

# How To Stand • Ephesians 6:10-18

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. *Tragedy*

1. It was an extravaganza called "Over The Edge" and it took place in the Kemper Arena on May 23<sup>rd</sup>
2. 34 year old Owen Hart was supposed to dive from 70 feet above the floor, into the ring
3. But something went wrong
4. Somehow, the quick release mechanism that fixed him to the cable that would ensure a safe landing was opened, and Hart fell
5. The crowd of wrestling fans that had packed into the arena thought it was all just part of the show
6. They screamed and cheered wildly, thinking it was another of the many stunts that are staged at these slam-fests
7. But Hart didn't get up off the mat
8. When the ambulance arrived and the emergency workers hurriedly rolled the stretcher into the ring, the spectators still thought it was all just a part of getting their money's worth
9. But as they watched, and saw that they were really trying to revive Hart, they began to quiet
10. And slowly, the realization that something terribly wrong had happened began to spread over the crowd
11. By the hundreds, they stood in shock as they realized Hart was dead

### B. *Reality!*

1. Personally, I despise professional wrestling - it is just not my cup of tea
2. But what happened that night in the Kemper Arena is a powerful illustration of what we are going to look at this morning
3. You see friends, while those people went to be entertained, to see a show, to escape from their lives for a couple hours into the fantasy of professional wrestling, REALITY interrupted their plans
  - a. without stopping to ask if it was okay
  - b. without being polite -
  - c. reality intruded into their diversion
4. And without warning, the fake was confronted with the real
5. Staged violence was *upstaged* by death!
6. While you and I live most of our lives, thinking that we are at peace, safe from the ravages of war, the fact of the matter is - we are locked in a deadly battle with a powerful foe
7. And the stakes are nothing less than life or death - ETERNAL Life & Death
8. Part of our enemy's strategy for keeping us ineffective and weak is to lull us into a distracted mindset
  - a. he dangles bright, shiny trinkets before our eyes

- b. he sings soothing songs of ease - like the mermaids in the Odyssey
  - c. anything to take us out of the fight
  - d. but all the time he weaves his web of deception, people are falling to their deaths
  - e. and every once in a while, someone near us falls,
  - f. we wake up, and realize the battle is on
9. Friends, there is a war raging all around us
10. We'd better wake up and get in the fight
11. It is this Paul speaks of in Ephesians 6 . . .

## II. TEXT

### A. Vs. 10-13

**{10} Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.**

**{11} Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.**

**{12} For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.**

**{13} Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.**

1. Here we see the last of the 3 postures Paul writes about in Ephesians: sit, walk, and now *stand*
2. I want to start with v. 12 because this is the reason we need to be strong and stand

**{12} We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.**

3. The war between God and Satan has its roots in the very beginning of time
  - a. the devil was originally named Lucifer and was the highest and brightest of all created beings
  - b. but something happened and Lucifer determined to replace God
  - c. not content to worship and serve God, he decided he wanted to *be* god
  - d. so he rebelled, and managed to persuade a third of the angels to join him in his rebellion
  - e. of course he was defeated, and removed from lofty position
  - f. he became Satan, God's adversary; and the angels who followed him became the demons
  - g. their program now is to oppose the plan and purposes of God
  - h. and their chief target is man because men and women are *God's* focal point
  - i. you see, God created mankind to provide Himself an eternal companion
  - j. and because relationship is only meaningful and rewarding when those in the relationship have the power to make real choices, both God and the devil seek to sway men and women to their side
  - k. since God loves us and wants us and desires only to give us the finest of

