

Ephesians Chapter 6 v 10 - 20

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Preacher: James Swanson

[0 : 00] Very, very good morning to all of you, and particularly if you're visiting us, this morning, then we do extend a welcome in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It's great to have nearly everybody who's been at the September Bible School this weekend with us still. Unfortunately, most of our speakers have had to get back to their churches.

They'll be preaching this morning, apart from James, who's with us. He'll be bringing to us God's Word a little later on, so we're very thankful to him. But we've had a fantastic weekend and been some wonderful Bible teaching, some really encouraging fellowship as well.

And it's the last part of our September Bible School this morning. We're here again because of the Lord Jesus Christ, because of our God and Father.

And our verse that's on the screen there behind me reminds us that when we come together, and we've been thinking about worship and worshipping together over this weekend, we're coming to God's throne of grace.

[1 : 29] Let us then approach, draw near to God's throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

This is the wonderful thing for the Christian, and the wonderful thing that happens when we come together in this way as Christians. We are approaching, drawing near to God, and we see that he's the God who is the ruler, the authority, God's throne.

But it's not a throne of judgment in that sense, but a throne of grace, which means his undeserved favor, his love, his kindness. That's why we can come with confidence, because through Jesus we have the forgiveness of sins.

Through Jesus we come to God, and we can look to him to meet our every need, to bring to him our worship and praise, and as well to know his blessing. So our first hymn is going to come on the screen behind me.

It reflects those words, Lord, I come before your throne of grace. We'll stand and sing as the music begins to play. This God of grace.

[2 : 53] Let's pray together. Truly, you are the faithful God. Truly, you are the God in whom we can put our trust.

The God who will never fail, nor let us down. The God who will never leave us, nor forsake us. The God of all comfort. The God who gives us strength in our weaknesses.

The God who forgives our sins. You are a faithful God. And, oh Lord, we come to you again with that sense of wonder and amazement, that you, this faithful, this good, this holy, this awesome God, should care for us.

That you should care for us, oh Lord, and be interested in us. That you should have us upon your heart and upon your mind. That you should be at work in this world for our blessing and good.

Lord, we find this amazing and astonishing, not only because you are so great, but because, again, whenever we come near to you, we realize just how not great we are.

[4 : 02] We recognize and see again, oh Lord, that we are sinful. That we are those who have not loved you or been faithful to you. That we've been those, Lord, who have been self-obsessed, self-concerned, self-interested.

We've been forgetful, neglectful. Oh Lord, even disobedient again and again to what we know is your good will. But, Lord, we thank you that in spite of us, you love us.

In spite of us, you are faithful to us. Oh Lord, not because we are better than others, but as your children, as those who have put our faith and trust in your Son.

As those who are your dear children. Lord, we are those whom you have loved in such a very real and powerful way. Thank you that you have loved us.

It's then that we experience and enter into the joy and the delight of your love. Your forgiveness. Then, oh Lord, only then do we receive that newness of life by your Holy Spirit and become new creations.

[5 : 41] Oh Lord, we thank you. That, oh Lord, that you do not leave us in our sin, but you lift us up from it. You rescue us from it, from its consequences, from its judgment, from its guilt.

But also, Lord, you set us free from its power. That we might live in newness of life. That we might live to your glory and praise. So we come here this morning.

Each of us. Lord, you know us. Nothing about us is hidden from your sight. Our thoughts, our struggles, our fears, our anxieties. Yes, Lord, our rebellion and our sin.

Lord, you see us totally and completely. And Lord, we pray, please meet with us where we are. Deal with us where we are. Whether we are those that need for the very first time to recognize our sin and repent.

And receive your grace. Whether we are those, Lord, who are cold in our hearts towards you. Once, Lord, we loved you, but now we are far from you. Lord, reheat us.

[6 : 45] Revive us and draw us back. Whether we are those that are struggling, Lord. With physical or emotional or mental troubles, fears or anxieties.

Lord, you are the God who is able to speak those words of comfort and life. Of healing and power. Lord, in our need.

