

Battle Ready – March 9, 2025

We are a sports family. My parents both played sports, they coached several of my teams growing up. I spent hours watching my brother play baseball and football, and my sister play soccer. I spent even more hours in the gym playing several sports, but mainly volleyball, and now I coach volleyball for my daughter. My husband played sports; our boys are athletes – it's just been a part of our family culture.

I have a lot of memories of games. But I have a snapshot memory of one experience that always stands out. Now I have to give you some background for this story, and that background is that my mom does not like thunderstorms, or more specifically she doesn't like severe weather. Growing up, if there was a tornado warning we were all in the basement bathroom with our supplies ready to survive the F5 tornado and dig ourselves out of the rubble. Except for my dad who was on the porch watching it all happen.

So, back to the original story. We were at the baseball fields right over here, I must have been about 9 and my older brother was 11, and the fields were really close to our house. My brother was the pitcher, I can still picture him in his red jersey, and there was a storm coming. We could see the dark clouds moving in, start to hear rumbles of thunder, and then we saw the lightning. Now, everyone in the stands was starting to notice and they were all waiting for the ump to call the game, and nothing was happening. The ump wasn't calling it. Lightning was getting more frequent and closer, and these kids were still out there on the field, and in the dugouts and we were all sitting on the metal bleachers. My mom finally got tired of waiting this out. She stood up on the bleachers and yelled "Jared, get off the field. We're going home!" My brother looked at her from the pitcher's mound, looked back at the batter, dropped the ball, and walked off the field. We got in the car; we hurried home as the rain really started and we waited out the storm in the safety of our home.

My mom (and dad) was (and is) our protector. She knew what my brother needed (and the rest of the family on the metal bleachers needed) in order to survive the storm. Our family was safe at home – we had everything we needed, we didn't need to ride out that storm in the middle of the field with no

shelter or protection. My mom didn't make the storm go away, she didn't stop the rain and the wind and the lightning. But she gave us what we needed to be safe in the storm. We were not alone.

Being ready for a storm or ready for a battle in your life doesn't always mean fighting in the battle, or playing the game in the storm. It means listening to the right voice, knowing where to seek shelter, and having what you need to survive. And while my mom provided what our family needed during that literal storm, God provides what we need in every storm and every battle in each of our lives.

While God provides everything we need, Scripture is what gives us guidance on how to fight the battles in our lives. Let's read today's scripture, Ephesians 6:10-20.

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. Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, 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.

Paul begins by telling us to "be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power." Our strength doesn't come from ourselves, it is not our own abilities or wisdom. Our strength is found in God alone, we are not to rely on our

strength, but on His. The battles we face are not ones we can win by our own power, but through the power of God working in and through us.

When we face storms, or trials, temptations, or challenges in our lives, it's important that we remember where our true strength comes from. It's through Christ and His power, and knowing that is the only way we can stand firm.

The other thing to point out about this passage is that Paul is writing this scripture while he is in prison – he literally says that he is an ambassador of the gospel in chains. Many of us would assume that if we're in prison, that we've lost the battle. But it's all about perspective. Paul knows he hasn't lost the battle, that he's not in the middle of the storm on his own. He knows that his strength comes from God, and that God is with him.

So we can take this passage that Paul shares and we can use it to build a battle plan for our own lives. Scripture is true, and living, and active, and it teaches us how to live and how to fight our battles.

First, we need to **identify the enemy**.

Vs. 12 says “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the power of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Identify the enemy.

This scripture tells us that our enemy is not flesh and blood. Too often, we find ourselves focusing on the people or circumstances around us, thinking that they are the problem. But Paul reminds us that our struggle is against "the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil."

Our real enemy is not the person who wronged us, the circumstances we're facing, or even the things we fear. Our true enemy is Satan and his forces of evil that work against God's purposes. These evil forces are not make believe – they are very real and their goal is to defeat Christ's church.

The enemy is Satan and the spiritual forces of evil. It can sound weird and scary and strange, but no matter how it sounds, it is true. And here's an important part of this to remember – **no one is off limits to the work of the enemy**. You might think “oh, that would never happen to me.” You might say, I

won't fall victim to the lies of the enemy, or I would never have an affair, or I would never commit fraud. But you are not off limits. Your family is not off limits. The minute you think that it would never happen to you is when you become most vulnerable. Satan is sneaky and he tries to get a foot hold anywhere he can.

When we recognize that the battle is spiritual, we are better prepared to fight with the weapons God has provided. We can't fight this fight with physical weapons, because our enemy is not a physical being.

When someone says something unkind to you, it is often our human nature to pull out a weapon and respond – maybe you respond with an unkind word or harshness. But that is not the kind of weapon that we need to be fighting with. Or if someone tries to destroy your reputation, you may be drawn to try to blast them on social media and air all of their dirty laundry, fighting with lies and breaking their trust. That is not the kind of weapon that God wants us to fight with.

