

Ephesians #01: Ephesians 6:10-13

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Ephesians

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Dear congregation, the things we value most in life, whether it be close personal relationship with the Lord, intimate interpersonal relationships with family and friends, enjoyment and commitment through our work, through our careers, none of these things are easily obtained, much less retained, but the greatest joys of life both spiritual and natural come through ways of strife, ways of pain to grow.

In 1984, Dr. Paul Brand and Philip Yancey coauthored a well-known volume called "In His Image," in which they have conveyed this one great theme that the natural life, even a natural physical body experiences, as does the spiritual truth of God, that pain is a blessing in disguise. Pain is a necessary ingredient to true growth. As Brand and Yancey have so evidently shown with the natural body, so God's word shows with the spiritual body that pain must often be allowed to run its course for proper growth to occur.

This is true not only of the natural body but also of the entire realm of nature. Not so long ago, I have read of a man who found a cocoon of the emperor moth and took it home to watch it emerge. One day a small opening appeared and he observed the moth struggling for several hours to force its body past a certain point. Finally this well-intentioned man concluded there was something wrong with this moth, so he took a pair of scissors, he snipped the remaining bit of cocoon. The moth, of course, emerged very easily, its body large and swollen, its wings small and shriveled, and he expected in a few hours that the wings of this moth would spread out in natural beauty. But they didn't. Instead of a natural creature developing ability to fly, the moth spent its life dragging around a swollen body and shriveled wings, and only later did this man understand that the constricting cocoon and the struggle was necessary for the moth to pass through, for that tiny opening was God's way of forcing fluid from the body into the wings thereby developing the wings with strength to fly, and so the so-called merciful snip of scissors was in reality most cruel.

So it is, my friends, in spiritual life. Oh, how tempted we are sometimes when we see a sinner struggling to snip the end of that spiritual cocoon to let him go free. How tempted we are sometimes to hasten the work of the Lord. But we may not do so in the life of another, much less in the lives of ourselves for the true Christian life is an ongoing struggle and it is through the struggle and through the pain that the believe receives wings

to fly and soar into the heavenly heights as they are in Christ Jesus. As we heard this morning, the uplifted head is a fruit of knowing the pain and persecutions and sorrows and through those to receive wings and an uplifted head to look unto Jesus.

One of our forefathers once wrote the Christian way is not the middle way between extremes but the narrow way between precipices. A narrow way, struggle. A narrow way of pain. A narrow way of self-crucifixion. A narrow way of the [unintelligible] of the flesh. But through this way, God girds his Christian soldiers with armor and gives them hands to war, fingers to fight, and prepares them for that day, a great day of days when Jesus shall come on the clouds and when he shall say to them, "My friend, come up higher," but he shall also say as they enter, "These are they which have come out of great tribulation. Emerge with strong wings into the realm of glory."

Oh, my friends, we have seen the Beatitudes together, we have seen whom Jesus pronounces blessed and now we wish to see that those whom he pronounces blessed continue to live and be a blessing, continue to be salt in the earth and a light on the hill through a way of struggle, pain, and tribulation. And also we hope to see how the Lord continues that process of growth through these ways, and how that their pain shall come to gains and their tribulations to joy, and their sorrow to everlasting redemption, so we will not stop merely with the struggle but we will see that God outfits his child with Christian armor, and makes of them soldiers who struggle in the warfare and learn to fight the holy fight of faith. Yes, we wish to consider with you in a series of messages the struggle, the warfare, the armor of the true Christian soldier, and we hope to do that from the passage we have read, Ephesians 6, and in this introductory sermon we wish to consider verses 10 through 13, and in future messages, the Lord willing, we hope to consider piece by piece the outfitting of the true Christian soldier.

For now verses 10 through 13.

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

With God's help we wish to consider with you the fully armed Christian soldier, in the first place, his battle to be fought; second, his formula for victory; and third, his motive for fighting or wrestling. The fully armed Christian soldier: his battle to be fought; his formula for victory; his motive for fighting.