- blessing - because the devil opposes God, he seeks to sway man to turn away from His creator
- l. ultimately, what the devil wants to do, is destroy us, so that he can break the heart of God
  - m. this is his revenge
4. All of the evil, violence, and suffering we see in the world around us today, are not the real battle, they are only the *symptoms* of the war being waged in the unseen realm
  5. We *do not* wrestle against flesh and blood though it may seem that way sometimes
    - a. when we are at work and the other employees are persecuting and hassling us
    - b. when we see the government pass unrighteous laws and promote evil
    - c. all this is but a *manifestation* of unseen spiritual agents who are at work behind the scenes, blinding the eyes and minds of people so that they might not see and hear the truth
  6. Those of us who have come to faith in Christ and been born again, have left the devil's camp and sided with God in this cosmic struggle
  7. And because we are now living in the truth and filled with the Spirit of God, we present a dangerous weapon in God's hand that we ought to know the devil and his minions will seek to resist and make ineffective
  8. Note carefully how Paul describes this spiritual contest
  9. The word "wrestling" means this is a *personal* contest
    - a. the word means a face to face struggle
    - b. the Spanish say, "mano a mano," hand to hand combat
    - c. it's the picture of two locked in each other's grip, swaying back and forth as they push against one another looking for an opening
    - d. don't picture two armies facing each other on a field of battle at a distance shooting arrows or firing artillery
    - e. the battle lines have been joined and now it is one on one
  10. Who we are locked in this one on one battle with are *spiritual*, not physical beings
    - a. and Paul's language is precise
    - b. he presents our foe as a well-ordered hierarchy
    - c. this isn't some motley band of disorganized raiders we face
    - d. it is a well-ordered and highly organized opponent
      - 1) it would seem that in the demonic realm there are varying levels of authority and power
- {12} We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.**
- 2) these beings have positions and rank
  - 3) they have assignments,
  - 4) and they go about their role in a effective and efficient manner
11. Because our enemy is spiritual rather than physical, *natural* weapons and strategies of warfare are totally useless

12. And because of the highly ordered nature of their arrangement, we are completely outgunned if we try to battle only in our own strength
13. That is why Paul writes in verses 10 & 11 . . .
- {10} Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.**
- {11} Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.**
14. Then look on down to v. 13
- {13} Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.**
15. How can you tell who the victor is when the battle is done? He or she is the last one standing!
16. Paul says, "When all is said and done - when the battle is finally over, make sure YOU are the one who is standing victorious, and the enemy has either fled the field or lies dead at your feet."
17. But there's only one way we can stand like that - there is only one way to resist the devil and his well ordered ranks of evil assistants - And that's by taking advantage of the strength the Lord gives us
18. This strength finds itself doled out in some spiritual equipment Paul calls the armor of God
19. It's not hard to imagine Paul, writing this letter from his imprisonment in Rome, looking at one of the Roman soldiers who guarded him
  - a. he saw in their armor a ready set of illustrations for the things the Lord has given us to find victory
  - b. indeed, as soldiers in the Lord's army, we have a set of armor even *more* effective than the armor of the mighty Roman legionnaire
20. Paul lists this spiritual equipment in vs. 14-18, but before we take a look at it, I want to say that we must not extend the picture Paul paints here too far
  - a. when he talks about the belt of truth or the breastplate of righteousness
  - b. we have to be careful that we don't think there is a *literal* belt or breastplate
  - c. Paul simply looks at the soldier's armor, sees what it does, and then finds a *spiritual application* for it
21. So, let's dig in now and see what is ours that will enable us to not only fight, but to be victorious over all the power and authority of the enemy . . .

## **B. Vs. 14-18**

- {14} Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,**
1. "Stand therefore" is literally, "Stand like this"
  2. The first piece of armor Paul mentions is the belt of truth
  3. As we use them today, belts are of little more function than decoration
    - a. yes, a few of us use them to actually hold our pants up
    - b. but by and large, they are ornamental
  4. Not so as a piece of armor!
    - a. the Roman belt was more like a girdle in that it held things together
    - b. it was the *integrating principle*, if you will, of all the rest of the armor

