

Still Standing

Life Song Message – October 8th, 2023

Introduction

In the old Looney Toons cartoons, Wile E. Coyote was constantly trying to capture the speedy Road Runner in the hopes of getting a free lunch. He would employ all types of traps and weapons, from fake tunnels painted on brick walls to the always unreliable Acme bombs, in the attempt to catch the speedy bird for dinner. Unfortunately for the coyote, his schemes always backfired, causing him to be on the receiving end, bandaged and broken. It was good for a laugh.

The traps the devil sets for us are no laughing matter, however. These schemes that are meant to deceive us, and the “bombs” that go off in our lives, cause real pain and real damage and leave real scars, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual. If we are to be “still standing” after facing these assaults and come out of the constant battles intact, we must know how to fight, who were fighting against, and be protected in the fight. God shows us all of this in these passages from the letter to the church in Ephesus written by the Apostle Paul sometime around the year 60 A.D. This “self-defense manual in spiritual warfare” is just as relevant now as it was then.

Scripture Passage: Ephesians 6:10-18 NIV

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 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. 13 Therefore put on the full armor 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.

Know How to Fight

Be strong in the Lord ‘s mighty power.

From the Greek word “endunamoó” (Strong’s 1743) meaning to be “empowered”, we are to get our “dynamite power” from the Lord. We are not to fight this battle, against this enemy, alone, in our own strength. As the Israelites faced Pharaoh’s army, with their backs against the Red Sea, Moses told them, *“The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.”* Exodus 14:14. He reminds them again later that, *“The Lord your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory.”* Exodus 20:4. We shouldn’t for a minute think that God isn’t still keeping this promise for us today.

Put on the full armor of God

The full, or complete set of, armor, from the Greek word “panoplia” (Strong’s 3833) is required to fight this battle. Any less, and you are leaving yourself exposed to the “wiles of the devil” (from the NKJV). Wile E. Coyote would have been well fed had the Road Runner used less than his full speed. Or consider a football team playing without pads, or not having players at key positions. They wouldn’t stand a chance!

Know Who We’re Fighting Against

It’s not against flesh and blood

It is not people we battle against. In all of the issues and evil we are presently witnessing on a global basis, from abortion to transgenderism, from economic chaos to the breakdown of national borders, whether the fight is more corporately based or affects us individually, it is not people who are the ultimate enemy. We do not battle against a political party or an ideology. From the Greek word “kosmokratór” (Strong’s 2888), we are in a battle against Satan, who represents the “powers of this dark world.” To set our sights on anything less than the mastermind is to be distracted and, therefore, less effective. Consider these quotes from the book “The Art of War” by Sun Tzu:

“The whole secret lies in confusing the enemy, so that he cannot fathom our real intent.”

“If he sends reinforcements everywhere, he will everywhere be weak.”

We must be focused on the real enemy in this fight!

Be Protected in the Fight

The full armor is needed when evil comes

While the day of evil may refer to the end-times and the seven-year period of tribulation, a more common view is this means any day or time when a believer faces adversity or trials. Regardless of which interpretation is more correct, as we've learned already, when tough times come, we need the complete armor of God to be able to stand our ground, which, from the Greek word "antistenai" (Strong's 436) means to resist, oppose, or stand against. And, after we have given absolutely everything in this fight, to still be standing. Now we'll see what the armor God gave us for this fight looks like.