When sovereign grace and faith is an exercise, dear congregation, a true believer is a paradox. He is a mystery to himself especially. He is a living paradoxical reflection of the cross. When faith is an exercise, he or she is a person who believes the unbelievable, forgives the unforgivable, loves the unlovable, surrenders the unsunderable, and finds

love in giving it away. This is only possible for the believer because he has experienced something of Jesus' blessed Beatitudes, has received the blessings and the grace of God and, in turn, may be a blessing to others in this paradoxical way of salvation. So the true believer is one who learns paradoxically that the way through poverty of spirit is the way to the kingdom of God, the way through mourning the way to comfort, the way through meekness is to inheritance, the way through a cross to crown, the way through death to birth, the way through giving to reception, the way through becoming nothing to obtaining all, the way through hellishness to heavenliness. But all of this, all these paradoxes entail struggle. All these things demand the surrender of self-identity. They demand the living end of the Heidelberg Confession, "I am no longer my own," in order to obtain divine identity but belong to the faithful Savior Jesus Christ. And the exchange of their identity, my friend, involves a life-long struggle in which the old man must be constantly pushed down and the old resurrections of self-identity be abolished so that the believer experiences the way to divine identity is a road of wrestling, agonizing and warring, and it all because of his own stubborn, depraved and naturally prone to sin heart.

Therefore it is no wonder that Paul gives admonitions to the Ephesians about how to fight, to fight against not only the enemy without but also the enemy within, that greatest of all enemies, the old sinful heart. And so the apostles paints a picture for us in Ephesians 6 and tells us, as it were, a new series of Beatitudes of apostolic instruction where he says, "Blessed are they who have learned to fight the good fight of faith with the armor of God." And in his introduction to this passage, he tells us, my friends, that there is, indeed, a great battle to be fought, for this is the internal enemy, the believer himself, but there is also, he tells us, a great enemy outside of us that must not be underestimated, the great archenemy who we meet in the third chapter of Genesis and we read of him in Revelation 20, and thus as he covers the whole era of Scripture, so he covers in his subtle influences the whole time of the believer's sojourn on earth, the great enemy Satan. "We wrestle," he says, "against not flesh and blood only but principalities and powers, the rules of the darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places." We wrestle against Satan, a liar, a deceiver, the enticer, the murderer from the beginning.

Oh, my dear friends, if God has ever been real for us in our lives, Satan has been real for us too and we shall desire to hear instruction on how to be outfitted to fight the good fight of faith against this enemy, and we shall want to be outfitted if we know the powers of the devil and the weaknesses of our heart, we shall want to be outfitted from head to toe. Three weeks ago, I was in another congregation and the mother of that house told me, "I have outfitted my children with shirts and pants and dresses for school, and I have everything but shoes. I thought I could go and pick them up in a moment, but I spent all afternoon shopping for shoes because I want my children ready for school from head to toe," she said, and so the believer, my friend. To fight in the school of faith, wants to be outfitted not just with a new outfit of clothing but he wants to be outfitted with durable armor from head to toe. He needs his feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. He needs the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the sword of the Spirit because he realizes he's doing serious battle with the very archenemy of God, with the very mighty power of Satan. Oh, yes, Satan becomes real.

Two years ago in the New York Times, there were 68 Anglican Bishops from England who sent an article and paid for an advertisement to place in the Times that they no longer believe in a personal devil and, oh my friends, I thought at that time, these poor bishops because if we know the fight of faith, we shall know that there is a devil, and we shall know that the devil knows us too and knows our weaknesses, and we shall want to be able to say, "I know a formula for victory. I know a mode of fighting, but I also surely know there is a battle to be fought."

And now Paul tells us in our text three points about this battle. In the first place, he tells us this battle is very fierce. This battle involves the forces of light and darkness. This battle involves the issues of life and death. This battle can tolerate no compromise. This battle Paul paints for us is a picture of close wrestling. In the original language, the word he uses implies coming hand-to-hand with Satan, coming to hand-grips, as it were, more than ordinary fighting. It is a wrestling with the archenemy where the opponent seizes you and you seize him. So Paul tells us there is a fierce battle going on. As Bunyan paints for us in the Valley of Humiliation where Satan and Christian are warring face-to-face, are wrestling in the valley. Satan may come to wrestle as the prince of darkness or as the angel of light, but in either case when he wrestles with the living church there is a fierce battle.