We come to you, O throne of grace. And we look to you. O come and meet with us. By your spirit and through your word we pray. For we ask it all in and through.

The name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Now from our Bibles. And if you'd like to turn with me, please, to Paul's letter to the Romans.

That's, sorry, not Romans. Ephesians, I beg your pardon. Ephesians and chapter 6. And if you've got one of the red church Bibles, a bit like this one, you'll find it on page 1177.

[7 : 42] Page 1177. Ephesians and chapter 6. And James, who's going to come and speak in a moment, asked me to read this. As this is really the theme for our message later.

So Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 10. So down to about three quarters down the page of 1177. And if you've got the church Bible, it's got a subtitle for us there.

The armor of God. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

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. 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've done everything, to stand.

[8 : 51] Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with a breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 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.

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, for which I am an ambassador in chains.

Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. Now, it's so good to have James Swanson with us. James is a pastor in northern Cyprus, in Nicosia.

[9 : 59] And I'm going to ask him to come, and he's going to speak to young people, first of all. And chapter 40. So, we're going to read from the book of Isaiah, the prophet Isaiah, and chapter 40.

Again, if you have one of the red church Bibles, that'll be page 700, as I find it myself. And 24. And 24. Well, actually, page 725, because we're going to begin reading at verse 12. Isaiah, and chapter 40, page 725 in the church Bible, and reading from verse 12, near the top right-hand corner.

Here again is God's faithful word. It is always relevant. Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens?

Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales, and the hills in a balance? Who can fathom the spirit of the Lord, or instruct the Lord as his counselor?

[11 : 23] Whom did the Lord consult to enlighten him? And who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge, or showed him the path of understanding?

Surely the nations are like a drop, a drop in the bucket. They are regarded as dust on the scales. He weighs the islands as though they were fine dust.

Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires, nor its animals enough for burnt offerings. Before him all the nations are as nothing. They are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing.

With whom then will we compare God? To what image will you liken him? As for an idol, a metal worker casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold, and fashions silver chains for it.

A person too poor to present such an offering selects wood that will not rot. They look for a skilled worker to set up an idol that will not topple. Do you know?

[12 : 30] Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood since the earth was founded? He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers.

He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in. He brings princes to naught, and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground, than he blows on them, and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.

To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal? Says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes, and look to the heavens. Who created all these?

He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them forth, each of them by name, because of his great power and mighty strength. Not one of them is missing.

[13 : 35] Why do you complain, Jacob? Why do you say, Israel, my way is hidden from the Lord? My cause is disregarded by my God. Do you not know?

Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.

He gives strength to the weary, and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall, but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not be faint. Amen.

Amen. It's been a real privilege to be here this weekend.

[14 : 35] I want to thank you for the warm welcome that I've received, the fellowship that I've enjoyed, the hospitality. I also want to thank a lot of you who share a common interest in the gospel, the partnership of the work in North Cyprus.

I want to thank you for your continued prayers, and I can bring the greeting from the church there in Lefkosia to you all here. Please do continue to pray along with us, and fight in with us in that gospel work.

As a church, we've been going through the book of Ephesians, and we've now sort of reached the pinnacle, if you like, of Ephesians being this passage on the armor of God.

What happened was we were looking through the book of Daniel. The book of Daniel was telling us how to live in these last days, the challenges and everything around us, and we think, well, the next step from how to live in these last days and the challenge of these last days and how to practically do is the armor of God.

So I was talking to my fellow elders. We were praying over it, and I thought the armor of God would be the next place to go. And my dad wisely said, well, the armor of God's no good without the context of Ephesians.

[15 : 50] So we started in Ephesians, and we're there now in the armor of God. And what I would like to do now is, I was obviously speaking yesterday, and the thought was perhaps yesterday could spill on into today.

But as a lot of you weren't here yesterday, I kind of thought that wouldn't make a lot of sense, and it would be unfair on you. And then also with this evening, what this could do now is spill on to this evening, and I'm aware that some of you won't be here this evening.

