

"The Full Armor of God"

Ephesians 6:10-20 (10-13)

Good morning

Sally was married to a really cheep guy Sam, and Sally was going window shopping and Sam says what he always says before she goes window shopping, "Look, but don't buy." So she goes and she checks things out and she tries on this dress and sure enough she comes home with a box under her arm and Sam said, "I thought I said look but don't buy" and she said, "Yeah I was looking and I was thinking about what you said, but I tried the dress on and the devil said, "That really looks good on you" and Sam said, "Well right then you should have said "Get thee behind me Satan" and she said, "I did," but then he said, "It looks good from the back too."

That may be a dumb way to start a sermon, but it sure raises the question of; in all this stuff about spiritual battle, how much do we blame on the devil and how much do we blame on what goes on inside of us? As a believer Satan tries to exploit us in all ways.

In the April edition of *US News and World Report*; it said on the front "Speed Freaks" and it's got a guy looking over a cup of coffee with real big eyes and it look likes the coffee cup is shaking. It's subtitled "*From triple shot Lattes to Red Bull to Ritalin Americans are more wired than ever. Here is why it may be harmful to your health.*" and inside the cover story follows a high school senior.

Limley Hawk starts the day at 5:30 a.m. by downing her first cup of coffee. She then stops at Starbucks for a grand vanilla skim latte on the way to Winston Churchill High School in Potomac, Maryland where she is a senior. At 3 p.m. it is time for a jumbo iced tea to power her through hip-hop dance rehearsals and yearbook meeting. Homework, which often keeps her up past 1 a.m., requires more coffee. "I've got so much to do" she says, "I've

got to have the caffeine." The java-fired schedule has paid off says Hawk. She has been accepted by 15 of her 16 college choices including her first pick Wake Forest. Hawk may sound like a rarity but she isn't. Overworked and sleep deprived Americans young and old crave a buzz these days, that even alcoholic drinks come loaded with caffeine and doctors are getting worried. The past three years alone the number of 18-24 year-olds who drink coffee daily has doubled from 16 to 31% and some do other kind of drugs like Adderol or Ritalin for late night study sessions. Energy drinks like Red Bull and Cocaine; there's a name of a drink for you, with several times the buzz of a can of Coke have mushroomed in to a 3.5 billion dollar a year industry... and so goes the article.

Now I know that if I start preaching on the evils of caffeine in a world of 13,000 Starbucks and that's just Starbucks, I will have crossed that line from preaching to meddling. In fact, you can have a cup of coffee right here when you come in or when you leave. But my intent is not to preach about the evils of caffeine;

my intent is to pose a simple question;

from whence cometh your energy? Where do you derive your strength and how are you managing life?

If there were two signs today one that said "feeling weak" and one that said "feeling strong" and I asked everybody here to line up in front of one, I wonder what our lines would look like. And it would be no shame if you lined up by the one that says "feeling weak," because life is really difficult, at certain times especially. Life is difficult period. Once we accept that's it's difficult, it becomes less difficult, but there are some times that it is really difficult and the writers of the Bible knew it.

As we begin this sermon series of maybe 2 called "The Full Armor of God" or put in other words, how to manage those days when you know you are standing in the "feeling weak" line or even if you are standing in the "feeling strong" line; it is still a good idea to listen to this text.

let's pray

*Lord, as we open your word again we know that apart from **your** aid and **your** leadership and guidance, we will be blind and deaf and it will not sink in. So we pray that **you** would help us, that **you** would enlighten us and illumine us so that in your light we might see light and be strong **in the strength of your love and might**. In Jesus name, Amen.*

Our message is coming from Ephesians, remember Ephesians is written by the Apostle Paul to the saints (believers) of Ephesus while he was in prison.

I will be reading Ephesian 6:10-20 so that you can get a picture of what he wrote but our study will be focused on verses 10-13

10"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12For 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. 13Therefore 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. 14Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17Take 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.

19Pray 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, 20for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should."

Paul says "For which I am an ambassador in chains." I point that out that Paul was in prison, because when we look at Verse 10 and Paul says, "**Be strong in the strength of the Lord and in his mighty power,**

no one can say, "Well look at his circumstances: how rosy everything was. No wonder he can say that. He doesn't know what real life or real troubles are about." That was not the case with Paul keep in mind that here he is in prison, in chains and he is still preaching to be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Actually, if you worked your way back through Ephesians, just back to Chapter 5, all the way back to Chapter 1 would be great, but just in 5 Paul is talking about real life practicalities. If you look at Chapter 5 he covers in that chapter how to avoid addictions, how to have a healthy marriage, how to raise children, how to view work in positive ways and how to treat people, like your employees.

And at the end of this list he makes it quite clear that living in all this wisdom and with this understanding is not easy.