In the second place, there is a spiritual battle. Paul is using here to the Ephesians the image of wrestling and warring so common to the Grecian world of his day, but he means to paint here not a natural gymnasium but a spiritual warfare not with tanks or atomic weaponry as we would say in our day, but with the holy instruments of spiritual wrestling. We wrestle not against flesh and blood but principalities and powers and spiritual darkness in high places. He's aiming, you see, at spiritual realities and therefore he talks about being girt with truth and girt with righteousness and with the glory of the living God. He is talking about battle for the cause and the kingdom of Christ, battle for objective reality in the Christian faith and for subjective experience in the Christian faith. He is talking about the battle of eternal verities of the doctrines of God's word, the battle for the Christ and the Christian, the battle for the truth and the experience of it, the battle for both visible and invisible spiritual truth.

Thirdly, he is talking to us here in Ephesians 6 about a necessary battle. Fierce one, spiritual one, a necessary one. He says you must be clothed because you must be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all, he says, you need this warfare, you can't live without this armor, only when you are so clothed, so outfitted shall you be able to stand because the day is evil. Paul is referring, I believe, on a twofold level to this evil day here when he speaks of this necessary battle. He is referring, first, to the entire New Testament dispensation. We live, he says, in an evil day. Why? Perhaps you will say, "I thought Christ had Satan bound with chains in the New Testament dispensation until the end of the world because the Gospel has fully come." Well, in a certain sense it is true, but in another sense Satan is frustrated because the Christ child was snatched from him and now he concentrates his attack more furiously than ever upon the woman of Revelation 12, the church, that is, of the glorified Christ. And thus the whole New

Testament dispensation to the end of the world is that ever-present evil day when Satan is out to do his best to destroy the church of God.

Thus the living church is called to an essential battle but secondly, this necessary battle is also as it is corporately of the whole church, it is also true individually of the individual believer, sure day of our lives and be called the evil day. That's what Jacob called it, did he not, when he said, "Few and evil have been the days of my life." Oh, he knew the struggle with the internal and the external enemy and he called his life, as it were, an evil day. And oh, my friends, when we only see upon ourselves and what can we say of ourselves but 40 years long God was grieved with this generation inside. What can we say then but that our lives are only as a near evil day and therefore we must do necessary battle in this evil day, in this day, this lifetime of affliction in which the believer says we that are in this tabernacle groan, being burdened. In this evil day of temptation of which Christ says, "Blessed is a man that endureth temptation," and against it must needs be that we are in heaviness through manifold temptations. In this evil day of persecution of which Scripture says, "Yeah and all that live godly will suffer persecution." In this day, this evil day of death and of dying, the Scripture says we must needs die. The earthly house of our tabernacles must be dismantled. And now with all these things in affliction, temptation, persecution, death, in sin and guilt, we need the armor of God to fight the good fight of faith.

There is a battle, a spiritual battle, a fierce battle, a necessary battle which must be fought, and now Paul's purpose in painting in our text for us the fierceness, the necessity, the spirituality of this battle is not to discourage us beyond measure, but it is to give us a sober picture of the reality of Christian warfare. Paul will be realistic with us. He will tell us that life is no joyride. He will show us the seriousness, the brevity, but also the warring nature of this brief evil day of our lives, but he does all this so that he may realistically also lift up our drooping spirits and our discouraged hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ who has a heavenly storehouse of armor with which he may outfit true soldiers to do great battle in the army of the King Jesus Christ.

So you see, Paul sets up this battle, he tells us there is a battle to be fought in order to make us acquainted experientially with this battle, but also to present to us a formula for victory. He wants the believer and he wants to encourage the believer and he wants to be used as a spur in God's hand to encourage the believer toward victory and not defeat. And Paul has good reason for his optimism. Indeed, there are three reasons, at least, that the living church shall not fall prey to the wiles of the devil. Three reasons why the church's victory ultimately is secure though she may lose many skirmishes along the way.

The first is that she is secure in the dear person of God's only begotten Son. "No man shall pluck them out of my hands." Paul has good reason for his optimism because the love of God from eternity, the sovereign pleasure of the Triune God has formulated through the work of his Son, is a ground of stability and a ground of assurance for ultimate victory.

But secondly, the church shall gain ultimate victory because Christ has spoiled Satan of his dominion over the elect. That's what Paul wrote to the Colossians and to the Hebrews, that Christ has spoiled principalities and powers and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it, that is, in his cross. In Hebrews 2:14, he hath destroyed through his death him that had the power of death. Christ in his death on Calvary, destroyed the malice, the power of Satan who had without Christ the power of death.

