

All Saints Talk for Sunday 23rd February 2025

Standing Firm Together Emma King

Ephesians 6:10-24 The Armour of God

We've come to the end of this amazing sermon series. In the first three weeks, we have heard how we are chosen by God, Empowered by God, and we are Gods handiwork. We then went on to have learnt how we are members of one body through Christ. We have heard about how, as a church, we should be united and living as children of light. And then last week we heard from Paddy about respecting one another through mutual submission. So, it's been an amazing 7 weeks, and now we come to the 8th where we pull it all together by standing firm together and putting on our Armour of God!

Because I don't know about you, but life can feel like a battle sometimes. The challenges we face, whether personal struggles, temptations, or moments of doubt, can often leave us feeling isolated, vulnerable, and weak. I have lost count of the amount of people that have told me that they feel lonely. But we are not meant to fight alone.

As Paul writes, God has given us both individual strength and a **community of believers** to support us in the spiritual battle we face. In **our reading today**, Paul talks about putting on the **full armour of God** to withstand the attacks of the enemy. However, he also speaks about the need for **unity and support** in the Christian walk. The idea of "standing firm" is not just about individual strength but about standing together as one body in Christ.

The Call to Stand Firm Together

Paul finishes this important letter with an urgent call for Christians to "be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power" (v10). This is not just a call to individual strength, but a call for the entire body of believers (all of us) to be strong together, relying on God's power, not our own.

Paul opened his letter with a prayer for the Ephesian Christians to receive wisdom and knowledge. And now, here, after discussing the real-world application of that wisdom, Paul notes that we should not rely on our own strength, but on the power of God to win victory in life's battles.

The Nature of Spiritual Warfare

In verse 12, Paul tells us that “our battle is not against flesh and blood”, but against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. The challenges we face—whether external struggles or internal battles—are ultimately spiritual in nature. We are in a fight that requires more than human strength and wisdom. We need divine power to resist the schemes of the enemy and unfortunately, the enemy is everywhere, looking for ways to get in. Looking for cracks to seep through. This is why Paul emphasizes the need to “put on the full armour of God” (v13)—not just for individual protection, but for corporate strength. When we stand firm, we are called to do so together, as a united body.

The Church as a Unified Body

As the body of Christ, the church, we are not just individual members, but part of something much larger. Paul makes this clear throughout his letter, reminding the church that **together** we are being built into a spiritual house, a holy temple. Back in Ephesians 2:21, we read “In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple.” We cannot stand firm alone in this battle. We are part of a body, a community that is designed to strengthen and encourage one another.

When I was younger, one of my grandmother’s favourite songs to sing to me was Dry Bones. She used to touch all the bones of my body as she sang it, and it used to make me squeal with laughter. Its only later in life that I found out the lyrics are inspired by Ezekiel 37:1–14, in which the prophet Ezekiel visits the Valley of Dry Bones, and prophesies that they will one day be resurrected at God's command, picturing the realisation of the New Jerusalem. Just as the physical body needs all its parts working together to function properly, the church needs each member to be standing firm in Christ for the entire body to be strong.

Paul then describes the pieces of the armour of God. Each piece is necessary for both individual strength and for the collective strength of the church.

The Belt of Truth

“Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist.” (v14)

The belt holds everything in place. Truth is the foundation of our faith. As a community, we are to stand firm in the truth of God’s Word. I spoke a few weeks back about “Truth” in the world we live in now. The truth of Scripture binds us together, and we are to help one another stay grounded in truth. In a world filled with lies, deception, and confusion, truth becomes our stabilising force. When we hold to God’s truth, we avoid division and confusion. As a body, being committed to the truth of Scripture together, speaking truth to one another, and holding each other accountable in love, has to be the only way we stay united.

The Breastplate of Righteousness

“With the breastplate of righteousness in place.” (v14)

Righteousness guards our hearts. We are made righteous in Christ and our righteous lives protect us from the enemy’s attacks. But as a community, we must also encourage one another to live rightly. When we fall into sin or temptation, it affects the whole body. So, we need to be a community that holds one another accountable and encourages one another to live lives worthy of the calling we have received.

