

Fil-Am Community Church
Pastor Rolly Estabillo
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Ephesians 6:10-20

“Be a Warrior, Not a Worrier (Part 1)”

Good morning! I hope that this is really a good morning for all of us. Some of us may have gotten up on the wrong side of the bed. Some of us may be feeling grumpy. Like this guy who said to the other guy, “Did you wake up grumpy today?” **“No, I let her sleep.”**

Truth is, sometimes, it’s really hard to wake up in the morning. There are times we say, “What’s good in the morning? What’s good about today?” We say those things because we feel that life is unfair, that we don’t deserve the things that are happening to us. Or we just plain worry that something bad is going to happen to us. We worry about the bills; we worry about our children, about our spouse, about what others think about us, about this pain in our body, about our job security, about the ever-increasing price of gas, about our relatives in the Philippines, about the coming elections. I used to be a worry wart. There was a time that I became depressed because of my many worries. Not until I realized that I don’t control my future but God does that it brought stability to my life. Jesus said, *“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”* (John 16:33)

How many of you are worriers? Raise your hand. How many of you worry a lot? Raise both hands. Well, in the next two weeks, I hope to be able to share something that will turn you worriers into warriors. So today, we’re starting a new series. It’s a two-part series on the full armor of God. I’m sure many of us have heard about it. For some of us, it may be new.

What is the full armor of God? When you think of armor, you think of a protective covering, something you put on to defend yourself against any attacks on your body, right? And you think also of weapons that are part of the armor. That picture is an example of soldiers who are dressed up in their personal armor. That's another picture, a marine in full combat gear. I think that's **Pastor Dave**.

In olden times, soldiers or warriors wore their own personal armor too. But, of course, technology was different and they looked different. This is the picture of a knight in shining armor. Nowadays, a knight in shining armor refers to a man who comes to the aid of a woman in a gallant and courteous manner. Many women dream of a knight in shining armor, right? Then he comes and marries him. They find out later on that the dream is a nightmare.

Now, going back farther in time, during the time of Jesus and the apostles, the warrior looks like that. That is the picture of a centurion, a Roman soldier and that is the soldier that is referred to by the apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians. He compares the Christian to a Roman soldier. Let's look at this passage. Please follow along as I read. (Read Ephesians 6:10-20)

You see, the Christian life is one of constant conflict. That is why Paul says, "Be prepared. As a Christian, you are engaged in a war. You are fighting a battle. Put on your combat gear." That's not really a comforting thought, right? You would think that a Christian would be living more peacefully, more comfortably, because they are children of God. But such is not the case. I could attest and many could attest, including many of you, that becoming a Christian is not a pass to a worry-free, stress-free life. That happens only in Disneyland where you get an express pass that allows you to bypass the long waiting line, out of the burning heat of the

sun and into your dream ride. No, we're not in Disneyland. We're still on earth. We're not in heaven yet. And so, we suffer just like any other. We experience troubles just like any other. We get sick, we get laid off, our relationships turn sour, we lose friends, we lose our hair, we gain pounds, we gain enemies, and so on and so forth.

Because of this, many Christians have succumbed to the pressures of life. They have been waylaid, so to speak. Some have stopped praying, some don't read their Bibles anymore, and some avoid church altogether because of frustrations and disappointments. All of us, who are here this morning, may have come, out of a sincere desire to please our Lord and Maker. We may have been motivated by the fact that coming to the Lord's house is one way of keeping the embers of our faith burning. Yet, deep inside, perhaps, we still harbor doubts and uncertainties. We may be thinking how long could we stand before another boulder of hardship come rolling down upon us.

Augustine said that each of us is fighting our own battles. That is absolutely true. Some are even fighting an uphill battle. Folks, the reality is, we are not immune to the ups and downs of life.

In this passage, the apostle Paul compares the Christian to a soldier or a warrior. He mentions armor, struggle, powers, forces – terms that indicate a battle situation. And that is true. For we are engaged in a battle. As long as we live in an imperfect world, we'll be dealing or battling with imperfect situations, imperfect people and even imperfect solutions.

Sadly, many of us, instead of fighting, retreat and then let our worries get the better of us. To some, worrying has become a habit. But God calls us to be warriors, not worriers. He calls us to stand our ground and to just keep pressing on.

A warrior is a fighter. He is someone trained to engage in a fight. During the time of Apostle Paul, the Roman soldiers were the most disciplined and most well-equipped. They were trained so rigidly that armies of other nations fell back before their might. The powerful Roman army was the reason for the spread of the Roman Empire and its existence for hundreds of years.

The Roman Empire extended from the tip of Africa to the southern part of Great Britain. If you've seen the movie *Gladiator*, the opening scene shows the Roman armies under the leadership of General Maximus fighting the Barbarians from Germany and eventually conquering them.

You see, the Roman warrior, to be effective, must undergo strict training to develop strength, both mental and physical. He must wear a full armor in battle, and must, of course, know who the enemy is.