Now, all these three are linked together. So those of you that were here yesterday, what's been said today will link. But it's not essential to be here yesterday. There's a link, and you'll find it.

And what's been said this evening, there is a very strong link. And if by any chance you can be here for that, I would encourage you to do so. But if you can't, don't worry. You're not going to miss out

something that needs to be said to understand this morning.

So this morning will stand on its own. And what I want you to do this morning is sort of look at the very, very first few verses of this passage in Ephesians chapter 6. So you probably want your Bibles open.

[16:59] If you don't want your Bibles open, I'm encouraging you to have your Bibles open. It's always good to have them open, to see what's been said, to check that what's been said is right. So that's the passage in Ephesians chapter 6.

And that's page 1177. And so looking at the first little bit of it, and then this evening what I want to do is, I'm being a bit ambitious, but I'm with the Lord's help going to try and do this, is give you the highlights of the armour of God.

That's taken us about eight weeks to do. And I'm going to, God willing, give you the highlights. But this morning we're looking at these first few verses.

But what I want to just do is put it in the context of the book of Ephesians. Ephesians is a letter that Paul wrote. It's probably one of his last letters that he wrote. He was in prison and he was writing to this church that meant so much to him.

And this church in Ephesus was a church made up of non-Jewish believers. And as non-Jewish believers they felt left out.

[18:08] The Jews thought they were wonderful and still do, but for different reasons. But then there was sort of like a class divide. And the Gentile, the non-Jew felt a bit left out. And what Paul tells them in the first three chapters is something quite incredible.

He tells them that through grace, through the work of the Holy Spirit, through the work of God, they have become part of God's family. On the same level, on the same standing as the Jewish people. God's family brought into being God's people. And then he tells them of the marvelous blessings that they have in Christ. As a believer they're no longer what they used to be.

They've been taken out of this old situation what they were. They've been brought into this new situation. They're radically different and they're infinitely rich. And as soon as I say infinitely rich to a bunch of Africans in Cyprus, ears prick up.

And it probably does the same here. But this riches isn't your bank account. This riches is an inheritance in heaven. Our inheritance is there waiting for us.

[19:13] We are now seated in heavenly places waiting for that moment to be. And so being a believer, we are radically different.

And we should live differently. And the next three chapters of this epistle is telling the Ephesians and telling us that if we are made in the image of Christ, if we've been saved and brought into his family, we should live differently.

And he sets out how to do it. He tells them in the beginning of chapter 4 where he changes his tone. And he urges them to walk in a manner worthy of the calling. To walk worthy.

To walk in unity. To walk in the way of the teachers. Don't walk as the Gentiles. Dark and ignorant. Foolish. Don't have anger, sin, corrupt talk in your lives.

Walk in love. Walk in sexual purity. Walk as the wise and not as the foolish. Make good use of your time. Do the will of God. Be filled with the Spirit.

[20:13] And practically work this out in your everyday life. So husbands, love your wives like Christ loved the church. And wives, submit to your husbands. And children, obey your parents.

And parents, don't provoke your children to wrath. And servants, workers, don't work as men-pleasers. But work to the Lord. And masters, you're the same as them.

What teaching was this? And I can imagine that when this was being read to the Ephesians, they were thinking, how can we do this? They knew that they were radically different.

But how could that radical difference translate itself into everyday life when the standards were so high? When sexual immorality was all around them? When foolish talk was everywhere about them?

When doing the will of God was different to what they wanted to do? How do we do this? And maybe you have the same struggle in your own lives.

[21:15] You know what you should be doing, but it is hard. It is hard. It is difficult to be a Christian. And it's becoming harder, and it's becoming more difficult in the UK as I see it.

And what seems to be able to happen, as long as the Christian is just a little bit better than society, it's okay. And that's not the standards that God is setting out to the Ephesians.

He's saying, you're different and be radically different. And yesterday evening, when I was speaking to the young people from that passage in Isaiah, we saw that ultimate worship is this. When we see something of the glory of God, when we see our sinfulness, when we have been forgiven for our sins, when we have been brought into His kingdom, ultimate worship is to say, here I am.