- c. it held the scabbard for the sword -
  - d. it held the bottom of the breastplate to the body -
  - e. because it was wide, like a modern weightlifting back-brace, it provided some protection against a blow to the kidneys
  - f. as the soldier prepared to enter conflict he would hike up his skirt and tuck it into the belt to allow greater freedom of movement
  - g. it also had strips of metal-studded leather hanging down in front to protect the groin
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- h. Paul likens the belt to *truth* and it's fitting he does because truth is the integrating principle in the believer's life - truth is what holds everything together
  - i. Paul mentions truth *first* in the armor because the devil's only weapon is deceit
    - 1) in Col. 2 we read that Jesus has *disarmed* the devil and his minions
    - 2) and though he is without any weapons, still he speaks
    - 3) and what he speaks are lies
    - 4) he is without power, except what we give him by believing his lies
    - 5) so the first piece of armor we must embrace is truth, because without it we can't even get in the fight
  - j. truth, like the Roman belt, holds everything else in place
    - 1) we call internal truth, *integrity* - being morally together
    - 2) without integrity, we are prone to defeat in spiritual attack because what we might be able to keep secret from other people, we cannot keep secret from the spiritual realm!
    - 3) just as the belt held the sword, so without a firm grip on truth, the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, is bereft of power
    - 4) as the soldier would secure the skirt of his tunic under his belt to allow himself greater mobility, so truth gives us great freedom of movement because we are not *bound* or tripped up by deception
5. The next piece of armor is the **breastplate of righteousness**
- a. this protected the soldier's vital organs by either a leather, wood, or metal plate
  - b. there were three blows that a soldier would always go for in battle
    - 1) the head shot
    - 2) the leg shot
    - 3) or the gut shot - this was the best
  - c. the breastplate protected the heart and vital organs from attack
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- d. Paul calls it the breastplate of **righteousness**
    - 1) he knows that our understanding and application of our righteousness *in Christ* is essential if we are to survive the accusations and propaganda of the devil
    - 2) the righteousness Paul is referring to here is *not* the rightness that arises out of our own good works
    - 3) it is the gift-righteousness that comes through our faith in Christ
    - 4) I know this is something we have all experienced: we are going through a trial, and we call out to God for help

- 5) and the thought comes, "I have no right to ask God for help - I'm a wretched sinner! In fact, I'm probably going through this because God is upset with me. Yeah - this must be His judgment. I can't ask God for help - I'm not worthy!"
  - 6) friend, know where that thought comes from - the pit of hell
  - 7) get on your breastplate and resist
  - 8) you are righteous before God because He gives you HIS righteousness when you believe in Jesus!
  - 9) when the enemy seeks to make you *feel* unworthy - agree with him, YOU ARE UNWORTHY in yourself - but you are not standing against him, IN YOURSELF
  - 10) you are standing IN CHRIST, and that means you are righteous in GOD'S EYES!
  - 11) in war, soldiers don't go to battle in their own name; they represent their nation or kingdom
  - 12) think about the three US soldiers who were captured by the Serbs recently; their value was not that they were fighting in their own name - they were representatives of the USA
  - 13) in the same way - you and I don't battle in our own names - we represent the Kingdom of God - and we have all the authority of the King to fight with His power to effect His victory!
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**{15} and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;**

6. The Roman soldier's combat shoes were not exactly the most comfortable things in the world!
  - a. they were made of leather and had nails driven through the soles to provide a solid footing
  - b. they resembled a pair of golf shoes
  - c. this footwear helped the Romans win many key battles because their armies were able to stand when their adversaries were slipping and sliding on a bloody or rain soaked field.
7. The spiritual parallel is that the shoes are a *readiness to share the gospel of peace*
  - a. with whom do we share it?
  - b. with those flesh and blood humans that we so often *mistake* for the enemy
8. You see, what Paul is saying is that we need to *keep* a wartime mentality that sees things as they *really* are
9. We must be ever ready to proclaim the gospel which brings peace to the lost
10. Never lose sight of the objective and prize of the spiritual contest = PEOPLE!
11. History tells us that the Romans began to lose their military superiority when their soldiers grew lackadaisical in their commitment to be the best and to be ready at all times
  - a. they stopped seeing themselves as *fighters* and started to identify themselves more as *consumers*
  - b. the first real evidence of this was that they started taking off their combat shoes as soon as they got into camp, and more and more went into battle without them because they weren't very comfortable