This applies to the Christian as well. To be effective in fighting our battles, we must develop our strength, we must wear a full armor, and we must identify the enemy. There are three things, however, we must know first in relation to each one so that we can become real warriors.

The first thing we must know is

I. Our Real Strength:

Many try to deal with their problems in their own strength or power. Only to find out later that it is not enough. The Bible tells us that there is a kind of strength that can help us go through adversities. This is spiritual strength or being strong in the Lord. Let me read again v. 10, "*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.*"

Why should we be strong in the Lord Jesus ? Why should we draw our strength from his mighty power? It is because Jesus is God himself. As God, he is almighty and powerful and able to supply us strength in our hour of weakness. Paul said that he had a thorn in the flesh. He didn't mention what it was but it could be his poor eyesight or a hump on his back. He admitted though that it kept him humble. Three times, with prayer and fasting, he asked the Lord to remove it. God didn't but instead Jesus said to him, "*My grace is sufficient for you. For my power is made perfect in weakness.*" (2 Cor. 12:9)

Because of this experience, Paul could therefore say, a few years later, "Therefore, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power." He knew that real strength is spiritual in nature and that it comes only from the Lord. That's the reason why he encourages us to draw our strength from the Lord.

How then can we be strong in the Lord? First of all, let me tell you that the Roman soldier's mental and physical strength were developed by constant and rigid physical training. In the same way, our spiritual strength can be developed only by constant and rigid spiritual training. What does this training consist of?

It consists, first of all, of praying. By praying, we are drawn closer to God. It is an act of submission and humility. And when we humble ourselves before the God of

the universe, his grace abounds to us. 1 Peter 5:5 says, "*God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*"

When we pray, we are strengthened. In the garden of Gethsemane, just before he was arrested, the Lord Jesus prayed, "*Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.*" (Luke 22:42) Then Luke tells us that an angel appeared to him and strengthened him.

Our training consists also of reading the Bible. Joshua 1:8 tells us, "*Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.*"

The Bible is our manual of instruction. God speaks to us through it. Through its pages we can find wisdom that we can apply in our daily lives. We can also find solace and comfort in the Bible. Most importantly, it helps us to become more intimate with its author. Now, if you want to learn more about the Bible and love the author, we can help you through our **IMPACT Class**. Pastor Dave and Kuya Elvin are diligently teaching the class every 10 am. You just wake up an hour earlier and it **will make a difference** in your morning and in your life as well. Lastly, our training consists also of being in fellowship with other believers. That means being regular in attending church and home groups. Hebrews 10:25 tells us,

"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

When we come to church, we are not only glorifying God but we are also encouraging others. At the same time, we ourselves are encouraged. Sometimes, we may not feel like it, but we should force ourselves to do it. If we don't, we start to become lukewarm and then cold. We lose our enthusiasm and then our strength.

I read the story of a church in the south which offered a reward of \$10 to those who would attend their service. That's how desperate the situation has become. I hope we don't come into that situation because I don't think we can afford it. But maybe Kuya Rey can.

And don't forget our home groups. We have four that are regularly meeting. One in Woodbridge, another in Burke, another in Alexandria, and another in Loudoun/Fairfax. This is where the **rubber meets the road**. This is where you experience community, the love and care of people, and all that stuff. This is where you can ask questions because in a preaching like this, you don't raise your hand to ask a question. But you can ask later. I have only limited time and so I can't handle all your questions. The point is, coming to church and belonging to a home group are avenues for spiritual growth. They strengthen your spiritual muscles.

Folks, if we train ourselves to pray, read the Bible, and attend church and home groups; I believe that we will be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

The second thing we must know is

II. Our Real Defense

When a Roman soldier went to the battlefield, he didn't wear a shirt, shorts, and slippers. That would be foolishness. For it meant certain death.

He knew that he must wear something that will defend his body from the enemy's arrows, spears, and sword. And so, he put on armor and a helmet that is made of metal and sandals of strong leather. He also carried with him a large shield that covered almost his entire body and a short but sharp sword to ward off the enemy's advances.

Similarly, as verse 11 suggests, we must put on the full armor of God to defend us against the schemes of the enemy. Thus, this Armor of God is our real defense. Let me read again v. 11, *“Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.”*

You see, some people, when attacked by problems, rely on something else to defend themselves. Some defend themselves by their mental abilities. These are people who believe that they can think their way through a problem. Then, there are others who adopt a positive mental attitude when confronted with difficulties in life. Some meditate, chant a mantra, and empty their minds in order to experience calm and peace. I tell you, I've done all these things before but they didn't work. Either I didn't do it right or they just didn't really work. I believe it's the latter.

Well, the mind is a marvelous thing but it can also do only so much. Exercising our mental faculties may help for a time but they will also fail us. Even the brightest scientist the world has known, Albert Einstein, had to admit that his mind was not capable of understanding the deep mysteries of the universe. And he acknowledged that there is a God behind these mysteries.

