So Lord, help us to do that, help us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, help us to strap on the armor and be ready to go. For your glory and may we have joy in this because you have given us the victory. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*