

Ephesians Series

18. Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power

We now come to towards the climax of this great epistle. We started by considering who we are in Christ: chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son, sealed by the Spirit. We then saw how we should live in a manner worthy of our calling and to be imitators of God. We are the children of God - let's act like that!

We end with the final encouragement: Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power.

We are at war. The human race has always been in the middle of a battle zone; which I guess isn't surprising as we see the consequences of sin in people's lives being death. The enemy has tried to drag men and women away from the one true God and consign them to a lost eternity.

When we accepted Christ we ceased to be civilians, lost without Christ and have entered into the battle. It's a battle that commenced early in the history of creation and will end when Christ returns victorious.

Actually the battle is already won on Calvary, but the enemy still needs to be subdued and his territory occupied because he has not surrendered. You may win the battle, but some enemies do not lie down but show resistance and guerilla tactics.

Who are we dealing with?

Three Enemies: -

The World: *a system of thinking and values that oppose God's truth.*

The Sinful Nature: *that nature within us that opposes God's Will.*

The Devil: *a spirit being who opposes God's Rule. The latter is a strong opponent as he actively works to undermine our faith.*

When you become a Christian you automatically made these three enemies although they were always your enemies because you were lost. But in becoming a Christian You allied yourself with the One True God who will one day destroy your enemies and their power.

We are in a battle. And the enemy is out to get us. He can't snatch us from God's hand (John 10:27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one,); but he can kick you into touch. The problem is that the church in Britain today is a Church, although not quite in defeat but in retreat - we are a people who are snatching defeat out of the jaws of victory. And that happens to us all too often as individuals.

Satan Described (Satan = Adversary, Devil = Slanderer) uses guerilla tectics

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 1 Peter 5 : 8

And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light

2 Corinthians 11 : 4

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father' s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. John 8 : 44

Satan's origins - look at worksheet in the Spiritual Living Series.

Whether we like it or not we are opposed. Some Christians find that immensely worrying. Satan seems to deal with this in two ways - by suggesting that he is a dangerous adversary - or that he isn't an adversary at all. For an adversary that doesn't exist, Paul seems to be making quite a lot of him here!

But should we worry about an adversary who is out to get us and to keep us from walking the Christian walk and doing all the things we have been encouraged to all over the past weeks?

NO - because we are protected from our enemies - all three of them. And that's what this passage is about.

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armour 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.

Here we have what we've just been talking about - our struggle is against principalities & powers etc. We are called to be strong in the Lord. But most of all we are called to stand because the winner is the battle is the one who continues to stand when the battle is done.

I've made out so far that somehow we must defend ourselves in this battle. We're called to be OFFENSIVE not DEFENSIVE. We do battle and we stand. After all what is the battle? It's not a battle to defend our lives, but to extend the kingdom of God. We are here as God's army to rescue the human race and in doing so to extend God's kingdom.

*But how can I stand against forces I scarcely know anything about or even recognise? Let alone win battles!! If you have the right equipment and superior force, you can beat any enemy. We have that equipment and that overwhelming force. **Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power.***

Armour protects us. Put on the whole armour of God. It covers your body and allows you to be protected from an attacker who attacks you from the front - or who sneaks up on you from behind.

When dealing with an adversary you need to be prepared. When soldiers go into battle, they go equipped. Modern soldiers have Armoured Personnel Carriers, flak jackets, helmets, night sights, eye protectors, army boots and of course a gun.

Most of what a soldier takes into a battle is there to keep him alive - the rest is in order that he can kill the enemy. He is equipped with that which is both defensive and offensive. It was the same for soldiers in Paul's day..

The soldier had armour to defend himself with and a sword to attack and he was always accompanied by others whom he worked in concert with.

I don't have time this morning to look into the armour in detail - we're going to do that next time. But I want to give you this challenge this morning.

Do you realise that you are in a battle? Whether you like it or not, you're in the middle of a war. There are no non-combatants or pacifists in God's kingdom. We are called to kit up and stand. In fact the call comes twice in the passage you read before.

11 Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil' s schemes

13 Put on the full armour 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 encouraged to kit up and stand - what is the alternative - we are wiped out by the enemy!

A few years ago police made a raid on a house in Tottenham and sadly a policewoman was killed in the struggle. She was stabbed through the heart. These days most London police wear body armour, but unfortunately this woman was not wearing it because it was too uncomfortable. Are we wearing our armour? Not wearing it makes us vulnerable to attack, but the enemy can't get us if we are kitted up.