So Paul has a ground, a second ground of optimism, but his third ground is this: God himself shall give the elect practical advice, personal strength and necessary armor to gain the victory through Christ also in the way of sanctification, and it is that Paul aims to do. In this series of messages, in this outfitting of the Christian soldier, he aims to show the believer that not only is his salvation sure but God also has given provisions. Paul is an instrument in God's hands to do that, to provide practical advice, personal strength and necessary armor to gain the victory also in the way of sanctification.

Now Paul gives us in our text three little introductory secrets as a formula for this practical daily victory. Sprinkled throughout our text, he gives us three clues that will be enlarged in the messages of individual armor to come. His first clue is be strong in the Lord. It is in the Lord alone that you shall gain the victory. And so Paul as he paints a realistic picture about the great spiritual powers in high places of Satan and all his host, much stronger than the mere strength of any given man, be still in the midst of that sober picture like a beloved General inspires his troops with a word of encouragement, he says, "Be strong in the Lord." Paul just like a General who may have an underdog army, who may be greatly outnumbered by the enemy, may pass along the message to his troops, "Be strong and fight to the hilt." When they are nervous and afraid and they see how outnumbered they are, so the more does this great General now has Paul say to his badly outnumbered children, his badly outnumbered soldiers, "Be encouraged, be strong in the Lord."

That means, my friends, if we only seek strength in ourselves, we will automatically fail every time. The formula for victory is the opposite side of the coin of the formula for certain defeat, and the formula for certain defeat is, "Be strong in thy own ways and lean upon thy own understanding and you shall certainly fall." But Paul says the secret of the true Christian's formula for victory is don't rely on your own strength. Be strong in the Lord. As the poet Isaac Watts put it very well, "From thee the overflowing spring, our souls shall drink a fresh supply, while such as trust their native strength, shall melt away and droop and die."

Oh, my friends, the first great secret for victory is to realize our own weakness, to realize our own inability and our own depravity, and our brokenness in the face of God to do battle with our self-piety, self-prayers, self-righteousness. We will fail. But also we have to move beyond that realization and we have to learn in our lives that tremendous secret that the Lord through our brokenness, through our weakness, through our infirmities will cause his strength to be glorified.

You know, there are two kinds of Christendom today. One kind is the kind that says, "We will do valiantly in our own strength." That's the kind that sets up mass evangelism crusades in the strength of the person himself and counts the number of people that, "We have converted. We will do it." The other kind is the kind of Christianity that claims the name of the Lord and claims to look only to the Lord but doesn't know personal brokenness and weakness and infirmities and everything is only Jesus, Jesus Christ will do it but the true kind of Christianity is the kind that looks through the windowpanes of my weakness, through the tunnel of my darkness, through the brokenness of my sin and it sees that God uses the brokenness, the impoverishment, the poverty of the sanctification of his child from his own perspective, that God works through all these things and confirms through the thorns in the flesh to his people as he did with Paul, "In weakness is thy strength." True Christianity knows both the believer's weakness and the Lord's strength. True Christianity is not only I must decrease and it is not only God must increase but it is both, I must decrease and God must increase. True Christianity is in my decreasing God increases. Be strong in the Lord. And oh, my friends, that's a paradoxical secret in itself, but the believer knows the times and places when he is the very weakest and he is the most broken before God, those are just the times when he feels the strongest in the Lord. When he says, "I have no strength," when he feels the brokenness of sin and its consequences, when he feels a broken heart and contrite spirit, just those times when he says, "Lord, in my flesh dwells no good thing," in those times it's strong in the Lord.

So these two things are not at odds at all. Be strong in the Lord, and we wrestle against principalities and powers, but these two merge in the believer's life. He who knows God knows Satan. He who knows sin knows righteousness. He who knows his brokenness knows the unbroken white robe of Christ's righteousness. The believer's knowledge of God and the knowledge of himself, says Calvin, go forward together and that's the first great secret of the formula for victory, "Be strong in the Lord." My friends, do you know that strength? Do you know the secret of the apostle who could say, "Therefore I take pleasure," imagine that pleasure, "in imprisonment, pleasure in persecution, pleasure in necessity, pleasure in distresses for when I am weak, then am I strong." Oh, the strength for victory lies in the realization of the brokenness of all that there is of self.