- c. they traded their sense of mission and vision for leisure and pleasure
- 12. This reminds us to keep in mind who and what we are!
  - a. we are soldiers of the Almighty!
  - b. and we have a mission to perform
  - c. 2 Tim 2:3-4

**{3} You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. {4} No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.**

- 13. Our mission, is *Mission* - winning the Lost
  - 14. Don't let anything distract you from that
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**{16} above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.**

- 15. "**Above all**" is better rendered as "in front of all," which is exactly where we expect to find the shield
  - 16. The shield was the first line of defense
    - a. the Roman shield was typically about 4' high and 2' wide and slightly curved
    - b. it was made of wood and banded with metal strips and covered with leather
  - 17. In ancient warfare, arrows were often dipped in tar and then lit
    - a. when they struck, the tar would fly forward and burn whatever it touched
    - b. but the leather covering on the Roman shield did not burn, so the fire went out
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- 18. Paul calls the shield, *faith*
  - a. the devil loves to shoot flaming arrows of doubt at us
  - b. like nasty pests, these doubts can burn their way into our hearts and minds
  - c. so the way to face doubt is with faith
  - b. whenever we are attacked, we remember first and foremost that *we are not alone*
  - c. Jesus is our captain who has gone before us and destroyed the works of the devil
  - d. He has disarmed principalities and powers
- 19. There was an interesting part of the shield that is often forgotten
  - a. the Romans were known for their effectiveness in battle because they worked as a *team*
  - b. the Greeks had developed the phalanx
  - c. but the Romans took the idea a step farther and moved en masse on an enemy in ordered and secure ranks
  - d. this was made possible by the edges of their shields
  - e. they had little sockets they could attach to each other; like the ganging sockets on the sides of the chairs
  - f. this presented an impassable front to the enemy
- 20. While we each need to hold our own shield of faith, we are also to link up with others and encourage one another to press on
- 21. God never intended us to either live or battle alone: spiritual growth and victory does not take place in isolation!
- 22. Divide and conquer has always been an effective strategy, and the devil has

used it liberally

23. When you are going through a rough time, don't isolate yourself, link up with other believers and let them protect your flanks
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**{17a} And take the helmet of salvation,**

24. The helmet protected against a head shot, which was fatal

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25. Here, Paul calls it *salvation*; but in 1 Thes 5:8, it is the helmet of the *HOPE* of salvation

- a. that gives us an insight into how the helmet pictures salvation
  - b. it's our hope in the final victory of Christ over Satan
  - c. there is little spirit to fight a *battle* when you know the *war* is already lost
  - d. but as Christians, we can fight on, because we know that every victory we secure brings us one step closer to the consummation
26. And that is why the *hope of salvation* is a helmet - it protects our mind!
27. It keeps us from the fear and suggestion of defeat the devil tries to lay on us
28. If he can only get a person to start thinking they are going to fail, he's nearly won the battle of temptation
29. Remember that he has already lost the war, and in Christ, we have already WON!
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**{17b} and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;**

30. What we've read so far is armor for *protection*; it's defensive in nature

31. But here we see something that is used both defensively and *offensively*

32. The Roman sword was a brilliant piece of work!

- a. it was short, only about 2 ft. long from tip to end of the handle
  - b. it was double edge, so could swing both ways -
  - c. though it was usually used in a *thrust* rather than a hacking motion
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33. Paul calls it the *Word of God*

- a. reminds us of Heb 4:12

**For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**

- b. we see Jesus using the Word of God *defensively* in Luke 4 in the temptation in the wilderness
- c. we see Him using it *offensively* in His confrontations with the religious leaders and in His sermons to the multitudes
- d. in Revelation we see a sword coming from the mouth of Christ as he deals with His enemies once and for all at the end of the age
- e. for us, the Word is both *defensive* and *offensive*
  - 1) we use it in defending against temptation and error
  - 2) we use it in encouraging one another and in winning the lost to faith in Jesus
- f. there's an important reason why the Roman sword was short
  - 1) it was not only was it used on the enemy
  - 2) it was used on one's self for surgery
    - a) it could be used to remove arrows
    - b) and was sometimes placed in the fire till it was red hot, then applied



to a wound to remove infection and cauterize it against further harm

- g. every once in a while, one of the fiery darts of the devil gets through and burns us
- h. the way we remove it is to apply the Word of God right at that point
- i. sometimes sin infects us and begins to spread it's rot through our soul
- j. but the Word comes and heals the infection and sets a guard over us so that we don't sin again

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34. Finally . . .