There is a word that shows up six times in this text: the word "against." He is trying to alert us again that as we go through our every day lives that we come up against that which is not mere coincidence, it's not bad luck, it is not fate, it's about being in a spiritual battle and that battle is for your strength. That is what the enemy is trying to take care of. He is trying to drain your strength.

John Eldredge, author of "Wild at Heart" puts it this way in speaking to men about sexual temptation and struggles that go along with it. He says that we get so hung up by the addictive quality of it, by the sinfulness of it and miss the fact that when we fall to temptation in that area that it's a battle for our strength. It's like getting a haircut from Delilah. It drains us. It distracts us. It takes away our strength. No wonder [Proverbs 4:23](#) says, "Above all else, guard your heart for out of it flow the wellspring of life." See, the enemy tries to dry up the wellspring of our life in Jesus Christ and he does so by pulling

us to the things that we think will give us life, but they zap our strength and drain us.

So Paul says,

"Finally," after talking about all of these every day life realities,

"be strong in the Lord." Actually it means "be strengthened in the Lord." You see, if I say to you "Be strong, buck up, stiff upper lip" it doesn't always encourage, but if I say "Be strengthened in the Lord; allow yourself to be strengthened" there is a process that you can follow, then it brings hope. He says, "Be strengthened in the Lord and in his mighty power." We could spend a whole sermon talking about his mighty power: the power with which Jesus was raised from the dead. How much power did that take?

Now listen again to verse 10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. **it's a command.** Strengthen yourself. **Command.** And do it continuously. It is something that you don't just do once. You do it every day. How often did Jesus pray and strengthen himself in his heavenly father? Continuously.

And Jesus is called the Son of David. He is not just called the Son of David because of the lineage of David; he is called the Son of David because in a similar kind of sense, he was always seeking God, always seeking the father.

Jesus said in John 5 "I can do nothing of my own initiative" he said; "Only what I see the father doing".

It goes back to an evil day that happened in David's life. He came back to his city Ziklag. Do you remember this? 1 Samuel 30 The women and children had been taken captive, it was a crisis day. It was a terrible day. It was a day of loss. It was a day of tears. It says the people wept until they couldn't weep anymore. There was a day of criticism and danger and mutiny was in the air. David was going to be stoned by his own people and in the midst of all of that it says, "But David strengthened himself in the Lord."

David experienced strength for that present crisis moment and for the battles, which were about to take place.

And that is what Paul has in mind when he is writing to the Ephesians. He is saying, "Look, I know that life can knock you down. It's hard." I mean he is sitting there in chains, but it doesn't have to knock you out when you are in Jesus Christ.

When you go through life and you are struggling, **what** do you need to do? **Strengthen yourself in God.** **Why** are we called to do this? **"So that you can take your stand,"** he says in Verse 11, **"against the devil's schemes."**

Ah, now we are starting to get the picture. He reminds us who the real enemy in life is. It's not our spouse. It's not our boss. It's not our co-workers. It's not our neighbors. It's not our child or a parent. The real enemy does not consist of flesh and blood he says.

Now I know that in some places it is unsophisticated to talk about the personification of evil. You don't really believe there is a devil, do you?

But if we are guided by scripture, and we are, then it's hard to deny, because if you look in Genesis, the first chapters of the book, and you look in the last chapters in the book, you see the same thing. The serpent symbolizing the enemy: the devil, trying to undo the people of God from the very beginning to the very end. From Genesis to Revelation we see the encounters with the accuser. The word devil, means accuser and that is where the word is derived from. It is one of his favorite activities; just like he accused Job before God, remember God was kind of bragging on Job and Satan said oh sure he is good now all things are good in his life but if things are not going good he will not stay faithful to you. He was accusing Job to God so he will accuse your loyalty towards God. "You are just fickle. You have all kinds of reasons why you are doing it. You are not really true to God. It is only because things are going okay for you."

Can't you just see Satan going to God (and he does have access to God at this time), and God saying look at that child of mine, that Pastor Bill from Calvary church of Riva, you know he is going to be on the radio witnessing to thousands about what I have done in his life and how there is hope for all who accept my son Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Can't you see Satan saying, oh yea yea yea, that is because things are pretty good now but I bet if he got sick things would be different. And then God says you are wrong, he would stay faithful, then God thinks about maybe a certain nurse at Anne Arundel Medical Center that he has been wanting to send someone to use their mouth to tell her about his son, so he allows Pastor Bill to get sick (remember God does not make us sick, but nothing happens that does not go pass his desk that he doesn't have final approval.) and this happened, there was a nurse who after finding out that Bill was a pastor started asking some questions and Bill was able to share about Calvary and CR, who knows where that may lead. This is the reason we are here, to spread the word. That is our purpose. As Pastor Bill has told us many times, after we were saved (accepted Christ) God could have taken us home, but he wants none to parish, not one, so he leaves us here for the purpose of witnessing, even if it means we need to be sick to be in the hospital to witness to a certain person.