Paul's second hinge is believers must put on the armor of God. It is one thing to receive power from God in our brokenness, but with that power the believer must stand in the Lord and the way to stand in the Lord, Paul says, is to put on the armor of God. Now this order is very important. First, to stand in his strength and his strength to put on his armor. In other words, God must apply that armor, he must outfit his child and what he applies, as Reverend Keirsen(ph) said so often and so rightly, a child of God may appropriate. That's the second great secret. When the Lord applies that strength, oh my friends, then the child of God cannot help but be armored with the armor of God.

And what is that armor in a general sense? We will see it piece by piece later in future messages but in a general sense it is the spiritual understanding and the spiritual application of the great truth of the Gospel bound home on the heart of the sinner and fleshed out into his daily living whereby he may walk fighting the good fight of faith. And so the formula for victory is to put on the weapons of truth, of righteousness, peace,

faith, eternal salvation, the sword of the Spirit, the blessings of God, the gifts of God, the fruits of God. Put on the whole armor of God. Be clothed with it. Wrestle, to wrestle with that blessing. Wrestle to be clothed with the wrestling strength of God.

Thirdly, Paul says the great formula for victory is put on the whole armor of God. He repeats it twice but this time the action is on the word "whole." You need every piece, every part of you is vulnerable. Dear child of God, what part can you dispense with? The girdle of truth? The breastplate of righteousness? The helmet of salvation? The shoes shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace? The sword of faith? Or the word of God and the shield of faith? What part can you miss? Oh, whatever part is missing, that's the part Satan will be sure to capitalize on. And so Paul says the secret to victory is that you seek not just the armor of God but the whole armor of God; that you pray and you strive and you wrestle for grace that you may be outfitted from head to toe with the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ because that's the only reason, my friend, that the Christian's armor is whole and complete, because Christ's sufferings are whole and complete, and the substance of his Gospel is whole and complete, and his white robe righteousness is whole and complete.

So when the believer may put on the whole armor of God which, of course, is only by grace, he is, in effect, really putting on the Lord Jesus Christ and that's what Paul said to the Romans, is it not, exactly that, put on the Lord Jesus. And so we shall see in coming weeks that every one of these pieces of armor have their centrality in the Lord Jesus Christ. From head to toe he is the strength of the believer. The formula for victory is the whole armor of God which centers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And finally Paul concludes in our text with a motive for doing such wrestling, but that's our third thought and we will sing first. 392 stanzas 1 and 5, "Blest be the Lord my rock, my might, my constant helper in the fight, my shield, my righteousness." Stanzas 1 and 5 of 392.

"Blest be the Lord, my rock, my might
My constant helper in the fight,
My shield, my righteousness,
My strong high tower, my Savior true,
Who doth my enemies subdue,
My shelter in distress.

Now will I sing a glad new song,
Thy praise, O God, I will prolong,
For Thou hast heard my prayer;
Salvation Thou dost give to kings,
Thy own dost keep, with sheltering wings,
From hurtful sword and snare."

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." So here's Paul's conclusion to this

introduction, "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to," what? Here's his motive, "that ye may be able," this is the reason why, "that ye may be able," and then he gives two reasons, two motives, "to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." So the first motive is to withstand, and the second motive is to stand.

Now what does he mean? Well, he means the first motive is, you need to be girt about. To withstand, to be defensive for the truth. You need, like good soldiers, to be in the trenches defending the battle lines. You need all this armor to defend. To defend the truth of God in general, yes, but especially defend the enemies in your own heart and the enemies from without. To defend the waves of enemies that come in like the ocean's roar. You need to be entrenched and to be clothed with the whole armor of God to defensively uphold the truth of God. You need to be entrenched on the foundation of Christ crucified. You need to be dug in, as soldiers would say, into the trenches of his everlasting canal of blood to withstand all the enemies that shall come in this evil day, in this weary night of your lives under persecution and affliction, under the guilt of sin and the temptations of the waves of sorrow. Only through Christ, only through the armor of God shall you withstand the floods of temptation, the showers of fiery darts. Only in the armor of God shall it be confirmed no weapon formed against you shall prosper.