Meanwhile, some people try to defend themselves from the cares of life through money. They try to accumulate wealth in order for them to avoid hunger and poverty. For them, money is their security. Money is a tool they use to defend themselves against the uncertainties of life. Yet, money could not bring lasting peace to anyone. John D. Rockefeller, a Christian millionaire said, "I have made many millions, but they have brought me no happiness. I would barter them all for the days I sat on an office stool in Cleveland and counted myself rich on three dollars a week."

Then, there are also those who try to defend themselves from the worries of life through power or influence. They believe that by being powerful and influential they can have control of things and people around them. But, as the saying goes, power corrupts, and **absolute power corrupts absolutely.**

Paul clearly says that our real defense is the armor given to us by God. In verses 14-17, he enumerates the pieces of the armor and how they help us to defend ourselves from the enemy's attacks. Next week, we're going to deal with each one of those pieces.

Our defense comes from God himself who provides us the full armor. We must remember though that this armor will not be effective if we are not strong in the Lord. We cannot wear this armor if we are not properly trained for battle. Thus, it is important that we first undergo spiritual training through prayer, Bible reading and church attendance before we try to wear the full armor of God. In fact, it is as we undergo training, that we automatically earn each piece of the armor.

So, we now know our real strength, which is being strong in the Lord, and our real defense, which is the armor of God. Now, let me give you

III. Our Real Enemy, which is God's enemy himself.

And **who is this enemy of God?** Satan, the father of all lies, the old crafty serpent, and his demons.

Verse 12 says, *“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.*

The common view of our struggle in the present world situation, as in every situation of the past, has been that we are engaged in conflict against flesh and blood, against other men and women. But Paul says the battle is not against flesh and blood; it lies deeper than that. The basic problem is that this is a battle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. The battle is visible not only in the wars, revolutions, and crime waves which oppress us, and fill our newspapers, but it is also seen in the inner tensions and fears of individual lives, in the neurotic problems and mental illnesses which afflict us today, in family fights and church struggles. It is even visible in nature, where all of life competes in a ruthless, deadly struggle to survive.

We saw that the whole human race, according to this passage, has fallen under the control of satanic forces, whom Paul calls, "the powers of this dark world" -- a most significant phrase. Jesus confirms this in his figurative description of Satan as the strong man who, armed, rules his own palace and keeps his goods in peace.

The picture of the Bible from beginning to end is that all human beings, without exception, regardless of how clever or educated or cultured they may be, if without Christ, are the helpless victims of satanic control. Under the control of satanic forces human beings are uncomfortable and unhappy, but also completely unable to escape by any wisdom or power of their own.

But the good news is that some have been set free, some have been delivered. Through the coming of that "stronger one," Jesus himself, who came, as John tells us, "to destroy the works of the devil" {1 Jn 3:8b}, deliverance is obtained. Through the amazing mystery of the cross and the resurrection, Jesus has broken the power and bondage of Satan over human lives. Those who individually receive and acknowledge this are set free to live in the freedom and liberty of the children of God.

But they are not set free to live unto themselves. That is a common misconception of Christianity. Many believe that Christ has come into their lives by means of the cross, and the things which have bound them and blasted them and ruined them have been stricken away, and they have been set free. All too frequently they feel they have been set free to do as they please, to live as they want to live. But they are set free in order to battle. That is the call which comes to all Christians. We are not set free in order to enjoy ourselves. We are set free to do battle, to engage in the fight, to overcome in our own lives, and to become the channels by which others are set free.

In the final verse, verse 13, Paul reminds us to put on the full armor of God. He admonishes us to be prepared at all times because sooner or later the enemy will attack us. We should not let our guards down. We should not sleep while on duty.

The enemy is so deceitful and cunning that he attacks when we least expect it. In 1 Corinthians 12:10, Paul warns us, “So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!”

Years ago, I was in Australia and after a year of working there, the Lord spoke to my heart and impressed on me that I should go abroad for missionary training. Well, ok, but how? It will cost me a few thousand dollars and I didn't have much. I had been sending some money to the Philippines and so I didn't have any savings. But God's call was strong. And yet I worried. I was at the time not yet fully trained in the aspect of trusting God. Now, one thing that bothered me was this constant thought in my mind that said, “God doesn't love you. Otherwise, you have the money by now.” It came to me day and night. And I felt discouraged and depressed because of this thought. Until in my devotions one morning, the Lord spoke to me from Psalm 46:10 where he says, “Be still and know that I am God”. That snapped me out of my depression. Immediately I realized that the enemy was throwing a fiery dart at me through that unpleasant thought. But God helped me to fight it through his Word. In the end, God provided for my need and I went on to become a missionary.

Folks, is something bothering you? Are you worried about something? Is life dealing you a bad card? Be a warrior. God is on your side. The Bible says, “*If God is for us, who can be against us?*” It also says, “*No weapon forged against you will prevail.*” He will protect you. He will shield you. He will give you the strength to carry on and fight your battles. He is fighting for you. He is saying to you, “My child, don't be afraid. I'll never leave you nor forsake you.” And in Isaiah, he promises, “*So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your*

God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Be a warrior, not a worrier.

Let us pray....