Send me. And to keep on going, no matter what the cost is. And I imagine that, as you heard that last night, as I was bringing that to you last night, we were asking ourselves the question, how can I do that?

[22 : 36] How can I surrender myself? How can I give my all? Doesn't Paul understand my situation?

Doesn't the preacher understand my situation? I can't do this. I can't say, here I am, send me. I have plans for my future. I have ideas of what I am going to do and what I'm going to become. How do we do this? And this is how we can do it. Be strong. That's what Paul said.

In the light of this great teaching, in the light of the challenge of this book of the letter of the Ephesians, they're told to be strong. was little more than that.

He starts off with that, finally. Just as an interesting observation here, when a finally is used, here, it's in the very end of his sermon.

[23 : 42] And how many preachers have upset me when they've said, finally, and then finally again, and then, in last point, and, oh, just by the way, and the finally wasn't a final.

Well, this final isn't my final, but God willing, when I come to the end, I will finish. And if you ever are a preacher, please don't do that. It hurts. There's an imperative here, isn't there?

There's a command here. It's finally, be strong. Not, if you'd like to be strong on some days, do it. Be strong. And this leads to the two questions that I want to look at and address this morning. And the first one I want to look at is, why do we need to be strong?

Why do we need to be strong? And you could say, well, it's easy. You said that in your introduction because the Apostle Paul has charged the church to do all this stuff, and it's hard, and it's difficult.

[24 : 49] But actually, there's more to it than that. That is part of it. But he goes on to explain, in this Alma of God section, this 10 to 20, some other factors that we need to see.

And so we need to be strong because, firstly, we are at war. As believers, we are at war.

Now, the passage doesn't use the war word. It doesn't use the fight word. But the whole passage is in the language of war and military.

We may not immediately see this because we are not 2,000 years old. Back in Ephesus, where we would have seen Roman soldiers wandering around. But this was all about the Roman soldier. This was all about his armor that he wore.

And the people would have seen this and known it. It had been common to them. They immediately would have seen this in their eyes. And the armor then wasn't just some smart uniform to make them look good.

[25 : 50] The Roman armor was utterly and totally designed for war. Part of the military success and part of the fact that that empire ruled over four and a half centuries was down to the fact that this army was the best.

It was best in its discipline. It was best in its training. And it was best in its hardware. Its armor was state of art. In part of bringing this and preaching this, I've gone to depths of parts of the internet that I've found geeks and all manner of people who are obsessed by armor.

And it's been really interesting because they take this armor to pieces and reconstruct it and tell you all about it. And it's just fascinating to know how advanced these Romans were in their armor.

But the armor had one purpose. And that purpose was for war. And what this is saying to us now is it was saying to the Ephesians then, we are at war.

Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

There's an enemy, the devil, and the war is against the devil. And the war is alive.

[27 : 08] And the war is real. Now, a few years ago, the term that the snowflake generation was coined.

I don't know if you've heard of that. The millenniums. The millenniums got even softer and they became snowflakes. And it is referring to these children raised by their parents and societies in ways that give them an inflated sense of their own uniqueness and entitlement.

The world revolves around them and their smartphone, obviously. And if they want something, it should be given to them. The idea of working for something just doesn't happen. And why should they have it? Well, because they are who they are. And they're unique. And this has been fed into them. And it's going to cause us a huge problem when these people come to be the rulers of our nations.

But the sad fact is this. There is a growing generation of snowflake Christians. And the snowflake Christians are not just young people.

[28 : 18] It's across the board. Old and young people can fall into this. It's people who have been taught or people who feel that their decision for Christ is all about themselves.

Their salvation is doing God a favor. I'm coming onto God's side because He needs me. He needs my service. He needs my being there.

Volunteering from His team. That they're doing a kindness to God and they expect God to bless them and keep blessing them and giving them material blessings. And we say we're not like that. And we probably aren't. But there probably is an element of that there in our lives. That we think our salvation is about us.

We think that our salvation is for our own personal benefit. Our salvation is for the glory of God.

