

## Be Strong for Battle in the Lord

† **Armed with the best weapons (vv.10-17)**

† **Trained in the best tactics (vv.18-20)**

In the name of Jesus, our Champion, dear Christians, armed and dangerous:

On Friday, 9/11, sixty-three-year-old Jim Pouillon was sitting in his wheelchair, hooked to oxygen, holding a sign when a man drove up and shot him four times in the chest. The media didn't report it because Jim Pouillon was pro-life. Should he have been wearing a vest or carrying a gun? In this battle for souls Smith and Wesson are vegetable oil. Winchester is blowing in the wind. Bullets pass right through our enemies. The moment you become a Christian you are in the crosshairs of hell. Believers were praying 1000 B.C.: ***“For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”*** (Psalm 44:22; Romans 8:36) Paul shows why. Doesn't this sound soft? ***“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”*** (4:31f NIV) Weak and vulnerable in this cosmic battle for souls, we need to **Be Strong for Battle in the Lord...**

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***“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.”*** God created all angels good during the six days of creation week, but some wanted God's power and dominion for themselves. Satan and his demons were thrown out of heaven by God and the good angels, now sealed in holiness. Sealed in evil, Satan's cohorts cannot repent. They know the time to eternal torment is short. Therefore Satan is ***“filled with fury”*** (Revelation 12:12) against the Savior and His saints.

How often have we gone along with Satan's lies? Feeling strong in family or past education, we are soon relying on ourselves instead of God's strength. God's glory makes us feel heavy especially when it's time to study His Word. Daniel, the veteran statesman, couldn't even stand up when God had something very important to tell him. Daniel cried: ***“I am overcome with anguish because of the vision, my lord, and I am helpless. How can I, your servant, talk with you, my lord? My strength is gone and I can hardly breathe.”*** ***Again the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength. “Do not be afraid, O man highly esteemed,” he said. “Peace! Be strong now; be strong.”*** ***When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, “Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength.”*** (Daniel 10:16-19 NIV)

We need to ***“be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.”*** This is all ***“so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.”*** A combat soldier straps on weapons and body armor every time he enters the conflict. We need to renew our battle every day not only for our own soul but also for the souls of fellow sinners still trapped in the death of sin and guilt. We need a battle mindset as the sons of God go forth to war. When the smoke clears, our victorious Lord Christ wants us standing tall in His holy Word, more confident in God's prevailing grace.

You can't be tripping over tradition when some professor makes fun of your faith in class. Tie up the robes of Christ's righteousness with ***“the belt of truth buckled around your waist.”*** In the heat of battle, when sin weighs heavy on your heart, you need ***“the breastplate of righteousness in place.”*** US flack jackets in Vietnam couldn't even stop a bullet; layers of Kevlar do. Layer the ***“breastplate of righteousness”*** daily with the body armor of Christ-crucified and risen. As one former Marine told his grandson, ***“Make sure you're reading your Bible. Remember Jesus is always there for you.”***<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Linda Buxa, “God Stuck with Me,” *Forward in Christ*, September 2009, pp.30f.

Learn from US troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. They're not allowed to watch videos or read on duty. Eyes alert keep hands and feet free. Our own troubles can turn us so inside on ourselves that our feet feel too heavy to run. But US soldiers on guard are allowed Bible-MP3 players. God's Word of forgiveness sets your heart free and keeps your feet ready to run with *"the gospel of peace."* When you see a soul in need, you're there to assure one and all of the Good News that Jesus is their Savior too.

*"Flaming arrows"* – Satan has plenty – for Christians married or unmarried, happy love-life or lonely. They pierce our computer and TV screens with pornography. Watching instead of clicking flames our hearts like oil fire. So *"take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one,"* lest guilt and shame leave you *"with a continual lust for more."* (4:19). Resolutely *"take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."* Why trade heaven's eternal bliss for a few moments of hell's pleasure here? Should you leave a restaurant for a dumpster or wait a little longer until our Savior spreads His forever banquet of the finest food and wine?

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The *"evil day"* can come for us as for Job when the Lord allowed Satan to attack his life. But God strengthened Job as he said, *"When he has tested me, I will come forth as gold."* (23:10 NIV) In the heat of battle God tempers the steel of our faith for each new challenge ahead. Like veteran soldiers we take nothing for granted. What good are **the most powerful weapons** unless you know how to use them? As the battle rages inside and around us, we need to keep going back to be **Trained in the best tactics**.

One member told of Boot Camp with a professor whose lectures left everyone drowsy. One steamy day he droned to those still awake, "Now when I shout, 'Officer on deck!' you all remain seated.' When the sleepers heard, "Officer on deck!" they instinctively jumped to full attention amid laughter. Our Commander wants us at full attention, **Trained in the best tactics** to defeat our enemy from hell.

**The best tactics** target our prayers three directions: for ourselves, our fellow Christians, and our pastor: *"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. Pray 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, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should."*

Sometimes the harder I try, the more I mess things up. I wish I could outgrow impure thoughts, immature attitudes, unkind words. But my devotions and visits with fellow soldiers say I'm still a child of God, desperately in need of His grace for me and for ministering. Along with your pastor, you need constant prayer. The Lord warns, *"If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"* (1 Corinthians 10:12 NIV) It's no burden to pray for fellow Christians. The Spirit's call through Paul is to keep moving forward in prayer, knowing God's kingdom comes as we keep witnessing for Christ. Veterans tell us they fight for more than patriotism. Love wants everyone to get home safely. So, **Be Strong in the Lord**. Don't settle for holey flack jackets and rusty tactics. *"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. [Ours] have divine power to demolish strongholds."* (2 Corinthians 10:4 NIV)

A Jewish scholar's documentary covered several French villages that protected Jewish children in WWII. How could these Protestants without radios cooperate so closely and yet not pressure the kids to convert? Independently, yet together, they risked life and family to protect strangers, gaining nothing for themselves. Unknowingly he answered his own question in the documentary title: *Weapons of the Spirit*. They were armed with God's Word in church. His *belt of truth* unites us with fellow Christians. His *breastplate of righteousness* communes our hearts in prayer. We keep the *Gospel* pure for *ready feet*, not just hearing, but doing. The *shield of faith* and *helmet of salvation* protect our sins forgiven by God. The *sword of the spirit* fires Christ's love in us for friend or foe. In spite of all that divides visible denominations on earth, the invisible body of believers, Christ's hidden Church created and strengthened by God's Word, shines with the beauty of His holiness in a war He already won. Good Christians, **Be Strong in the Lord** – armed and dangerous to the devil, a blessing to blood-bought souls. Amen.