So if we can't fight with physical weapons, then how do we fight? How do we prepare for the battles and the storms in life?

That's also part of our battle plan - **first we identify the enemy, and then we armor up.**

Paul emphasizes the importance of putting on the *full armor of God* so that we can stand our ground in the battle. Each piece of armor is essential for our protection and success in spiritual battle. Let's look at these pieces more closely:

“Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist”. The belt holds everything together – it is the core, the center. Everything else is centered around this weapon of truth.

We use the truth to fight our battles. In John 17 it says “Your word is truth”. God's word is truth, but to know His truth and what it says about us we have to be in His word. Reading and applying scripture daily in our lives helps us stand firm in the truth. Living in truth means staying grounded in God's word and rejecting the lies of the enemy.

The Breastplate of Righteousness is what protects our hearts from the attack of the enemy – it keeps us from things that are unrighteous, or immoral or unpure.

Our emotions, our desires, our choices – these all come from our heart. But righteousness comes from Christ, and we live a moral and righteous life by making Godly choices.

Philippians 4:8 tells us to think about things that are right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy – those are the things that we think about. The breastplate of righteousness will protect you from the attacks of the enemy that try to get you thinking about impure things. But when we live in obedience and integrity and pray this armor on our lives, we can win the battle.

Shoes of Peace. When I think of shoes, I think of moving forward. Moving through the battle or through the storm – not getting stuck in one place. Matthew 5:9 says, ‘Blessed are the peacemakers.’ We want to be people that seek peace, people that pray for peace in our hearts and in our relationships. When we’re walking in peace it means that we are firmly walking in God’s promises, and we can share His good news with confidence. We don’t let the enemy steal our peace – for we know God is in control.

Next, verse 16 says “In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.”

The shield of faith is our defense against doubt and fear. We can trust God even when our circumstances are uncertain, and we can speak God’s promises over our fears.

A few years ago, in a meeting Allen Burris said, “The essence of faith is trusting God with the unanswered questions.” Now, I don’t know if that’s Allens quote, or where he got that, but there is so much truth to that statement. Faith is a deep trust in God, even when we don’t understand. And we won’t always understand what the enemy is doing or why the enemy is attacking. But we can trust that God is in the battle with us.

God tells us to armor up with the helmet of salvation. The helmet protects the mind, and it keeps us safe from doubt and deception that comes from the enemy. 2 Corinthians 10:5 tells us to take captive every thought to make it

obedient to Christ. We know our salvation is in Christ and the enemy can't take that from us.

And finally, the Sword of the Spirit. The sword of the Spirit stands out as a powerful piece of armor in our battles of spiritual warfare. Because while the other pieces protect us, the sword is used for defense *and* offense. This sword is the Word of God.

God's word isn't just for knowing or reciting—it's for *engaging* in battle. When the enemy tempts us, or tries to deceive us, it's God's truth that wins that battle. Jesus Himself modeled this during His time in the wilderness. Satan tried to tempt him in several different ways, and Jesus responded to those temptations with Scripture. He didn't just know the Word; He used it actively to defeat the enemy.

As believers, we are called to live like Jesus. When we're in battle with the enemy – if it's fear, or impure thoughts, or sin, - the Word of God becomes our best weapon. When we hold to God's promises and speak His truth, we are actively using the sword of the Spirit.

God gives us the armor that we need to fight our battles and survive the storms in our lives. But we have to know the armor and we have to put it on.

I do two things every morning when I wake up. The first thing I do is recite Psalm 23. I started this a few years ago, and it's how I start my day every day.

And then the other thing I do is a little prayer that Claudia Mitchell shared with me, and I know she does this as well. In my mind, I line up my little family – it's always Nathan, then me, then Lennon, Keller, and Elliot. And I pray the armor over my family. I just picture us and I pray "God, protect us today. Give us your helmet of salvation, your breastplate of righteousness, your belt of truth, shoes of peace, shield of faith, and sword of the spirit." This is what it looks like in my brain.

Picture

But as I was studying and preparing for the message today, I was drawn to Psalm 23 verse 5 where it says, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." In Bible times, hosts were expected to protect their

guests at all costs. God offers the protection of a host even when enemies surround us. God is the perfect host. So, in the past few weeks, instead of picturing my family lined up with the armor on, I picture us seated at the table in our armor, with God as our host and our protector.

Picture

Love that. I should get that one framed, right?

Let's keep building our battle plan – **we identify the enemy, we armor up, and then we need know our retreat plan.**

What do we do when the battle is long? Or when the storm continues to rage? There are battles in our lives that can be ongoing – we never seem to fully conquer them. So what do we do when we need rest?