Yes, we benefit from it ourselves. But it's not about us. It's about God.

[29 : 23] It's about His glory. And yet this snowflake idea thinks that our uniqueness and who we are is why God chose us or why we chose God. And it wasn't. It was for His own glory.

It's time to stop misleading people when we present to the gospel. It's time to stop being misled ourselves. Yes, the blessings of the Christian life are indescribable.

Chapters 1 to 3 of this book describe and made it more than clear before of the wonder of what we have in Christ and the wonder of what we've become and the wonders of the hope that we have.

But in reality, every day and every hour of our Christian walk brings us new hardships and new difficulties. And that's because we're at war. And that's because war is not a nice place.

A soldier's life is one of sacrifice. It's one of difficulty. It's one of danger. It's one of pain. It's one of tears, of frustration. And perhaps even ultimately death.

[30 : 28] Death is all around them. And we're called to be soldiers, not snowflakes. We're called to stand firm.

Yes, you are unique, but it's not your uniqueness that will enable you to stand against the enemy. A soldier in a conflict zone is always on a high state of alert, always ready for action.

They need to be aware of what's going on. They're always sort of advancing technology to have infrared goggles so they can see at night, having radar so they can see.

They're always alert, always needing to know what's happening and what's going on. And lots of Christians are taken out by the devil before they even attempt to stand because they're asleep.

And they're asleep because they don't realize they're at war and they don't realize that they're at war it's just because they've been told or they've been taught or they want to think that it's just about a decision I've made and that's it. They think their life is just one long story of joy and peace.

[31 : 37] Yes, we have joy of our salvation, but that's in a war setting. As a Christian, your enemy effectively is your worst nightmare.

He's none other than your old boss. Can you imagine being in a work situation and you've had a boss that's been a tyrant, a boss that's been difficult, a boss that's given you no end of hard tasks and has been totally unreasonable and then you get a new job.

And you go to a new job and your pay is doubled. And you go to your new job and your boss is kind and sensitive and works you fairly and rightly. And then you get a phone call from your old boss and he tells you to do something.

What do you do? You say, ha ha, go away. But sadly as Christians what we often do is, oh yes sir, I'll do that.

He's the accuser of the saints. And so many Christians are ineffective in their walk because they're either too busy trying to claim the benefits and salvation and comfort that they've forgotten that they're at war or they've not been taught that they're at war or maybe you find yourself in this situation, you are so tired of fighting in your own strength and the battle has got so great for you, you just, ah.

[33 : 00] Or maybe you're fighting the wrong enemy. Maybe you're fighting a brother or sister here. Maybe you're fighting another church. Maybe you're fighting a battle of your own decision.

We need to be strong because we're at war. We need to be strong because the warfare is spiritual. The warfare is spiritual. Verse 12, we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against rulers, against authorities, against cosmic powers over this present darkness, against spiritual forces of evil and heavenly places.

What a sentence. What does that conjure up in your mind? I hope it conjures up your worst nightmare. I hope it conjures up darkness that's coming around you. I hope it conjures up the things that frighten you because it should do because the devil and the spiritual battle is a frightening place and if you're not frightened by it, if you're not upset by it, then you're blinded to it.

And the devil's thinking, ha ha, I've got them where I want them. We need to be aware of this. We need to be aware of this battle and this is a battle that's not in the spiritual, in the physical realm, sorry, the effects, the symptoms of the battle can be felt physically.

Pain is real, suffering is real, disappointment is real, health issues, family challenges, relationship problems, they're all real but that is not the enemy.

[34 : 37] That's not what you're fighting. That's everyday life that you are experiencing. The battle is not against the physical but against rulers, authorities, cosmic powers, present darkness, spiritual forces of evil.

See friends, depression and anxiety is not the enemy. An unreasonable boss isn't the enemy. The failing health of your loved ones is not the enemy.

Not enough money for the month is not an enemy. That's life and that's what the devil will use to tempt us. And that's where the battle ground lies but that's not the enemy.

how we react in those circumstances tells us is where the standing actually happens because when this anxiety and depression come, it's the devil tempting us to despair.

