

For as long as there have been wars between nations and kingdoms, generals have led their armies into battle. Before each battle, these field marshals would give their soldiers words of encouragement. Such are the words before us today. You, who are the baptized, are soldiers in God's army. Your General and Field Marshal is Jesus. And through His apostle, here in Ephesians 6, He gives you words of encouragement.

And such words we need. For the enemy is strong. And the enemy is not flesh and blood, and thus we are unable to wound him and make him bleed, nor can we keep him away with doors that are bolted and locked.

The enemy is described here as the "*cosmic powers over this present darkness...the spiritual forces of evil.*" It is imperative that we do not make light of this enemy. And yet, the words before us are filled with comfort and encouragement.

There is a parallel between these words and God's words through Moses to His people in Exodus. They were trapped between the Red Sea and the Egyptian army. And they were terrified. Here is what was said to them: "*Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will work for you today...the Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.*"

"*Stand firm...the Lord fights for you.*" These words are yours on this day. And how we need these words, because we are not good fighters. Indeed, we are better at fighting against our God than against our enemy; resisting God's will for us more than what our enemy wills for us. I know this is true of you because this is true of me. This is reason for us to repent, but not reason for us to be discouraged.

The Lord knows our weakness, and He knows our enemy. He Himself dealt with him. This is why we are so encouraged. Not only does Jesus fight for you; He fought for you and defeated the enemy from the cross. Our enemy is not flesh and blood, yet it was Jesus' flesh and blood that defeated him once and for all.

And so, God's words to His people in Exodus are also for you. "*The Lord fights for you, and you have only to be silent.*" It is not for you to stand, move forward, and fight. But rather, stand back, and be silent, because the fight is not yours to win. It is not our battle to defeat Satan. Jesus already defeated him. We do not need more strength with which to fight, therefore. We simply need Jesus. And thus, Paul's words point us to Christ and to His strength. "*Be strong in the Lord,*" he says, "*and in the strength of His might.*" Your weakness finds rest in Jesus' strength. And because He became weak for you, you are strengthened in Him.

Jesus is very much like David who went out to face Goliath. But he took off Saul's armor. He had no spear nor sword in his hand. He had only five smooth stones for his sling. And with these, he defeated the enemy.

And so, Jesus removed His armor as He went to the cross. He permitted no angel to fight for Him. He was stripped of His clothing. There was no weapon in His hand. And in His weakness, He defeated the enemy. The five stones were the five wounds in His hands, His feet, and His side.

Here on this bloody cross is your strength. Here your enemy has met his match and is defeated. Be silent, therefore, and hear your Savior speak: "*It is finished!*" The victory has been won. The head of your enemy has been crushed.

Fear not, therefore, and yet be ready and be armed. Not with offensive weapons, but with defensive. For the enemy, though crushed and defeated, is nonetheless still with his weapons – his flaming darts which are his lies that come from his mouth.

"*Therefore,*" says Paul, "*take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day.*" Today is the evil day, the day your enemy is on the attack. You cannot face this enemy as Jesus faced him. You must wear the armor of God.

But do not go in search of this armor. Do not look within yourself for it, or listen to those who peddle Satan's lies and preach to you everything except your baptism into Christ. Because here in your baptism is God's armor. You already wear it. In your baptism you are clothed with the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the Gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the defensive sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

Every bit of this armor covers you in your baptism because you are clothed with Jesus in your baptism, and He Himself is this armor that you wear.

Stand, therefore. Stand back, and stand firm. Stand in Jesus. Every day put on the whole armor of God by going to your baptism and the assurance that is there for you. Your baptism assures you that you are God's child, that you are covered with Jesus, with His blood, and His blood washes away your sins. Have you resisted God's will? Fear not, you are forgiven. Have you fought against God more than you have fought against your enemy? God forgives you.

Do not be afraid. Jesus is your David who has won the battle for you. Your place is within His bloody wounds. Here you are safe, and here you stand. For here, in Jesus, is the whole armor of God. Amen.