It says, not only the devil, but it says "the devil's schemes: that you might be able to stand firm against the devils schemes." The word 'schemes' is where we get our word 'methods' from. Crafty methods and he's got a ton of them. He will try to keep us from listening to the word.

I believe that it is the devils schemes to bring disunity to our Church, but you know what, that just assures me that God has big plans for us and we are a big threat to Satan, if not he would not bother us.

Have you ever been trying to read the Bible and had to read the same thing over and over because you kept getting distracted from the whole thing."

In [Genesis 3](#) he creates doubt about God's love for us and doubt about God's word. "Has God really said?" "Oh God might have said that, but he really didn't mean it that way," and he tries to twist the word of God.

Jesus encountered this himself when he was in the wilderness with Satan, remember in Matthew 4:1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Satan challenged his identity as the Son of God. "If you are the Son of God, if you are the Son of God,

To us he whispers

you're not a child of God" that is what he says. "You are not a child of God." "God doesn't really love you. You are not doing well enough for him to love you." That is the kind of stuff that comes at us.

And how did Jesus encounter it? With the word of God he stood toe to toe. He didn't run.

In Matthew 16:22-23 Peter was being used as a pawn of Satan, and Jesus said right square in his face, "I am sorry this hurts your feelings Peter, but Satan get thee behind me." He knew Peter was being used as a pawn in that moment.

Satan means adversary

and the adversary is opposed to God, opposed to Christ, opposed to the church and every individual believer.

In [John 10](#), he is called a thief who came to kill, to steal and to destroy. In [John 8](#), he is called a liar and the father of lies.

How else do we explain what we see in the news every day, what we see in our world every day? Just because of bad upbringing? Just because of misunderstandings? Just because of poverty? How do you explain Chris Benoit remember the: professional wrestler, very wealthy person? He kills

his own wife, kills his own 7-year-old son, which is beyond horrific and then sits in his house a day before he takes his own life. That was a lot of steroids, Plenty of people take that stuff and don't do that. There are forces in this world that try to come against us.

What happens when ministry partners in the mission field or elsewhere are going along wonderfully and then all of a sudden there is a doubt about the motives of another person. Where do you think that comes from?

Acts 5 What about the church when it was in its height of spirituality and two people walked through the doors of the church, a couple named Ananias and Sapphira and they put this nice gift down and everyone said, "Wow, look at them" (but they had lied about the amount and kept some of the money for themselves and what did Peter say to them? , "How could you let the devil take control of your heart and lie to the Holy Spirit like that?" He knew where the enemy was. He knew what was causing this disunity and disruption.

What happens when a spat in a marriage turns in to a war? You know how it goes. You are getting in to it. One person says one thing and one person says the other thing and there is a thought in your head that the good side of you is saying "I better not say this. I better not say this" and then someone else is saying "Yeah, go ahead and say it. It's okay." And all of a sudden you are off to the races and somebody is sleeping on the couch before long.

Now I hear some of you saying, "Are are you blaming everything on the devil?" I am not, but I am also saying that not every thought that comes in to our head is just us. I believe that it's all about lies and deceit and distraction that tries to come our way and slow us down and drain our strength and destroy us, whether its insecurity, whether its inadequacy, all the lies that the devil can throw at us; that's intended to drain our strength, stop us in our tracks,

throw in the towel, don't keep going for Jesus; all of that.

Boy can I relate to this this week, he has been attacking my mind like you wouldn't believe, telling me over and over about how inadequate I am to be bring a message, he has literally drained my strength and tried his all to get me to throw in the towel but I finally (I am soooo slow) asked God to strengthen me so that I could take my stand against him.

And do you know what God put on my heart, He said this message really has nothing to do with you Joan, I am only using your mouth if you stand firm. He said His holy spirit is the one that takes these words and changes them from my mouth to your ears for your holy spirit to work in your lives.

Satan is just a liar and a thief and he wants nothing more than to drain us of our love for Christ and our joy.

Have you ever had a fly pester you? Sometimes maybe when you are studing or reading and there is a fly and he's flying around you and you just can't get it, right? Well, you can be sitting here today

and by the way the devil according to Jesus was called Beelzebub, the Lord of the Flies, the Lord of Distraction,

You can be sitting here today listening to the sermon, having the Bible in front of you and there is this thought in your head about somebody who made a remark to you and you can't get it out of your head. Or you are thinking about somebody who you are on the outs with and you don't know how to approach it, you know and it's distracting; it is just keeping you from focusing. Well I want to tell you that it happens to all of us. Pastor Bill has told us many times, when he preaches it's a battle royal in his head before and after preaching.

"That didn't work." "That was no good." "Why don't you hang it up" kind of thing.