It's the devil tempting us to rely on ourselves. It's the devil tempting us to push our friends away, to push God away. The unreasonable boss is the devil tempting us to be angry or to be unreasonable or to do something un-Christlike.

[35 : 45] The failing health of your loved ones is the devil tempting you to blame God, to say, I'm not going to church because it doesn't work for me. Not enough money is the devil tempting you.

Maybe it's because you've got unrealistic aspirations and you're coveting and the devil is tempting you there or maybe it is a real lack of money and the devil is tempting you to do something immoral or illegal to make that money.

These rulers and authorities are not the government now. The president of the, the prime minister of the UK, the president of the US, the president of Turkey, they are not the enemies.

Our Turkish believers, they often see Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the president of Turkey, is the enemy and he is not the enemy. He's been used by the enemy but he's not the enemy.

And everyone is harping on about Brit Exer and it's probably dividing this room. Some of you probably think it's a great idea and probably some of you think it's a horrible idea but Brit Exer is not the enemy. under liberal unbiblical equality and all that stuff that's coming out that just is counter God's word is not the enemy.

[36 : 55] They may well be used by the enemy but they're not the enemy. The enemy is the devil. It's these powers that are manipulating these things and the temptation is what do we do about it and we need to be strong.

We're at war and the devil is active and it's a spiritual war and it's a spiritual battle and we need to be strong because thirdly and the last answer to this particular question is because we are charged to stand.

We are told to stand. The passage starts with that that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. Verse 13 that therefore take up the whole armour of God that you may be able to withstand the evil day and having done all to stand.

We need strengthening because we have to stand. Friends, the fight is not an option.

If you're a believer your orders are to stand. There's no sort of passenger option here. There's no sort of tick box Christianity.

[38 : 03] I'm going to be full out on Sundays but during the week I'll do it my own way. You've got 24-7 duty. It's there.

You're charged to stand and this is why you need to be strong. We need strength because we have to stand. This is not a competition that's dreamt up by some liberal that just says it's not about the winning.

It's just about the taking part. Friends, this battle is about the winning and your winning is when you stand. And if you are not standing, you are not doing what you're being told to do by God. We're there and we're to go in and we are to stand. And friend, as a believer your job is to stand. stand. And it says here that you may be able or that you shall stand. It's emphatic here.

[39 : 10] And there's a really big challenging point that we have to make clearly here. If you are not standing in your Christian life, if you are not standing in your Christian life, it's simply because you're not going for the right place for your strengths.

This passage tells me, tells you, tells the Ephesians that they can stand, that you may be able to stand, that you shall stand.

We can stand. Brothers and sisters, we are on the winning side. We can stand, but we need to be strong. There is no need for us to be conquered.

Now, does that mean that these pains and difficulties will be taken away from us? No! But you're going to stand through them. That's the difference. You're going to stand through them.

We are not on the losing side. We're on the winning side. The battle is real. The battle is the Lord's and Jesus Christ won the victory on the cross.

[40 : 19] That has been done. That has been secured and that's why we can stand firm. But we have to be strong. You probably thought, and when I was preaching this, a similar sermon to this, a while back, my son was in the congregation and my son was sat next to a friend of his and his friend was getting really cross.

And my son spoke to him and said, what's the matter? And he said, I've got to go and tell you, dad is missing the point. Because I preached it like this.

Because we can't stand in our own strength, can we? I haven't mentioned that yet, have I? I've told you to be strong. I've told you to be strong. God's word has told us to be strong. But where do you go for your strength?

That's the second question. This is the point. This brings it together. Where do you go for your strength? Because we've been charged to stand firm. We've been charged that we're in this war. We've been told this war is a spiritual war that's nasty and vicious.

We're told to stand and we have to stand. So where do you go for your strength? And friends, this is why Christianity is such a mess in the world around us. Because so many people are trying to do this in their own strength.

[41 : 32] Maybe this is why you are struggling the moment in your own spirituality. Because you're trying to do it in your own strength. Let me illustrate it like this. Let us imagine that some national international travesty has happened and England is at war.

