

Grace to you and peace from Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood and has made us kings and priests to God. To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. It is certain.

Ephesians 6:10–20 (NKJV)

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

Christian Education: Armed and Standing

Lord, sanctify us by Your truth, Your word is truth. Amen.

In Jesus name, fellow redeemed,

In Sunday School, the children's lessons in the coming weeks will recount Israel's journey from slavery in Egypt to conquest in Canaan. This begins with the Lord parting of the Red Sea to rescue the Israelites from the pursuing Egyptian chariots. Hemmed in on every side either to face drowning in Red Sea or slaughter at the hands of the mighty Egyptian army – Moses speaks, **Exodus 14:13–14 – And Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.”**

This Christian Education Sunday we, like Israel, are reminded to not be afraid. We stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. Though the evil forces around us seem too much to bear, it is the Lord who fights. It is the Lord who grants peace when surrounded on every side. Christian Education is not just for the Sunday School children – it is all aspects of the Church's work – building up your knowledge in the salvation of our Lord. From pastor to parent from church to home, through Christian education we are armed and standing: armed for battle and standing in victory.

1. Armed for Battle

Some of the greatest battles the Israelites would face after leaving the Egyptians behind was not the nations that stood before them. It was not the lack of water that led them to

complain so soon into the wilderness. Nor was the real danger in lack of bread which led the Israelites to long to return to Egypt.

God had no trouble responding to every earthly need the Israelites ever faced. He had no trouble conquering entire nations that lay before them. Where the real danger lay was not in lack of bread or water ... not in Egyptians or Canaanites or Jebusites. The real danger a work was unseen.

(v.12). As we do battle, what is it that fight against? In Sun Tzu's Art of War, he writes: "It is said that if you know your enemies and know yourself, you will not be imperiled in a hundred battles; if you do not know your enemies but do know yourself, you will win one and lose one; if you do not know your enemies nor yourself, you will be imperiled in every single battle."

So often when battling false teaching for instance, we fall into the error of thinking that we battle a person or a church body. Yet Paul writes: **2 Corinthians 10:3–6 – For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.**

The battle is not against flesh and blood. If it was, then the Church would merely use the weapons of this world. We would do no differently then some of the radical Muslims who in the name of their god endeavored to eradicate all those who opposed their faith – battling flesh and blood.

The devil and the spiritual armies of wickedness dwell in the heavenly places. Jesus said to Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world, if it were, my servants would fight. But My kingdom is not of this world." God equips us for a spiritual battle. And the weapons of His kingdom are not of this world.

(v.10) In 1500 B.C. the Egyptians were perhaps the most dominant world power of their day. Yet the Moses, with the drop of his arms, was able to bring the walls of the Red Sea crashing down on them. Was this Moses doing? Be strong in the power of His might.

Our sinful nature is going to see the Egyptian pursuit and flee or surrender. The wiles of the devil press on every side. Sin is an everyday battle. It is just exhausting to think about the pursuit of Satan which does not let up. As soon as you think you've covered one hill, you see a mountain rise beyond. Yet the worst thing we could do is the thing we do most often – rely on ourselves or some other earthly support. Without the armor of God, the battle is lost.

Christian education arms us for battle. As we examine the armor of God, notice how not one reference refers to something that relies on us. The armor comes from God and brings with it the power of His might!

Paul was imprisoned in Rome while writing this epistle. He would likely see the Roman guards coming and going every day. We find the language used to describe a heavily armed soldier. How vivid a picture to see in the well equipped Roman centurion an image of our Christian Education.

The belt pictures readiness. The fluid response of the truth makes for your every ready posture. It carries the sheath from which the word of God is drawn. Always ready. The breast plate of righteousness is designed to protect those most vital organs. God's righteousness is given to us. It is put on us. For our righteousness would provide no protection for our soul. In Christ, with His righteousness covering us, we lift up the shield of faith. As Satan lobbies flaming arrows upon us, as he accuses us of our many failures, as he seeks to pierce through a fatal blow, we crouch behind a baptismal faith that holds up Christ to deflect every arrow. Together with the helmet of salvation we find the all the defense we need to do battle. In all this the Lord equips us with just one weapon meant not just for defense, but offense – the sword: the Spirit working through the Word. As is written in Hebrews, “the Word is living and powerful, sharper than any double edged sword.” When Jesus faced Satan in the wilderness, He did not use His almighty power as God to defeat Him. He quoted Scripture.

Christian Education equips us with this armor. From our Scripture reading we heard how important it is to teach our children and grandchildren of these wonderful truths of God. We would not know this true God, this Savior God who hears us, if it weren't for our instruction in the Word. We would not know the account of His mighty deliverance of His people from Egypt, if we were not taught it. Our children likewise would never know of the great works of God – the plagues of Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, and above all, the sacrifice of His righteous Son on the cross to save us – if we would not teach them.