You need, Paul says, the whole armor of God to withstand, to defensively wage war against all these powers of the devil and of high places but, secondly, you need this whole armor God also to stand. To stand. Paul says that in verse 11b and again in verse 13b, "that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil," 11b, and then again in verse 13b, "having done all, to stand." That's twice he mentions "to stand," once "to withstand." And by "stand," he means that not only must we be in the trenches to defend the ground gained, but we also, if we are good soldiers, must arise from the trenches and must go forward offensively, to stand and wage war against the enemy. The Christian life, in other words, when rightly lived, Paul would say is not merely a defensive life, a negativistic life that wages war only against sin and guilt, but it is also a positive victorious life that goes on from strength to strength. But in the believer himself show in himself it's from brokenness to brokenness but through that brokenness, you recall, from strength to strength in Christ.

There is an offensive gaining of ground when the believer wages war in the strength of Christ and Paul says twice, "You must gird yourself to stand." Not only to be mere defensive believers but to be offensive soldiers, to go out and meet the enemy and gain the ground that needs to be gained. And my dear friends, that is possible only through God's armor, not through your armor. God has his soldiers whom in the midst of the fiery darts of affliction are able to get up out of the trenches and to go forward in strength.

I once talked to a Vietnam veteran in one of our congregations and he was on the front lines, if there were a front line, of the enemy in Vietnam. He was often in his foxhole, he saw half of his platoon killed, and he said there were only two or three soldiers in all his platoon who fought offensively and he told me, whether it be true or not, he told me the major reason America did not win the war there was because most of the soldiers were in

their foxholes and they were so afraid of the artillery coming that to save their own lives, they simply lifted up their rifles above the hole and they shot aimlessly just to make noise. But they didn't aim at a target because they were afraid if they lifted their head above the foxhole, understandably that the enemies' rifle shots or the grenades would take off their heads, they would kill them by shooting at their heads.

He told me that it was as if all the time he was over there that the Lord had his shield round about him, and a whole year of fighting, he lifted up his head, sometimes he ran forward where he heard bullets round about him because he saw the enemy in the distance, and he ran forward trusting that the Lord would protect him. With tears in his eyes, that young man told me the Lord was his shield round about him. And oh, my friend, that's the picture of the Christian believer. Paul says the Christian believer is not one just to fight defensively, not one to keep his head below the earth's soil to spare his life and to shoot aimlessly at the enemy just to be defensive, but he is one also who must lift up his head, as we heard this morning, to see the strength and the power of Christ and in the midst of Satan's bullets, he must go forward, he must be picked up out of the trenches by the strength of the Lord God and in the midst of bullets he goes forward to shoot at the enemy, waging war against principalities and powers and spiritual darkness in high places. But the Lord is a shield round about him. Through the armor of God, the bullets shall not pierce him and though he shall be hit and shall be struck, and even perhaps at times wounded or grazed, the armor of God shall enable him to stand, to go forward in the strength of the Lord God. As David says, "I will go forward in the strength of the Lord God. I will make mention of thy righteousness even of thine only."

That's the true Christian life, you see. It's one of essential victory. It is one not only of defense but of offense and Paul will tell us from piece of armor to piece of armor exactly how each piece enables the believer to wage both defensive and offensive warfare and that all, we can't emphasize that enough, that all only only because of Christ. Take away Christ and the believer's left naked and the enemy will shoot him down. Only through Christ and to the armor of his provision he shall withstand and he shall stand, and both of these things, the offensive and the defensive shall serve that greatest of all motives, the honor and glory of the great General of the army, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, my dear friends, all of these things, the battle to be fought, the formula for victory, the motive for fighting, they leave us with some practical conclusions and I would just give you four of these in closing this afternoon. The first is remember your present state. Dear believer, remember this is the evil day. Be prepared for trouble, for enemies, for affliction, for persecution, for satanic devices. Expect evil in the evil day.