And we're here. And the enemy is approaching and there's safety in Darlington. Now forgive me using Darlington as a place of safety but that's where I was born.

Let's just run with this. I drove here from Darlington to here the other day so I know what I'm talking about. And we know here, we've been told here that there is safety in Darlington.

The road is dangerous. There's bombs going off, there's sniper fire, there's IEDs, there's roadside bombs, it's treacherous. But when you get to Darlington you'll be safe.

Now I was delighted when I went to the hire car company that they gave me a bigger car than I was paid for. It's a lovely orange colour. And I want you to imagine this. I say to you, look, I've got some spaces in my car, let me drive you to Darlington.

[42 : 44] And then we hear some great big noise. We look out and we see some armoured vehicles out there. And the army come up and say, look, we'll take you there in our armoured vehicle.

And I'm saying, no, no, no, come with me, come with me. Well, raise your hands if you'd come with me. In my orange hire car. No, you wouldn't, would you?

You get into the armoured vehicle. You get into the safety of it. Because that is where you're safe. But friends, we mess up. Because we get into our own little orange hire car of our own lives when we should have the strength of the Lord.

I can't help wondering if, in general, the battle has been lost. Because they see this challenge as a physical thing. And they're looking for a political solution.

if only Theresa May wasn't in power. Everything would change if my person was in power. If the police did a better job, it would be better.

[43 : 54] If education was better, it would look better. If there's a financial solution, perhaps if I had more money in my pay packet, it would work. Perhaps there should be a military solution.

No, this battle is not against flesh and blood. It's a spiritual battle. And we need supernatural power. And friends, we have it.

We have it. Finally, be strong in the Lord and the strength of his might. There's nothing about you there.

Nothing about your pastor. Nothing about your church. Nothing about the military. It is about God. the Lord and his strength. Friends, let God be God.

And don't let this world make you belittle God in your mind. Don't let your lack of faith belittle God in your mind.

[44 : 54] See God as God is. Ask God to show you more of himself. And as the theme of this weekend's been, now show me your glory.

I challenged the youngsters last night. I dared them as it were. Pray that. And I do exactly the same today. If you're feeling that you don't know how you can carry on in your spiritual life, cry out to God and say, God show me your glory.

Because that's what we need to see. We need to see as Isaiah saw the king high and lifted up in the throne. When the world is falling around and about, we need to see God in his kingdom.

And that's why I read Isaiah 40. Isaiah 40 from verse 9 to the end. We didn't read that from verse 9 but verse 9 to 11 is the fact that God will look after his people.

And then verses 12 to 17 give us a glimpse of God. Some of you yesterday went out and looked out onto the North Sea.

[46 : 05] And it's vast, but it's not really much of the ocean. There's bigger oceans. And our God just can scoop the whole of the waters of the earth up and have them in the whole of his hand.

That's our God. God. I travel quite a bit. And one of my best traveling companions is my scales. I don't like paying for excess baggage. There must be a bit of a Yorkshireman in me there. I don't know. And so my scales weigh my bag. my scales can weigh up to about 50 kilos.

God weighs the mountains. You get to Ingleborough, Wernside, Pennegent, just about mountains. You come to Cyprus and I'm on a hillside and that's sort of comparable size to those. You go to the south of our island, we've got mountains that are 6,000 feet, 7,000 feet.

[47 : 16] You go to the Himalayas and these are huge mountains that your eyes are not big enough to take in. God just drops them on his scales and says a few billion ton and he knows it.

Who's measured the spirit of God? You see friends, we try to and it's ridiculous. We try to second guess God, we try to tell him what to do. Who does he consult?

I was working in the bank for quite a few years and we had these consultants come in to tell us what to do and how to do things. God doesn't consult anyone. He doesn't phone up the World Bank to have a little conflag about where interest rates should be set in India or Japan or wherever.

He knows it all. He doesn't need it. He has a path of justice. No one's taught him anything.

Everything that I know has been something that I've had to learn.