Through your growth and knowledge of God's Word, you are ARMED FOR BATTLE.

2. Standing in Victory

“Stand up! Stand up for Jesus! Ye soldiers of the Cross! Lift high His royal banner, It must not suffer loss. From vict'ry unto vict'ry His army shall He lead Till ev'ry foe is vanquished And Christ is Lord indeed.”

As the Children of Israel stood on the banks of the Jordan river, they looked onward toward the vast land that the Lord had promised them. From victory unto victory the Lord would be with them. In fact, the victory was their's before they even crossed the Jordan. **Deuteronomy 20:1** – **“When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the Lord your God is with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.**

As we look onward, as we face the next battle, do we need doubt the outcome? Having put on the whole armor of God, we are standing in victory.

(v.13) We face the evil day. Any day ... Every day ... The day that characterizes your whole life in this world. For every day the devil wages war. In a nearly endless pursuit

for your soul, he will try countless different methods to pull you away from God. He knows your weaknesses. He knows the further he draws you away from God's Word, the more vulnerable you are. As Luther writes: "If you could see how many knives, darts, and arrows are every moment aimed at you, you would be glad to come to the Sacrament as often as possible" (LC V 82)

As we referred to before from Sun Tzu's Art of War: "if you know your enemies and know yourself, you will not be imperiled in a hundred battles." The devil surely knows you. And he knows himself. One of the great temptations Jesus faced in the wilderness was when Satan offered to give Him all the kingdoms of the world if He would just bow down before him.

The "evil day" we face might not show appear quite so evil. Perhaps it is when things are going well, when Satan offers you the kingdoms of this world on a platter, that we are most vulnerable. Notice v.11, you stand against the wiles, that is the schemes of the devil.

Know yourself. Know where your weaknesses lie. Know that we do fall. We sin daily – in weakness, in pride. This is why the victory cannot rest in our hands. The battle must be given over to the mighty hands of the Lord. "Having done all" is to put on Christ. Christ has overcome Satan in the wilderness for you. He is our the source of our faith-strengthened shield. It is to gather around God's Word and Sacrament regularly – to receive the armor of God that He gives in His word. To grow in your Christian Education that your shield of faith be strengthened. We stand behind Christ. We wear the breastplate of His righteousness.

Deuteronomy 20:1 – "When you go out to battle against your enemies, ... do not be afraid of them; for the Lord your God is with you."

The preservice devotion on page 2 of your service folder is Psalm 91. As you read this Psalm you might wonder – how can it say that "no evil shall befall you, Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling? For instance, how can it be said to someone dying of cancer or that loses a teenager in a car crash – no evil shall befall you?

Notice, no evil shall befall you – 91:9 "because You have made the the Most High, your dwelling place. As v.1 begins this Psalm "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High ..." The place where we dwell is the secret place of God – His Word. By faith we go to a place where nothing can touch us – no evil can harm us. In the secret place of the Most High is where we find Christ. As we gather together in this fellowship, as we enter into God's holy place in the hearing of His word, we find a shelter where nothing – no evil, no plague can touch us. So the Psalm rightly describes the spiritual nature of the battle we wage. the true enemies not of flesh and blood, nor is the danger physical – sickness or tribulation: **91:2** "The Lord is my fortress" ... **91:3** "from the snare of the fowler" ... **91:4** "His truth, your shield" ... No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling."

... "And take they our life, Goods, fame, child, and wife, Let these all be gone, They yet have nothing won; The Kingdom ours remaineth."

This is the last of our series from Ephesians. What a compelling conclusion! The Spirit's concluding words engulf the whole epistle. We were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Though we were once strangers, possessed by darkness, yet now we are fellow members of God's household, children of light. Through the cleansing power of baptism we have been made holy by faith in Jesus, adopted heirs of heavenly riches. Our walk has changed. This news of Christ has transformed our mind, that we put off our former ways and walk according to the new man, in the light of Christ where the will of God is revealed. The epistle concludes with the epic battle scene – light vs. darkness. The spiritual forces of evil waging war against the Church. But the outcome is not left to question. The outcome has already been scripted in the blood of our crucified Lord who cried out "It is finished!" Indeed, dear Christians, it is finished. Having put on the whole armor of God, nothing can touch you. As Moses spoke to the children of Israel – the Egyptians on one side, the Red Sea on the other – you stand in victory. **Exodus 14:13 – And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today."**

You are armed. You are standing. You have the victory. Amen.