Psalms 18:2 says, “The Lord is my rock and my fortress, my deliverer.” 2 Samuel 22:2 says “The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer.” This is important to remember, especially in the midst of a battle.

A fortress is a secure place of defense and protection. It's also a place of hope, security, and refuge. When the battle gets too hard or too long, retreat to the protection of God. Rest in him. The Bible tells us in Exodus that the Lord will fight for you, you need only to be still. When you're too tired to fight, it's okay to be still. Because God will carry on in the battle for you.

And the final part of our battle plan is to adjust your posture. And this is likely the hardest part for us and our human nature.

When things get hard – when we have to go to battle against Satan, when we have to face challenges and storms and hardships in our life, our natural instinct is to get in a fighting stance. We want to put on the armor and swing a sword and advance the front lines.

But what scripture calls us to is a posture of humility. That posture of humility comes in knowing that it's not us fighting the battle on our own. We have to invite God into the battle.

In the passage in Ephesians Paul tells us to be aware of the enemy, to put on the armor, and then he immediately tells us to pray.

Verse 18 says “*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.*”

The power behind the armor is prayer. Prayer keeps us connected to God and strengthens every piece of armor.

And in another letter from Paul, in 2 Corinthians 10 verse 3 he says “For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world.”

We don’t fight these battles on our own or with the weapons of the world. We fight these battles on our knees in prayer. When you think of a humble posture – a posture in which you are not ready to physically fight back, it’s on your knees. When you’re on your knees, you are susceptible. When you’re on your knees you have to rely on protection from something outside of yourself because you can’t protect yourself. And that protection has to come from God. When the battle pushes you to your knees and you are exhausted and you can’t fight anymore, you are in the perfect position to pray.

Prayer is our communication line with God, and it is vital in the battle. Prayer empowers us to stand firm, to be alert. When we pray, we invite God’s power into our lives and into the lives of others.

Prayer is not a passive action but an active weapon that aligns our hearts with God’s will and strengthens our resolve. It’s also a reminder that we are never alone in this battle—God is with us, and we can always call on Him.

Even in a humble posture of prayer, on our knees, we can be brave.

2 Timothy 1:7 says “For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.”

We don’t have to be fearful and timid during battle. We don’t have to wonder what happens if we win or lose. **Because God – God who fights the battles with us – He is victorious. He has already won the war, calmed the storm, defeated Satan, and He is fighting your battle with you.** When God sent Jesus to die on the cross for your sins and for my sins – he won the war. All we have to do is choose to follow Him and invite him to fight our battles with and for us.

I promise you that when Satan knows he is going to battle with a son or a daughter of the king that he is scared. He knows what he's up against, and there's no way he can win. He'll try every tactic he can think of, but *spoiler alert*, God wins every time.

When I think about what God does for us it takes me back to that ballfield. My mom called to my brother, the way that God calls us to Him. My brother had to be willing to listen to her voice – not the voice of the coaches, or the other players, or the ump. And then when he listened, he was taken home – to a fortress, a place of protection from the storm. And he was given what he needed to survive the storm. The storm didn't go away – but he wasn't alone in the storm. He had a humble posture to invite my parents to care for him and he trusted them and let them win that small battle against the literal storm.

We have to be battle ready with a plan. Don't get off guard by the enemy. The spiritual battle we face is real, but so is the victory that is ours in Christ. We have to know our enemy, equip ourselves with the full armor of God, know when to retreat for rest and protection, and we have to adjust our posture. Remember, you are not off limits to the work of the enemy. So you must know how to remain strong in His power, and be prepared to fight with the truth, with faith, and with humility. Be prepared to fight on your knees in prayer.

As we've gone through this series of prayer we have challenged you. We've asked you to do things that may feel uncomfortable, things that you're not used to doing. Because on the other side of discomfort is growth. And we want to grow together.

Today is no different, I'm going to ask you to get uncomfortable. We are going to practice adjusting our posture before God, and we are going to get on our knees in prayer. Now, I know that it can be physically hard for some of you. If you can't get on your knees, I invite you to keep your hands open in a posture of submission. But if you're able, in just a moment I'll ask you to get on your knees in prayer. There are some kneeling pads at the end of the pew, if you need one just ask someone to pass it down. Or you can use your coat, whatever you need.

When we're on our knees I encourage you to take time to identify the battles in your life. What battle are you fighting? What storm are you in? Name it, own

it, know that Satan is behind it. Then take time to pray God's armor over yourself, or others. Pray for God's protection and rest. Adjust your spiritual posture and lay it all down before God, invite him to fight the battle for you and with you. For he has already won.

Let's take the next few minutes to get on our knees before God.

5 Minutes

Prayer

Response Time