The belt of Truth

Just like a belt is the centerpiece of your clothing (and, frankly, keeps you from looking like a fool with your pants on the ground), holding to the Truth of God's Word is essential for the proper perspective and keeping us centered when facing trials. We are told to be "girded about", which comes from the Greek word "perizónnumi" (Strong's 4024), the idea being that the truth is to be securely fastened to us. Or think of the girders used to make a tall building steady and able to withstand terrible winds. And truth is not relative! The very definition of truth does not leave that as an option. Jesus says of Himself, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* (John 14:6 NKJV), and when He stood before Pontius Pilate, he declared, *"In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."* (John 18:37 NIV)

To say that truth is under attack is a gross understatement. It's like saying "water is wet". When truth is cast aside for convenience, when feelings trump reason and actual science, you get the cultural mess we're in now. A word of caution as we engage in this battle, though. Don't be so focused on exposing lies that you fail to share the Truth. Don't get so caught up in pushing back the darkness that you forget to shine the Light. Jesus said, *"you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* (John 8:32 NIV) and it was said of Him in John 1:5 (NIV) *"the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."* If you share the Truth, the lies will be exposed. If you shine the Light, the darkness will flee.

The breastplate of righteousness

You don't go into battle without protecting the vital organs, especially your heart. That's what the breastplate is for. In a spiritual sense, it's a covering that you enjoy when you remain under the authority of Christ by walking with Him as you strive for living righteously. Jesus made this promise in John 15:9-10, *"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My*

commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." God's love never leaves you, but straying into the ways of world and, by default, into the jurisdiction of the devil, you leave your heart exposed and your spiritual authority compromised. We can trample the "powers of the enemy" (Luke 10:19), but only if we stay in Christ. He tells us in John 15:5 *"I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."* Keep that breastplate on, your heart protected, and your authority intact!

Feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace

Do you have the correct footwear for battle? Will the grip of your shoes allow you to stand your ground, or help you run where the Lord is calling? Or are they falling apart, not protecting your tootsies, and have you slipping and sliding all over the place? Has anxiety about what has or may transpire left you beat down? When you have the peace of Christ, you are ready for whatever may come. In Colossians 3:15 (NKJV), the Apostle Paul writes *"let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful."* He writes again in Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV) to *"not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* This is only possible because Jesus, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6) leaves His peace with us. He tells us in John 14:27 (NIV), *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."*

The shield of faith

This verse implies that you will face arrows. In fact, the Greek word is "belos" (Strong's 956) which can also mean dart, javelin, or missile. You will face flaming missiles, and not the kind that blow up in your enemy's face. What the shield of faith affords you, however, is the ability to extinguish, suppress, or thwart ("sbennumi" – Strong's 4570) the effectiveness of these missiles. You might take a direct hit, but faith protects you from lasting (i.e., eternal) harm. See these examples from Hebrews 11, the chapter referred to as the "wall of faith":

And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and

escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

The helmet of salvation

If you can't think, you can't fight. If you can't fight, you can't stand. Protect your thinking center, your brain, by knowing who you are in Christ. When you fully understand what God has done for you, through the Blood of His Son, Jesus, everything falls into its proper perspective. You can think clearly, and fight more effectively, when you carry the knowledge and the confidence that you are a redeemed child of God into battle. Take these words to heart and protect your mind!

John 3:16 (NIV) - For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

1 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)- God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Ephesians 2:8 - 9(NIV) - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

Isaiah 53:5 (NIV) - But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Romans 8:1 (NIV) - Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

The Sword of the Spirit

We have been given one offensive weapon for the battles we face, and that weapon is the word of God, which the writer of Hebrews calls a “two-edged

sword”. But don’t think that just because you have it in your possession that it’s going to do you any good. Your enemy, the devil, was once the highest order of Angel; he was in God’s throne room and was referred to as “Lucifer”, the angel of light. He knows the Bible. He also knows how to twist and pervert it. If you think for a minute that you can wield this sword in the midst of the constant battles of trials and temptations without really knowing it, you are sadly mistaken. Like any weapon, you have to practice with it, and your training ground is to read it deeply and often. In Joshua 1:8 (NKJV) we read that *“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”* Meditate is taken from the Hebrew word “hagah” (Strong’s 1897), which means to moan, utter, speak, growl, or muse. It can be compared to a cow chewing its cud.