The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace

“With your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.” (v15)

The shoes represent the gospel of peace, and they are meant to prepare us to move forward in the mission of God. We are called not only to stand firm but also to advance the kingdom of God together.

At Trinity College where I trained, and so did Tom. The strapline is “Live as if the Kingdom is near.” And I love that! Our Diocese strapline is “Living and telling the story of Jesus.” And ours here at All Saints is “Sharing the life and message of Jesus.”

Our shared mission to spread the good news unites us and gives us purpose as a body. When we share the gospel with others, we work together to bring peace to a broken world. Standing firm together means being united in our mission and encouraging one another to go out into the world with the message of peace in Christ.

The Shield of Faith

“Take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.” (v16)

The shield is meant to protect us from the “fiery arrows of the enemy” (v16) — attacks like doubt, fear, and temptation. A shield is not only meant for individual protection but can be used to protect others. Together, we can shield one another with our faith, standing firm in what we believe. We are called to stand together in faith, lifting up one another when doubts and temptations arise. As a church, we are to shield each other in prayer, in encouragement, and in our shared faith.

The Helmet of Salvation

“Take the helmet of salvation.” (v17)

The helmet protects the mind. Salvation in Jesus gives us the assurance that we have been rescued from sin and death and that we are safe in Him. The helmet of salvation is not just for individual assurance; together, we are a community of the saved. We can encourage one another in our shared salvation, reminding each other of God’s saving grace. As a community, we celebrate our salvation together. And it’s so important to remind one another of the hope we have in Christ, especially in times of trial or doubt. When things are going on in our lives, our world can become cloudy. We need each other to be the light shining through the clouds.

The Sword of the Spirit

“And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” (v17).

The sword of the Spirit is the only offensive weapon in the armour of God. The Word of God is powerful and effective, able to cut through the enemy’s lies and deception. But the Word of God is not just for individual battle—it is a shared weapon that we use to encourage, teach, and correct one another. We must stand firm in the Word together, studying, meditating, and applying it in our lives. As we share the Word with each other, we equip the body to stand strong in the faith.

This is why home groups and prayer triplets are so vital. The Bible is not just a novel. It’s everything. It is our guide, our strength, our comfort, our armour, our conscience, our truth.

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.” (v18)

Prayer is the means by which we stand firm together in the spiritual battle. Paul emphasizes the need to pray for each other, to support one another in prayer, and to be united in our petitions before God. Prayer is the thread that weaves us together in our dependence on God. Standing firm together means lifting one another up in prayer, asking God to strengthen us, protect us, and guide us.

At Alpha on a Monday, Godfrey told us about a book he’s been reading: “When we pray like Jesus.” I have been reading it, and I would encourage you to do the same. Elisa encourages us to look at the two-sided prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane: *“Take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”* (Luke 22:42). Godfrey talked about how it has changed his prayer life and how he prays with people and for people. Take this cup – Being honest about what is going on. Not my will – abandoning the situation to the Father.

I wonder when we last re-evaluated how we pray for each other?
Paul's call to put on the full armour of God is not just an individual call. We are part of a community of believers, and our strength lies in standing firm together in the power of God.

As we face the challenges and spiritual battles of life, let's remember that we do not stand alone. We have a superpower that is each other. We stand firm together—in truth, righteousness, faith, and the gospel. We are called to encourage one another, support one another, and pray for one another. Together, we are stronger. Together, we can stand against the schemes of the enemy. May we be a church that stands firm together in the power of Christ, united in His love and mission.

Closing Prayer

Loving God,

Thank You for the strength we find in You and in one another.
Help us to stand firm together, putting on Your full armour, and encouraging one another in the faith.
May Your power and unity be evident in our lives as we seek to walk in Your victory.

In Jesus' name,
Amen.