Secondly, examine your armor. Examine whether by grace it is divine armor. Seek grace to throw away all other armor that won't hold, that won't endure in the day of battle. In English we have an expression "you get what you pay for." How many times have you gone out to a store and bought something very cheap and you thought you got a very good deal, and you came home and you used it twice and the thing broke? It didn't hold. It didn't stand in its task. It wasn't built right. It wasn't constructed well. Well, my friends, whatever is not built and bottomed, as the Puritan Thomas Shepherd would say, whatever

is not bottomed on the blood of Christ won't stand. It won't stand. And everything you purchase with your sweat and with your piety and with your righteousness is too cheap to stand before the holy eyes of God who can see through your artificial shininess into the emptiness of your broken heart. So only what is rooted in the blood of Christ stands. Is your armor, my friends, built and based on the blood of Christ?

One of the Puritans once said you must not only have a wedding garment on, what you must ask yourself is it well-kept and preserved. Oh, we need armor but we also need that armor to be well-kept, to be preserved. And to be well-kept and to be preserved, armor must be worn, it must be used. That's the mystery of good armor. Other things work well or last longer if we put them away, but good armor on a soldier learns to fit his body the more it is used. And as John Calvin once said, the trouble, the greatest trouble of the Christian is that he hangs his armor in the closet too much.

Oh, that's our trouble, is it not, children of God? As soon as we come home from the Lord blessing us, figuratively speaking, we take off the clothes of our armor and we think next time we can go out and meet the enemy again in our own strength. Oh, what fools we are. The armor is there and we may even taste something of it, we may know the joy of it, we may know the power of it but we are so prone to go back to our own mere flimsy, ragged righteousness. And so Calvin added how tragic that we hang our armor on a hook. Is it your sorrow, dear believer, that your armor is often more on the hook than on your body? Do you grieve, does it grieve you that you do so little holy warfare?

Examine your armor. What is your armor, what condition is your armor in and is your armor being worn? And thirdly, seek grace in the exercise of all that you do, also when you use the very armor of God. Depend not upon the armor but wear the armor and look to God. Lean hard to God and not on his benefits. We have to learn so often in our lives that we begin to rely on the graces of God or on the experiences God has given and it all has to go overboard. The graces are precious, the experiences are unforgettable, but God will get all glory to himself. It is only at the eye of faith wearing the armor to fight, looks away from the armor to the God of almighty grace and is seeking his grace that the conscious grace of the believer is found to walk in the strength of God. We can have the best armor in the world but we need the grace to walk with our legs in wearing that armor. Seek grace to look to God as you wear his armor and remember as you wear his armor and as you look to him, that Satan cannot get the victory. Oh, remember that before Satan can destroy the true believer, he must destroy the true believer's Christ. And my dear friend, Christ shall never be destroyed because he is exalted in the heavens, he is above the nibblings of Satan. The church is secure and safe in the hands of an ascended Jesus.

Oh, therefore seek more and more grace to leave and to give and to surrender your weak defenseless self into the hands of the strong conquering King of kings. And finally, as you seek to walk in your armor looking to the Lord, that the glory of the coming day, dear believer, animates you forward. As we heard this morning, oh, seek the grace of the uplifted head that you may realize there is a day coming when you may lay all the armor aside. There is a day coming when you may walk free in the presence of the Lord God

Triune where there will be no more battles to be fought, no more formulas for victory needed to gain peace and security, no more motives for fighting, but where all shall be peace, all shall be serene calm in the courts and in the presence of the most high God where you may lean on the Master's bosom and you may say the very same person who has offered himself on the cross for me shall so come again and cast me and all my enemies, cast all my enemies away and translate me into heavenly joys and glory. There is, in other words, only a temporary wearing of the armor. That's another reason why you can't end in the armor because the armor will one day end. The armor will one day be good for nothing. Peace shall follow trouble, crowns shall follow wrestling. Here, said one of the godly Puritans, we have our bitters but the sweets are yet to come.

Oh, that the glory of the coming day spur you forward with courage as you withstand and as you stand. May you then say with the poet, console your own soul with the poet,

"Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
Stand in his strength alone.
The arm of flesh will fail you,
Be dare not trust your own.

Put on the Gospel armor,
Each piece put on with prayer.
Where duty calls or danger,
Be never wanting there."

Are you too a soldier in the army of King Jesus? Be strong in the Lord. And if you are not a soldier, oh my friend, how shall you withstand and how shall you stand? Your evil day shall then be forever. Are you a wrestler? Do you fight the good fight of faith? To whose family do you belong? Amen.