

Pulpit Series

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Finally...

Mario Dučić, December 2005

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might¹."

The Christian life is a fighting life. We are not fighting against people, but against *"principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."*²

Our enemy are fallen angels whose leader is Satan.

Although the apostle Paul knew Christ and His power, he did not ignore the enemy and its tactics, rather he warned us to be sober and careful, because:

*"Your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."*³

A preacher once said, "Christianity is not a dream but a battle". Unfortunately, many do not understand or believe that we are literally engaged in a battle against darkness, so they try to live without God's strength, which is simply impossible. Christianity is not a game; it is a serious thing. The only way to resist the devil and overwhelm the

powers of darkness is to stop relying in our own strength and become strong in the Lord.

When Peter, in his pastoral letter, mentions the devil it is interesting to see that he compares the devil with a lion. Do you know who lion's victims are most often? Sick, young, and helpless animals; he picks his victims in lonely places or those animals who ignore danger.

The same tactics are used by the devil; he usually attacks us when we are in trouble, haunted by something, or isolated. He attacks weak Christians who do not pray and do not depend on the Lord's powerful might; they are easy prey for him.

Every time we get lazy, putting the focus on ourselves, we allow the god of this world, materialism, to overcome our spiritual senses; we ignore our spiritual guard and become weak and thus enter into

★ **The Christian life is a fighting life.**

(Footnotes) | 2 Ephesians 6:12
1 Ephesians 6:10 | 3 1 Peter 5:8



a battle, which most often is not planned in advance, and we do not fight with armor of God in his powerful might; we take the battle in our own hands, use alternative plans b or c, and experience a shipwreck of our faith because our inner man is weakened.

1. To resist the enemy we must strengthen ourselves in the Lord and in His mighty power while moving away from a victim mentality.

“Finally be strong in the Lord”, says Paul. In the original Greek, this sentence is translated with the well-known Old Testament sentence: “strengthen yourselves in the Lord.”

In the critical part of David’s life, when he faced his big loss in Ziklag and Negev where the women and children were taken to slavery by Amalekites and the cities were burned, his soldiers turned against him and were very bitter for losing their families.⁴

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But rather than blaming his men (which is usually what we do) or feeling victimized because of his earlier tragic circumstances, David found new strength in the Lord. He found a solution: he encouraged himself in the Lord. Certainly David was greatly distressed because his men spoke of stoning him, because the souls of all the people were grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.⁵

God sent similar encouragement through the prophet Zechariah as David was returning from captivity; he said that God would be their strength:

*“So I will strengthen them in the LORD, and they shall walk up and down in His name;” says the LORD.*⁶

When we face battles it is useless to blame or criticize others. What we ought to do is to look for solution; we ought to rely on Christ, find strength in Lord, and stand firm in faith. *“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.”*⁷

The Greek word used by Paul here for “be strong” is translated “to strengthen, to become strong.”

The question is then, how do we strengthen ourselves in such crisis, in the evil days in our life? Do we respond by becoming bulimic or

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anorexic, by acquiring money, titles, or good connections? No, the Scriptures clearly say what should be done when the enemy has surrounded us and tries to get our soul to destroy it: “be strong in the LORD and his mighty power.”

This is what the apostle Paul prayed for the church in Ephesus and for all who would read his letter, that all may perceive:

“What is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power...”⁸

The only way to resist the devil is through the gospel, to be strong in Lord!

How can Christians do this? By becoming more intelligent? Nowadays there are many dead theological seminaries and institutes that strengthen the intellect of those hoping to help themselves by becoming more theological. Diplomas will not fill your emptiness, remove your pain, defeat spiritual battles, or strengthen you in Lord. How many marriages have fallen apart and children of Christian parents found caught in perversion, drugs, and alcohol? Yet preachers continue to preach empty religion, sending their children to the theological universities hoping that more theology will set

them free from the devil's chains.

Instead of being strong in Lord and his mighty power they fight in worldly ways. Paul clearly confirmed that it was wrong when he said, *“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.”⁹*

Actually, we must be strengthened *“with might through His Spirit in the inner man”¹⁰* How do we do this? We strengthen our inner man in the Holy Spirit so that the same Spirit drives our human spirit, emotions, thoughts, and purposes. Only in this way will we be revived and defeat our enemy –the devil!

2. To strengthen the inner man there is no option but to take up armor of God and withstand in the evil day.

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

(Footnotes) | ⁹ 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 | ¹¹ Ephesians 6:11-13
⁸ Ephesians 1:19 | ¹⁰ Ephesians 3:16



Many Christians say, "Spiritual warfare is not my ministry". However, spiritual warfare is not an option for us because at the moment you turn yourself over to Christ you will either fight and win or give up and be defeated. Satan does not sign any international contract. He will give up fighting only when we take his side.

When the devil tells you lies, makes you feel pain, and steals the joy of salvation with the help of his evil spirits what can you do but fight a spiritual battle?

Evil spirits are a reality, not fantasy.
Every day we are fighting against an army that is trying to defeat us – Christ's church.

At the moment we became saved demonic spirits became our enemies and since that time they have been doing all they can to remove us from Christ and send us back to the kingdom of darkness by using temptation. Their final wish is to take our lives. While victory is granted to us, we will continue to fight up to the second coming of Christ, therefore we need

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supernatural strength given to by the Holy Spirit who is in us and whose armor surrounds us.

Apostle Paul prayed for us that

*"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power."*¹²

The Scriptures say:

*"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."*¹³

In the evil days Satan sends his army of demonic spirits who attack your emotions, families, finances, and careers. If you are not armed with the armor of God you will be destroyed by Satan.

Let me give you a short description of armor we need to have in order to resist in the battle so we can stand firm.