Don't want the battle? You have it and you're in it. What is the alternative to standing - we are wiped out by the enemy! A bit too much to believe you think? Look at the Church in Britain. Lincolnshire. Look in Norfolk. In retreat, in defeat, closed church buildings, irrelevant witness. The armour dropped, the Christians fled and the enemy took the ground.

Perhaps an alternative version of Onward Christian Soldiers is more suitable for the British church today:

*Backward Christian soldiers
Fleeing from the fight
With the cross of Jesus,
Nearly out of sight
Christ our rightful Master
Stands against the foe
But forward into battle
We are loathe to go.*

*Like a mighty tortoise
Moves the Church of God
Brothers we are treading
Where we've often trod.
We are much divided
Many bodies we
Having different doctrines,
And not much charity*

*Crowns and thrones may perish,
Kingdoms rise and wane,
But the church of Jesus
Hidden will remain;
Gates of hell can never
'Gainst that church prevail;
We have Christ's own promise,
But think that it will fail:*

*Onward, then, ye people!
Join our lazy throng;
Blend with ours your voices
In a feeble song
Glory, laud, and honour
Sing to Christ the King!
But with our modern thinking
We won't do a thing:*

We are called to stand, not to run.

How are we as a Church? I have been here 6 months almost exactly. We have looked in Ephesians at the foundations of our faith. We started realising who we are. Now we know that we are the children of the living God, we are called to stand as His people in Swaffham. The Church in Swaffham has been in retreat for decades. Ministry here is difficult. Christians who should be standing together don't.

I believe that the Lord is telling us after 6 months of this ministry that we lie at a crossroads. We must affirm ourselves as God's people. We must make our stand because victory is His in Swaffham, but that we must stand. There is no alternative to standing.

In talking with other church leaders of like mind in this area, we all have the same expectancy that God is going to do a new thing in this area. But we must be prepared to walk in victory - to stand. To be strong in the Lord and His mighty power.

I believe most of you have already decided to make that stand. I know because some are doing Sharing Jesus. Some of you have made your stand in other ways. In our prayer meeting nearly two weeks ago we studied Elijah on Carmel. His challenge to the people at that time was "Why waver between two opinions, if Baal is god follow him, if the Lord is God follow Him.

The same is the challenge here. We have a choice, stand or capitulate. If we want to see God's Spirit poured out in Swaffham, to see people come to Christ, to see His kingdom extended - then we must be people who are committed to stand.

How are you this morning? Standing? In retreat? In defeat? A non-combatant? Getting involved in civilian affairs?

We can stand because we are part of a mighty army with a powerful leader. We have the victory.

Let's live in it. Let's go forward and serve the Lord in it.

Prayer of affirmation

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armour 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 armour 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 saints. 19 Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. 21 Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. 22 I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you. 23 Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.

Ephesians Series

Put on the Whole Armour of God

This morning we are going to look at our defences. Defences protect us both against a frontal assault and if our enemy creeps up on us. That's the whole reason for all our armour. If we've got lots of it and it's in good order, then our enemy can't get us because he does not have the ability to.

If you are worried about Satan this morning and are worried that he will somehow creep up on you, then remember this. God has given us armour. How is it described?

*11 Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes
13 put on the full armour 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*

The armour, if it has been put on fully protects us entirely from Satan, it enables us to stand as Christians.

This is important - if we are tooled up properly, Satan won't get us from behind and he won't get us from a frontal assault as we can see him and cut him down - yes, you heard right; cut him down - at the end of the battle we will still be standing.

So why do so many Christians live in defeat? Because they were not wearing their armour and they were not using their weapon. And worse, we don't know even what the battle is for.

This is a message for today. The Lord is going to bring renewal and revival I believe and we have to be prepared. And that is where our text verse comes in

Evening Service

67 Breathe on me breath of God

295 I serve a risen Saviour (Please could you check the key on this one as I think it's a bit high as written in the book)

316 I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live

378 Jesus shall take the highest honour

760 When we walk with the Lord

The Jerusalem Road

1. Who's the greatest?

Matt 20:17 Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, 18 "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death 19 and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!"

20 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favour of him. 21 "What is it you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom." 22 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered. 23 Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."

24 When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. 25 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Big Idea: Being the greatest

Intro to the series. People will do what they want, think what they want. They'll do anything except see things as God sees them.

Road movies - events that occurred during a journey.

Journeys are often significant because they are eventful and help us understand a bit more about life. This series is on Jesus' last journey. It was probably from Galilee along the usual route Galilean Jews took to Jerusalem - across the Jordan to avoid Samaria and then through Jericho and up the hills to Jerusalem.

