

- **III** – Here are some of the physically toughest jobs on earth – which one would you choose?!
 - Deep sea tuna fisherman. Highest on-the-job mortality rate!
 - Oil well driller
 - Deminer – nearly 100 deaths per year
 - Helicopter lineman
 - Skyscraper window cleaner
 - Logger – about 1 death per thousand per year

When we think of difficult jobs, we often think of physically or mentally or emotionally difficult. But what about spiritually difficult jobs?

Last week, we summarized the theme of Ephesians as

- **“Christians living under the rule of Christ.”**

We're called to live lives that are different from the rest of the world – lives that stand out as followers of Jesus. Listen to these verses from the previous chapters:

- 4:24 “Put on the new self”
- 5:1 “follow Gods example”
- 5:8 “Live as children of light”
- 5:15 “Be very careful then how you live”

and this one really sums it up for us:

- 4:1 “Live a life worthy of the calling you have received”

How do we live up to this? It's hard to live the Christian life. Does anyone here feel like they've lived up to God's expectations? I'm pretty sure I haven't! It's a hard calling.

• God's Strength

Paul begins the final section of Ephesians with these words:

10*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.*

The strength to be a Christian – the strength to live a life worthy of our calling, the strength to follow God's example – comes from... God. Be strong “in the Lord and in HIS mighty power. The strength to live as Christians comes from God. Not from ourselves. And it is continual. A better translation might be “Be continually strengthened”. We need God's strength CONTINUALLY, to live as his people.

III – Think about a normal human Father. A Father doesn't stop being a Father when he goes to work. Or when he goes to sleep. Or when his kids turn 18. He's a Father 24 / 7. And God is continually OUR spiritual Father, and the work he does as our Father is to **continually** strengthen us.

And why do we need his strength? Because our battle is spiritual.

12*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 spiritual conflict we face – the devil’s schemes – is a battle that is beyond OUR control. But it is not beyond GOD’S control. We are in battle with the spiritual, but we are unable to fight the spiritual. So how does God strengthen us **continually** in order to fight this battle?

- **God’s armour**

With His armour.

13 *Therefore 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.*

God provides us with armour. Two things about this armour:

- 1. God provides us with what we need. The FULL armour.
- 2. We WILL need it. All of it. In order to stand.

- **III** – I used to play baseball with a few different teams at different times in my youth.

Once, I played for my school. And there were only really two of us who could play. So I ended up being the catcher. And you get given a lot of equipment as a **catcher**. A mit. A helmet. A facemask. Leg protectors. In-between-your-leg protectors... And guess what? You need it! All of it! Guaranteed the ONE time you don’t use a face mask, you’ll get hit in the face. The one time you don’t put on leg pads, you’ll get hit in the legs.

You have to use ALL of the equipment, all of the time, because you WILL NEED it!

When God offers us the full protection of his armour to stand firm against the devils schemes, why would we say: “No thanks – I’ll just take the helmet” Or “I’ll only be needing the shield” Or “Can I just have the belt?”

“Put on the whole armour of God” Paul says twice. Why? Verse 13: So,

- *“you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.”*

It’s not about just standing your ground in the battle. It’s about standing your ground until the end of the **war**! It’s not about getting through the next day or two. It’s about standing **every** day until the very end. It’s about standing firm, and after you’ve done everything, been through everything, faced everything, battled everything, to **still be standing firm**.

So what is this armour?

- **The belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness** – we are to have the character of God. Upright and godly in all that we do and say.
- **The gospel of peace** – If we want to be ready for battle – we need to KNOW that gospel and be ready to use it. Never water it down. Never leave it. Stand firm with it. And be ready to use it.
- **The shield of faith** – a complete reliance on God. Complete dependence on his protection. Never fighting from our own strength, but always in his strength.
- **The helmet of salvation** – this is the **confidence** that we are SAVED! That we cannot be defeated. It’s the confidence that reminds us each day that even though we battle each day, Jesus has already won the war. We are victorious. **We just need to stand firm.**
- And finally, **the sword of the spirit**, which is the word of God. Use God’s word just as Jesus did against the devil in the wilderness. Know God’s word. Read it. Learn it. Take it to heart. Use it to fight against the devil. Use it to protect you.

We could probably come up with different ideas about what each part means, figuratively and literally, why one’s a helmet and one’s a shield and one’s a sword... but Paul doesn’t spend a lot of time in the detail here. So we need to ask – “What’s his big point?” The big point is this: the armour Paul is talking about, the names he gives it, tells us simply that God’s armour is **complete**. This armour

covers **every part** of us. We are **completely** protected by it. Like the catcher's outfit. He provides it ALL because we need it ALL.

But there is one more thing Paul has to say.

- **Pray...**

Put on all of God's armour and...

- Pray on all occasions
- Pray all kinds of requests
- Always keep on praying
- Pray for all the Lord's people.

Now, let me suggest a different translation of those verses, that many of us fall into the trap of using:

- *"And pray in the Spirit sometimes, with some prayers and requests for some things, occasionally. With this in mind, be alert and if you can, sometimes you might like to find the time to pray for some of the Lord's people."*

For many of us, in our busy lives, prayer is a "sometimes" thing. But Paul says it needs to be an "always" thing. For all things. For all people.

- The image Paul is giving us in Ephesians 6 is an image of **war**.

We are **constantly** in battle. But we stand in the strength of a great commander. God provides us with His **complete** armour – he gives us all we need to stand our ground in the battle and win the war. And he sends us into the battlefield every day and he says: "Pray". Talk to me. Don't lose touch with me.

Are things going well? Then tell me.

Do you need anything? Then tell me.

Is anyone in trouble? Then tell me.

Do you need reinforcements? First aid? More ammunition? More defense teams? More weapons? Then talk to me.

We have a Spiritual Father who has sent us into a spiritual battle with spiritual armour and weapons. And the results of this battle are spiritual. The consequences of this battle are spiritual. The casualties of this battle are spiritual. The attacks of this battle are spiritual. And the victory of this battle is spiritual.

- **Prayer is the spiritual power to talk to our spiritual Father so we can stand firm on the spiritual battlefield.**

I think for many people the biggest thing about Father's Day is talking, or not talking, to your Father. Maybe it's the one day of the year your Dad expects a phone call. Maybe you're estranged and it's a day that reminds you that you don't talk. Maybe your Father's died and you're reminded that you're simply not **able** to talk to him today. Father's Day is about a relationship – and a big part of that relationship is talking.

So Father's Day is a great day to remember that every day, in our spiritual battle, our *Spiritual* Father wants us to talk to him. And our relationship depends on it.

So let's pray now.

10Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. **11**Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. **12**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. **13**Therefore 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. **14**Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, **15**and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. **16**In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. **17**Take 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 Lord's people. **19**Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, **20**for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Final Greetings

21Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. **22**I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you. **23**Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **24**Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.