► **Belt of truth**

*"Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth!"*¹⁴

Within the spiritual battle Satan will

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often fight against us with lies that may sound like the truth. For example, he will tell you that nobody in the church loves you because you were not invited to coffee this week, that nobody has compassion for you or knows your problems because they don't know you, or that God doesn't love you because if He did you would not have such problems in your life. What we must do is stand firm in God's truth that victoriously defeats the lies of Satan.

Isaiah says about Jesus:

"Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist."¹⁵

We need to stand firm in the Word, rejecting the lies that Satan uses to isolate us emotionally and physically from our family, friends, and church. Put on the belt of truth because only the truth can set you free.

► **Breastplate of righteousness**

"Put on the breastplate of righteousness"¹⁶

When Satan attacks our heart, our self worth, and emotions by telling that we are not worthy or righteous in God, the breastplate of righteousness guards our hearts that we can know we are accepted by God. We know that because the Scriptures say:

"He loved us so much that he gave his son for us."

Apostle Paul says:

"But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love..."¹⁷

Our confidence should be in Him and His power. Love for God and His love for us are our mutual weapons against the enemy.

► **Sandals of readiness for spreading the gospel**

"And having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace "¹⁸

How many times are we discouraged because our friends were not ready to receive good news? Satan keeps trying to convince us that people are not interested in the gospel and that evangelizing is a useless and hopeless job. He tries to persuade us that this job is too big for us to handle. We think, "Besides, there are many other positive people out there." Many people cease to evangelize and become plump Christians who say: "I testified before but it did not work. Now I enjoy watching TV and

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fellowshipping with other Christians.”
What kind of warrior is this?

Isaiah says:

*“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, Your God reigns!”*¹⁹

If your feet are not ready for the gospel remember this: they will surely lead you somewhere you don’t want to be. Your feet are given to you to take you to God, therefore, use them for Him. The Scriptures does not say: “How gorgeous are the feet of those who have the most beautiful stockings, toned muscles or pedicured toe nails; who like to show themselves off or enjoy going shopping” rather it says that those with “beautiful feet” are those whose feet carry the gospel! It would be great if Christians would start using their feet for what they are created.

★ **It is very important to look at circumstances from God’s perspective because when we look at life through his eyes of faith our circumstances will appear different than before.**

The readiness God gives us is actually our motivation to faithfully continue to proclaim the gospel the true peace given by God; news that everybody should hear. Be always ready; don’t be lazy and fail to tell other people about Jesus!

► **Shield of faith**

*“Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.”*²⁰

When Satan attacks us the shield of faith protects us from his temptations and assaults. It is very important to look at circumstances from God’s perspective because when we look at life through his eyes of faith our circumstances will appear different than before.

When the Syrians surrounded the Israelite army, the servant of Elisha asked *“Alas, my master! What shall we do?”* So he answered, *“Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”* And Elisha prayed, and said, *“LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.”* Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around!”²¹

When we look at life from God’s perspective we will always see above our temporary circumstances and

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know that at the end we will have victory because we are from God: *“For whomever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.”*²²

▶ **Helmet of salvation**

*“And take the helmet of salvation.”*²³

One thing we can always be sure of is that Satan always tries to make us doubt God and our salvation. Most often when we fall he is standing right beside us saying, “Maybe God doesn’t love you” or “God doesn’t care for you” or “you are not saved if you do such things.” The helmet of salvation protects our thoughts from Satan’s doubts. Isaiah says that he put:

*“A helmet of salvation on His head; He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak.”*²⁴

His salvation protects our thoughts and defeats our enemy, and he is ever ready to forgive our sins.

▶ **Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God**

*“And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;”*²⁵

The sword is the only weapon of attack on this list. In other words, there are times when we should be

aggressively fighting against Satan and his forces of darkness. Therefore, when we are tempted and engaged in a spiritual battle we ought to believe in the truth of the Word of God and use it to defend ourselves, we dare not rely on our own emotions.

The writer of Hebrew clearly says that our weapons are “living and active”:

*“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”*²⁶

3. God’s armor is empowered and is working only in prayer. Through prayer we become strong in God and experience his mighty power.

*“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.”*²⁷

Martin Luther said about prayer, “No one can believe how powerful prayer is and what it can do except those who have learned it by experience.”

★ **Prayer is God’s strong instrument through which we are strengthened in Him and experience His mighty power.**



Mary, the queen of Scotland, once said the following, "I am more afraid of the prayers of John Knox than the army of ten thousand soldiers."

Prayer is God's strong instrument through which we are strengthened in Him and experience His mighty power. When we engage in spiritual warfare we must know how to do more than murmur on for 5 minutes before work.

If we want God to destroy Satan's footholds in our cities we need to pray as if everything depends on prayer.

Paul wanted us to keep praying all kinds of prayer. He clearly stated the duration and intensity of a prayer: *"Pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."*²⁸

Although imprisoned in Rome and waiting to come before the emperor, Paul did not pray selfish prayers such as: "Set me free God of these chains

★ **The only way to see the harvest and God's power is to become empowered in him.**

and show your power" or " Please God perform a miracle and provide a house for me in Rome ", rather, he sought others to pray that he would be a testimony while in prison and that he would have the right words to say at the right time. Paul was a proper example of a man whose strength was in God; he did not walk on water or receive gold from the heaven, rather, he wanted to see real miracles in which great spiritual battles are won for human souls.

The only way to see the harvest and God's power is to become empowered in him. We can do nothing in our own strength, therefore finally be strong in him.

*"So I will strengthen them in the LORD, and they shall walk up and down in His name," Says the LORD.*²⁹

(Footnotes)
29 Zechariah 10:12 | 28 1 Thessalonians 5:17

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