A significant journey because despite the clear statement at the beginning of tonight's passage, it's pretty clear that the disciples didn't have a clue of what was going on. Missing the point is the preacher's greatest area of worry. It

sometimes doesn't matter what you say, people have their own agenda. They hear what they want to hear - to the point where they will suggest back to you that you said the opposite of what you did, or worse suggest you are the origin of ropy doctrines that they have!

Disciples missed the point. They heard Jesus, but they did not listen to him.

Jesus was absolutely clear

Matt 20:17 Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, 18 "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death 19 and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!"

But the disciples?

Clear message to the disciples. But the response by James and John's mother and the response of the disciples to that shows that they had not really been listening. They wanted authority and greatness and thought that Jesus was going to establish that and as His disciples they would get exalted places.

So there was this approach from James & John's mother - why? Was it her or was it prompted by them? Probably appointed by them because Jesus addressed them. They were close to Jesus - John was the disciple Jesus loved so they thought it right that they should have a place of honour.

Had they not heard Jesus? They had heard the bit about the glory, but had not seen the cross. The glory, not the cross.

We want the glory, but we don't want the cross. Our Churches are full of self-seekers. People who want the attention, people who want the glory.

What sort?

Leaders of all sorts are in danger of this
Those with gifts - teaching, sign gifts
Those who think themselves spiritual

The danger always is that people in this situation overstep themselves. They may have started in the Spirit but they've gone into the flesh.

James and John were in danger of this. Who had made them the people that they were - Jesus. Before that they had been a pair of humble fisherman in an unfashionable part of the holy land. They had experienced exciting times,

been used mightily of God. But so had the other disciples. They were abusing their relationship with Jesus.

Jesus turns on them fairly roundly.

22 "You don' t know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered. 23 Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."

And that says it all. You want the glory - can you drink the cup? I'm not sure they understood when they said they could - they did find out later. James was the first of the disciples to be martyred. Besides - whoever gets that authority in glory - that's decided by the Father. It is through His grace.

So you want to be great?

How do we often see greatness.

Leaders who are profound.
People who are devout
People who are financially well off.

Jesus is really radical

26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave - 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

- want to be great - become a servant
- want to be first - become a slave
- and be like Jesus - who gave Himself a ransom for many.

The exciting thing is that to be great, we don't have to do great and mighty deeds, we do not have to be eloquent speakers BUT servants - of God and of one another.

Do we feel weak? Useless? Difficulties in life? The least of God's people? Greatness is not measured by our eloquence or our importance in this world. It's based on our service, or slave hood - our obedience.

The death of Jesus was the ultimate act of obedience. It's back to a familiar theme - obedience.

The Bible does things the other way around.

We say - I can't do this.

God doesn't want you to be like me. To do things that you are not equipped and gifted to do. But He wants you to serve and obey Him in what you can.

You want to be great in the eyes of God - obey Him.

Jesus is Passing by

Luke 18:35 As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. 36 When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. 37 They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." 38 He called out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 39 Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 40 Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, 41 "What do you want me to do for you?" "Lord, I want to see," he replied. 42 Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you." 43 Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.

Text: "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by" or taking our opportunities

Saving the lost

Luke 19:1 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. 3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. 5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." 6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. 7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a `sinner.'" 8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." 9 Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

Text: For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

A dire warning

19:11 While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. 12 He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. 13 So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. `Put this money to work,' he said, `until I come back.' 14 "But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, `We don't want this man to be our king.' 15 "He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it. 16 "The first one came and said, `Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' 17 "'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. `Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' 18 "The second came and said, `Sir, your mina has earned five more.' 19 "His master answered, `You take charge of five cities.' 20 "Then another servant came and said, `Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. 21 I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.' 22 "His master replied, `I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? 23 Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?' 24 "Then he said to those standing by, `Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.' 25 "'Sir,' they said, `he already has ten!' 26 "He replied, `I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away. 27 But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them--bring them here and kill them in front of me.' "

Text: I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away.

The Triumphal Entry

19:29 As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, 30 "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 31 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it.'" 32 Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. 33 As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" 34 They replied, "The Lord needs it." 35 They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. 36 As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. 37 When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: 38 "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" 39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" 40 "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." 19:41 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it 42 and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now it is hidden from your eyes. 43 The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. 44 They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

Text: Jesus has come - do you recognise Him?

The Cleansing of the Temple

Matt 21: 10 When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" 11 The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee." 12 Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. 13 "It is written," he said to them, "'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a 'den of robbers.'" 14 The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. 15 But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant. 16 "Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him. "Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read, "'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise'?" 17 And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night.

Text: Is our Temple Clean?