That is what goes on and I am so thankful that the task of preaching is not just to be eloquent; it's to point people to Jesus Christ as the center of life,

no matter how well or poorly it is done. If we are pointing to Jesus, we are doing the right thing.

Thankfully too we have a word made visible today; so even when the preacher can't get it right, the word made visible can show us what it is all about. It's about his strength in us. If we don't eat or drink we are dead. If we don't take and eat of his flesh and his blood, we are no good. We will never be able to stand in the battle.

So today I want to give you a fly swatter for the Beelzebub. It's a prayer of the believer and this prayer just so you know, is based on Ephesians, Chapter 2

In [Ephesians, Chapter 2 in Verse 6](#) listen to what Paul is saying as he describes our salvation. He is not just talking about how we experience God's mercy and we are delivered from our transgressions, but in Verse 6 he goes beyond that and he says,

["And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus."](#)

Did you know that if you are a Christian, you are sitting in two places today? I don't know how it works. It's a mystery. If you are sitting here, but spiritually united with Jesus Christ you are seated at the right hand of God, the place of all authority and power in Christ. That is why we don't need to be intimidated by the enemy. We need to pray this prayer many many times, like when we have those mental gymnastics, those mental battles going on, starting to think negative things about someone you love, ready to say something that you don't want to say, self doubt about our performance or whatever we are trying to do. And after a while it's like, "wait a minute, that is coming from somewhere else." So look at this prayer. Why don't you read it with me?

["In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by his blood that was shed for me, I command you \(Satan, powers of evil,\) to cease the activity you are](#)

having in my mind as a co-crucified, co-resurrected, co-ascended, co-seated believer at the right hand of God."

The parentheses you can use anything you want. To whom it may concern in the Kingdom of Darkness; it doesn't matter. The point is that you are addressing and rebuking that which stands against Jesus Christ and against everyone who names his name. All authority in heaven and earth is given to him. Spiritual forces may overcome us, but they don't overcome him and by his blood and by his power we are safe from harm.

There is a passage in Acts 19 where the seven sons of Sceva try to speak in the name of Jesus, but they are **unconnected** to Jesus and do you remember what one of the demons says? "Hey Jesus I know and Paul I know, but you guys I don't know" and wham just knocks them out. It's about Jesus flowing through us and being united and connected to us. So even in an evil day, Christ's power can help us stand. Revelation Chapter 12 is about this warfare that is going on in heaven and this is

7And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. 8But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. 9The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

10Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:

"Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God,

and the authority of his Christ.

For the accuser of our brothers,

who accuses them before our God day and night,
has been hurled down.

11They overcame him

by the blood of the Lamb

and by the word of their testimony;

It is speaking about when God interrupts human history to undo the works of the devil. And so, you have now come to salvation, the power and the kingdom of our God, the incarnation and the authority of his Christ for the accuser of our brethren, who accuses them before our God day and night has been hurled down and they overcome him. **How? How did they overcome him? By the blood of the Lamb and by the word of his testimony.**

See, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by his blood that was shed for me, I command you as a co-crucifier, co-resurrected, co-ascended, co-seated believer to stop the activity you are having in my mind right now.

It's a battle, but I am telling you that it works. It works when you name the thing and don't just chalk it off to poor upbringing or something else.

Four times in this text Paul says in Ephesians, "Stand." "Stand in his strength" So here is the word of God today; when you feel like the pressures of living are threatening to knock you out, stand in Christ. When you feel like you are alone and you can't make it, stand in Jesus Christ. When you feel like everything you have tried is still not working and you keep going, you stand in Jesus Christ. He is the armor. He is the armor. Clothe yourself in him. Come to him. Believe in him. Put your trust in him again. That is why [1st John 5:18](#) says,

["We know that anyone born of God does not continue in sin. The one who was born of God keeps him safe and the evil one cannot harm him."](#)

Don't be fooled that there is not a battle, but don't be intimidated that there is a battle. Be aware that your sins are forgiven and rejoice in that fact, and also think of yourself as though someone is pinning a medal of honor on you, that you are known and you are signified as a Christian and when people see that medal of honor they say, "Oh you are in Jesus. You are connected to him and he will give you the strength that you need." So receive all that you need today.

Let us pray: *Gracious Lord, we know that if left to ourselves we will always fall, we will always stumble even when we are walking and trying our best, we still stumble in many ways, but we thank you that we are not left to our own self. That even though you created the world and everything in it and called it good and even though we strayed from you and we tried to seek our strength in other things, you sent a strong one, the strong man in to this world, our Lord Jesus Christ. And through his humility and through his power and reliance on you, he brought us back to you by dying on a cross. But death couldn't hold him and he was raised the third day and then ascended, and now seated with you and we are seated in him. . For we ask in Jesus name who taught us to pray saying, Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not in to temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*