Don’t just “do devotions”, as if checking off a to-do list, but spend time “chewing on” a passage from Scripture so that it becomes imprinted on your heart and mind. God even had Moses tell the Israelites, *“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”* (Deuteronomy 6:6-9 NKJV) Knowing the Bible intimately means that, when you really need a specific passage of Scripture for whatever occasion or circumstance may arise, you’ll have it readily available. It also means that you won’t use the word inerrantly (incorrectly). 2 Timothy 2:15 (NKJV) admonishes us to *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing [handling] the word of truth.”*

Pray and pray often

All the armor and the best offensive weapon available will do you no good if you’re not in constant contact with your Field Commander. A primary strategy in battle is to cut off communication. If we are going to be still standing after this fight, we must be praying often and for each other. And no request is too miniscule or unimportant. Note the part about “all kinds of prayers and requests?” God wants to hear from us, and we need to talk to Him and listen for our “marching orders”. In 1 Thessalonians 5:17 we were told to pray continually or without ceasing. Keep those lines of communication open! And when combined with the whole armor we find this promise from James 5:16 (NIV) to be true:

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”

What “Still Standing” Might Look Like

Ephesians 6:13 NIV - Therefore put on the full armor 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.

We are in a war. That fact cannot be over-emphasized. Life on this Earth is a lot like trying to have a picnic in a battlefield, and we act surprised when a mortar shell lands on our blanket. We ask why bad things happen, when we probably should ask how is that good things happen. Psalm 31:19 (NIV) says about God, *“How abundant are the good things that you have stored up for those who fear you, that you bestow in the sight of all, on those who take refuge in you.”* That’s definitely one answer to that question!

Are you still standing? Maybe you don’t think so, so here are a few things to think about.

First, failure is not final! If you’re not a Christian and think that maybe you’ve messed up one too many times to qualify for redemption, please know that this could not be further from the truth! Keep these three passages in mind:

- *Romans 3:23 - All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.*
- *Romans 5:8 - But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*
- *Romans 10:9-10 - If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.*

There are no qualifications for salvation outside of giving your heart to Jesus Christ.

For the person who’s already a Christian and feeling like you’ve let the Lord down, consider the accounts of our “heroes of faith” as found in Scripture. If your Christian walk looks more like a Slip-n-Slide than an escalator, you’re in good company! Abraham, Moses, Rahab, Samson, David, Elijah, Jesus’ disciples, the Apostle Paul, and many, many others all had plenty of baggage, to say the least, yet God used them in powerful ways to advance His Kingdom. Many of them had moments of defeat after times of victory. Just because you’ve fallen down, doesn’t mean you have to stay there. A famous man once said, I

believe it was Mr. Miyagi, “Quarterback who never throw interception never throw pass.” Just kidding. I made this up. But it’s true. Mistakes and missteps are part of living, and the Blood of Jesus covers it all!

Second, keep on keeping on! The Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 3:12-14 (NIV), *“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”* In other words, don’t look back, look forward. Christ is the finish line, and He’s just up ahead!

Third, use your story for Christ’s glory! Your testimony on the other side of trials is one that no one else could give. Whatever the problem, be it pain or prison, remember that we’re promised in Romans 8:28 (NKJV) *“that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”*

Are you still standing? Really, it’s all up to you to determine that. Do you feel bruised and bloodied, but are still holding firm to the Word of God? Then, my friend, you are still standing! Just proclaim it, and let the enemy know what’s what!

To the one who keeps battling addiction, but is trusting that God will lead him to a clean life once and for all . . . I’m still standing!

To the father who really messed up his family with a series of bad decisions, but calls on Jesus every day to bring restoration . . . I’m still standing!

To the woman who fought for her marriage for years despite feeling hopeless, trusting that God would bring it back to life . . . I’m still standing.

To the one who suffered unspeakable loss and just wants to know why, but is choosing to keep trusting God . . . I’m still standing!

To all those who put the armor on every day, keep taking the hits, but continue to push the line forward, proclaim with a loud voice, because of Jesus Christ:

I’M STILL STANDING!