

Week 3: Stand Up to Oppressive Forces

1. What insights did you gain from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What was difficult for you? Was there anything that seemed puzzling or with which you disagreed?
2. Read Ephesians 6:10-20. Was this passage already familiar to you? If so, what thoughts and feelings do you have about this passage, and how have they changed over time (if at all)?
3. What do you think Paul means when he urges the Ephesians to “be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power” (v. 10)? How might this relate to sitting with Christ in gentleness and humility, and walking in love and peace?
4. How do you understand the concept of “rulers, authorities, the powers of this dark world and spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (v. 12)? What might resistance to such forces mean for us in our own context today?
5. How might the metaphor of putting on God’s armor be helpful? How might it be unhelpful?
6. In this part of the letter to the churches in and around Ephesus, Paul draws heavily on the prophet Isaiah—as well as referencing the psalms. How do the following passages cast a different light on our understanding of “the armor of God”?
 - Isaiah 11:2-5 (Note: in the LXX version that Paul references, v. 5 reads, “Righteousness will be his belt and truth the sash around his waist.”)
 - Isaiah 59:15-17
 - Isaiah 52:7
 - Psalm 91:4-5
7. Consider the interpretations of God’s armor below. How are these items part of your identity in Christ? How do you “wear” them? Where do you feel weak? Where do you feel strong?
 - Belt of truth—grounded integrity that unites the church
 - Breastplate of God’s righteousness on behalf of the marginalized and exploited
 - Shoes of readiness to proclaim and embody the good news of peace
 - Shield of God’s faithfulness
 - Helmet of God’s salvation and liberation of the oppressed
 - Sword of the transformative word of God that makes us more like Jesus
8. Reread Ephesians 6:18-20. Take a few minutes to share about any situation in which you want to be “fearless” in standing up for what is right, or anything related to your responses in question 7 above. Spend some time praying for one another.

Practice for the week: Standing in God's strength

Each day this week, read the verses below.

- **Be challenged** to stand in God's strength.
- **Take encouragement** from the promise that you will be able to stand up to anything.
- **Receive** the grace and peace that God gives.
- **Commit** to living out the love and faith we see in Jesus.

Let the Lord make you strong... Evil days will come. But you will be able to stand up to anything. And after you have done everything you can, you will still be standing... May God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give peace to the brothers and sisters, and also love and faith. May grace be given to everyone who loves our Lord Jesus Christ with a love that will never die.

Ephesians 6:10, 13, 23-24