

Be Strong

Digging Deeper

John Lohmar

Director of Life Groups

In 480 BC, a group of three hundred Spartan soldiers faced an army of over one hundred thousand Persians in a narrow coastal pass called Thermopylae. They were all that stood between the invading Persian army and their Greek homeland. All but two of the Spartans died over the three day battle. Their sacrifice allowed the rest of the much smaller Greek army to escape and saved Greece from occupation by an authoritarian regime that had no concept of freedom and was intent on enslaving the people they conquered.

The battle we fight today is a spiritual one. It is fought against the forces of darkness in the world and evil spirits that intend to occupy us and keep us in bondage to sin, shame and fear (Eph 6:11-12). But it is a battle we are well equipped to fight when we put on the armor of God that was bought for us with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross (Eph 6:13-18). It is from confidence in his victory over sin and death that we are able to put on this armor and fight our daily battles.

Jesus is the source of every piece of spiritual armor we wear to protect us in the war against sin and darkness.

His truth is the belt that holds our spiritual armor together (John 14:6).

We must know the truth that was revealed by his life and is found in God's word. It keeps us grounded and reminds us of our identity in him.

His righteousness is the breastplate that guards our most vital organs - our heart and our soul. Our faith in him is what allows us to tap into his power. That softens our heart, restores our soul, and enables us to live the righteous life that he did (Rom 1:17, 2 Cor 5:21).

His gospel is the firm foundation for our life. Like a good pair of sandals that protect our feet as we walk across rough ground, the gospel brings us the peace we need to walk over whatever hills and through whatever dark valleys we encounter in life (John 16:33).

Our belief in him and what he says about us is the shield of faith that protects us against the fiery arrows of our spiritual enemies. As firm believers, we are able to stand strong as the battle rages around us, trusting that what he says is true, knowing that he keeps his promises, and remembering that he works all things to the good (Psalm 28:7).

His helmet of salvation is the most crucial piece of our spiritual armor. It liberates us from sin. It protects us from thoughts of guilt in life and fear of death. And it allows the Holy Spirit to enter our mind and protect us from our weaknesses. Without it, the rest of our spiritual armor is useless and there is no victory (Col 3:2-4).

His sword of the Spirit, the word of God, is our one offensive weapon. With it, we can pierce the armor of any spiritual enemy we face and put it to death before it harms us. Lies, guilt, shame, pride, slander, lust and other enemies that are part of our flesh nature can all be slain with the word of God wielded by the Holy Spirit dwelling in our mind and our heart (Col 3:5).

When we put on the armor of God, we can be strong in the Lord and his mighty power and take a stand against the sin and darkness that creep into our life (Eph 6:10-11). But to do this, we must immerse ourselves in God's word, declare it fearlessly to ourselves and others, and pray without ceasing (Eph 6:18-20).

And when the enemy comes, we will stand firm in our faith and hold our ground, knowing that we are not alone in the fight and will see victory when we fight in His power.

Key Verse: Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 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 (Ephesians 6:10-12 NIV).

Key Message: And when the enemy comes, we will stand firm in our faith and hold our ground, knowing that we are not alone in the fight and will see victory when we fight in His power.

Message in Music: Warrior, by Steven Curtis Chapman

https://youtu.be/GYEgOh_b-Co

Question for Understanding:

We all need something to stand on and believe in. The truth found in the

gospel is foundational to living and loving like Jesus. What truths of the gospel are foundational to you and how do they help you fight the forces of darkness and the spirits of evil that invade your life?

Thought Provoking Question:

Our faith in Jesus allows us to tap into his power and do the right thing - what he would do - in the toughest moments of our life. Describe a time in your life when Jesus called you to do that.

Questions for Sharing:

What pieces of armor are you strong in? How do you think God may want you to use those strengths?

What armor are you weak in? What steps do you sense God would have you take with Him to grow in areas where you are weak?