

Sermon at Davenport Cathedral

Diocese of Iowa

Date: 26/08/2018

Greetings to you all in the name of Christ, our Lord and Our Savior, Amen.

We are delighted to be here for the third time, since we arrived here in the US exactly four months today (26th April 2018). We are grateful for how you as the people of Iowa have taken care of us, hosted us, fed and supported us as we spend our Sabbatical with you. It has been a time well blessed with rest, reflections, reading, studying, etc.

Our time is nearly at the end, we have from today 10 sticks to count before we board the plane on our way back to Nzara. I would presume that I will take your greetings to the people back at home. We are looking forward to that.

Introduction

Maybe you are emotionally strong. Maybe you can handle a lot of pressure, work for long hours, day after day after day. Maybe you are the one who is the emotional anchor in your family and everyone leans on you for support.

The text we had this morning written by Paul to the Ephesians talks about the armor of God. For me coming from a country of many civil wars, many soldiers of all kinds, child soldiers, military governments, the word armour refer to what we see and relate to almost every day.

We have a common talk about “Libs Khamis” Fully armed, fully dressed like a soldier. Uniform, shoes, belt, helmet, weapon, breastplate, etc.

A soldier ready for battle, a soldier.

Here Paul was listing the many ways, Christians can be dressed and be strong to win their battle. He was talking about what kind of battle and struggle of the Christians:

He explains that it is not against flesh and blood as it could be for an army, but it is against the rulers and authorities, powers of darkness, evil spiritual forces.

V. 13 full armor makes a soldier stronger and well prepared to defend his nation.

As Christians Paul suggest that

1. Belt of **truth** buckled around our waist, (Safety), think about belt in your car.
2. Breastplate of **Righteousness** in place
3. Your feet (**Shoes**) fitted with readiness to bring peace in any circumstances.
4. Take up the **shield of Faith** as it extinguishes all flaming arrows of the evil one against you, professional soldiers wear special boots, shoes, manual labor. *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Simply put, faith is “trusting in something you cannot explicitly prove.”*
5. Take the **helmet** of salvation as it will protect you from any attack on you head
6. Take the **sword**, weapon for Christians (**our weapon is the Bible**) which is the word of God.

7. **Prayer on all occasions**, good or bad situations, food or no food, persecution or peace, healthy or not, depression or not.
8. Prayer for others (**Intercessions**), for Paul, for those in mission, companions, justice, church leaders,

There are many **kinds of strength**. But as a Christian, the most important **one is the strength you need in the Lord Jesus Christ**. True Christian strength is not of the body. True Christian strength is **of the spirit, measured in faithfulness, trust, and perseverance**. By Grace we live by Faith.

Our (true) struggle is against powers and principalities and so **the Lord wants us to be strong**.

As Christians, there are many things to fight in this world. **For instance, you can fight sickness, fatigue, death of loved ones, failure of your plans and hopes, questions without answers, and pain without reason**. Yes, we fight in this world.

But we also fight in the spiritual world.

It is Satan who opposes us as Christians. The devil seeks to test us in various ways and to destroy our bodies and souls, so that our relationship with our God is spoiled.

Paul inspired by the Holy spirit was led to write to the Christians in Ephesus that **God wants them to be strong in Him because they are in a spiritual battle against the powerful forces of darkness**.

Question: **What is this spiritual battle?** What form is your battle?

It takes many forms: sexual temptation, serious illness, the loss of a loved one, hatred of others, even God, coveting, addictions: alcohol, drug, pornography. The list can go on and on.

In our part of the world: Poverty, war, corruption, we face every day, I wonder if peaceful country like US, whether too much or too little of the material world can be another front line in our battle.

If you cannot **stand strong** as a Christian: there are spiritual forces ready to weaken you, to cause you to fall, and then to trample you under their feet.

To Be Strong in the Lord is the only way to be able to resist the devil. You are not merely fighting weak and feeble human beings with all their physical and mental deficiencies.

You are fighting the countless host of fallen angels. **It is they who are in control of the world of ignorance, sin, and sadness**.

Therefore, **we must be strong in the Lord and fight the battle with spiritual weapons. We must be clothed, dressed up, like a well-armed soldier ready to win the battle**.

I want to speak briefly of three men: Solomon, Samson, and David.

- **Solomon was the wisest of all men.** He had great wealth and great power.
- **Samson was the strongest of all men.** He killed 1000 men with the jawbone of an ass and he toppled a temple with his own hands.
- **David was gifted with devotion.** He loved the Lord and sought to honor and glorify God. Just look at the Psalms and their beautiful poetry of adoration.

Yet, all three fell. As strong as these men were, they were no match for the schemes of the Devil.

Satan, in his evil cunning led **Solomon** to marry many foreign women and through them he fell to the temptation to serve false gods.

Samson, as strong as he was, was unable to resist the persistence of a woman. Delilah hounded him into telling the secret of his strength, and through her betrayal of Delilah, he ultimately fell.

David fell into the temptation of **lust, then adultery, then murder.**

Question: Are you any stronger than they?

God wants you to be strong in Him because the spiritual battle can only be won through the power of God alone.

Relying on God, not yourself. Take the helmet of salvation.

Why do you take the armor? So you won't be naked and rely on your own strength. So, you may remain strong.

That is why these 8 instruments that I mentioned earlier makes a well-prepared soldier. **So that you might remain strong in faith, rooted in the gospel, living in truth, and victorious by faith. It is the armor of God that you wear, that keeps you safe and strong.**

It has already been field tested and proven itself worthy of trust. To trust the armor of God is to trust God.

You can trust God's provision to win the battle, not your own. God's faithfulness to you has already been manifested in the cross. You have already tested the armor of God. You have already trusted in Him and His provision.

The Armor of God has already been tested. Faith in God is never misplaced.

God wants you to be strong in Him because the spiritual battle is won through prayer. Pray at all times in the Spirit. This may not mean every second. But it does mean in all things with all perseverance.

This means that you are to continue in prayer even though you do not seem to get an answer or the answer you get does not seem to be what you had hoped for.

Are you praying for your brothers and sisters in Christ? Are you praying for those who run this church? Are you praying for your Dean and his associates?

And Paul even asks for prayer so that He might be able to speak the gospel. Though Paul is long dead and we cannot pray for him, you can pray for those who further the gospel.

We shall be strong when we dwell in the Lord.

Psalms 84: our strength will grow till we appear before the Lord

We shall be strong when we live on the bread that came from heaven, the bread of life, we shall not perish like those who ate manna and died.

We shall be strong if we pay attention to our God and follow his ways. Paying attention calls for discipline. Solomon called the elders and leaders of his community, to listen and pay attention.

As I come to Conclusion I want you to know that:

Every one of us has a struggle going on and that struggle is always spiritual. It might be internal with thoughts that are tearing you apart inside. It might be external with forces that seem to be working against you that are outside of your control.

In order for you to be strong, in order for you to fight the good fight of the faith and win the battle: you must put on belt of truth, faith, breast plate of righteousness, ready with the feet that carries the gospel of peace, take the helmet of salvation. You must use the gospel which is the Word of God, and last, but not least, you must pray.

Will you? Will you pray, will you be faithful, will you trust in the Lord and rest in His provision for victory in Christ? You must decide. You must act.