**{18} praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints;**

- 35. Though Paul doesn't assign prayer to a piece of the Roman armor, it is still a part of the Christian's *spiritual* armory
- 36. The one piece of the Roman soldier's equipment Paul's guards would not have brought with them on this particular assignment was the pilium, his spear!
  - a. each soldier carried two to launch as missiles at the enemy from a distance
  - b. and so, while the majority of our warfare is a face to face battle -
  - c. there is one weapon we can use in the larger conflict that is like the spear - prayer
- 37. As we pray, we are launching missiles wherever we direct them
- 38. And like the Roman pilium, they pierce through the ranks of the enemy
- 39. Maybe Paul didn't call prayer a spear because while the Romans only carried two, we are to **pray always!**
- 40. And we are to pray, as he says here, **with all kinds of prayer and supplications**, meaning *requests*
  - a. there are many forms of prayer
  - b. there's praise, intercession, thanks giving, petition, worship,
  - c. there are long prayers, short prayers
  - d. there are even one word prayers - "HELP!"
- 41. But our prayer must be **in the Spirit** which means it must be directed by God if it's to be effective!
  - a. as we hold the pilium of prayer, we need to listen for our Captain's orders on where to throw it
  - b. this morning, we can be effective in spiritual warfare *around the world*
  - c. the key is to be attentive to the Spirit's direction on where to point our prayer
  - d. Chile, Ukraine, Uganda, China, Yemen, India, Malawi, Sudan, Vladivostok, where?
  - e. how should we throw it - high, low, or midpoint; what target do we aim at?
- 42. Earlier we saw that the demonic realm is a well-organized hierarchy
  - a. our spiritual opponent is highly ordered
  - b. with a complex and efficient structure
  - c. all too often, the Church engages in Spiritual warfare like the Scots faced the English
    - 1) if you saw Braveheart, you know what I'm talking about
    - 2) the English were all in neat ranks and well trained and ordered

- 3) the Scots just lined up on a hill where ever they wanted to stand
- 4) then when it was time for battle - they just rushed across the field without any order and smashed into the English line
- d. sad to say - that's the way we all too often battle our enemy
- e. It's imperative if we're to stand and be victorious that we fight IN THE SPIRIT
  - 1) that we get our direction from the Lord
  - 2) that we know where we are to stand
  - 3) who is to be on our left and who on our right?
  - 4) who is in front of me and who is behind?
  - 5) what is our mission - where, when and how do we attack?
  - 6) where is the enemy attacking and how can we defend against his assault
- f. all of this demands that we be in constant communication with our captain

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. Watchful

1. Finally Paul says that we need to be watchful, we need to stay awake and be alert
2. We need to have a tough minded attitude of stick-to-it-tiveness!
3. Another tactic of the devil is to use peace as a weapon
  - a. he will let up in his assault, hoping to lull us into a false sense of peace
  - b. then, when we've taken off our shoes and helmet, BAM!
  - c. he attacks!
4. So, we need to stay alert and ready at all times

#### B. A Wartime Mentality

1. In 4:16, Paul told the Ephesians to redeem the time, because the days are evil
2. We live in a fallen world
  - a. and because it is fallen, the days are evil
  - b. while God is sovereign and His providence is unshakable,
  - c. still, this planet on which we live is in rebellion against Him
3. And that means we live in enemy occupied territory!
4. Friends - never forget that we are at war!
5. And we need to adopt a *war time mentality*!
  - a. just as our nation did during WWII
  - b. the whole country reoriented itself to winning the contest in The Pacific and Europe
6. That is what Paul is calling us to here
7. That when all is said and done, we might be found, *standing*
8. And standing - The Victors!