Everything that you know, someone has had to teach it to you and no one's taught God anything because he knows it all. The nations there is nothing before him.

[48 : 24] That's our God. That is who is going to strengthen you. But you have to go to him for strength. He's not going to strengthen you if you sit there and don't ask for it.

If you sit there trying to do it in your own strength. He's going to sit there and he's going to let you make a mess of it. And continue to let you make a mess of it until your mess is so bad that you're there on your knees and you just cry out Lord help me.

And then through grace and mercy he'll scoop you up and help you. But friends what I'm trying to say to you is don't let yourself get there. Be strong in him and be battling in him before that situation.

And so as you look at your problems and your challenges of this coming week and you see that depression and anxiety in front of you and it's real and you know the unreasonableness of your boss and there's that nosy neighbor that just makes your life a misery and there's a failing health of your loved ones and there's not enough money for the month.

As you look at these battles that you are facing, if you look at the spiritual battles you're facing and you know in your life that there's lust and gluttony and greed and sloth and wrath and envy and pride, you know that there's besetting sins, things that just get on top of you, the pornography that

you're trying to get rid of that just keeps coming over you, the alcohol, the temptation here, the lying, these addictions and then the whole world is coming in around you, there's britex, there's rampant liberalism, there's persecution of the believers around the world and some preacher tells you to say here I am, send me.

[50 : 06] And we're overwhelmed. And what do we do? This is what we do. This is what we do. We do. Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

We don't do anything else. We go to the Lord. We take his strength and we let him fight our battles. We still will receive the wounds, we will still be in the pain, but he is there with us and through his strength we can stand.

stand. And so although the depression is there, although the anxiety is there, although the unreasonable boss and all these things are there, you can stand in them because the Lord is strengthening you and enabling you to stand.

When every sinew of your body is telling you to go after the lust of the flesh, to go after that particular sin, you can stand up and say no because God is with you and God is strengthening you. And when you watch the 10 o'clock news and your head's in your knees and you're thinking what next, you can face tomorrow because God is beside you.

[51 : 31] And you can stand firm. you will stand firm if you're strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

I've said a lot to believers. But before I finish I just want to say something to non-believers.

I was going to call you the lost but apparently the lost don't like being called the lost. So I'll call you a non-believer. I'm calling you a friend, that's for sure.

And I just don't understand how you can survive in this world. Because you have the same problems.

The anxiety, the depression, the money worries, the family issues, the difficulties, the exit, the economic situation.

[52 : 38] They're all, they're real for you. And my heart goes out to you because you're doing it in your own strength. And I guess you know in your heart of hearts that's not good enough.

And I want to introduce you to the Lord Jesus Christ. Because he came to deal with our biggest problem, our sin. And in dealing with our sin, he's given us a hope for the future.

And he's given us the ability to say, I can stand in this life because he strengthens me. And it's almost as though the blessing of being able to stand in this life is a symptom or a side effect, if you like, of the big thing, of being made right with him.

Your life will never be complete without being right with God. And you cannot make yourself right with God because the stuff that you've done wrong separates you. But now, if you come to him, now if you ask him to save you from your sins, if you confess your sins, he's faithful and just to forgive you all unrighteousness, he'll forgive you.

And not only will he forgive you, not only will he bring you into his family, he'll give you a purpose and a hope. He's not promised to take away that pain and that suffering and those difficulties.

[54 : 14] No, I'm not saying that. But he's promised to stand beside you. And I know that the people in this church that you probably look on and you say, how do they manage?

How do they cope with all the challenges that they're going through? They cope because they're standing strong in the Lord. And you too can cope if you stand strong in the Lord.

And it starts by asking him to forgive you. Let's pray. Almighty God, we thank you for the wonder of who you are.

May each and every one of us here this morning see something of your glory. And in seeing something of your glory, may those of us that are yours be driven to confessing and saying sorry for the times we've tried to stand strong in ourselves.

May we only ever stand strong in you. May we only ever fight this battle in you. And may we know that we're on the winning side through the Lord Jesus Christ. And for those who don't yet know you here and don't know the joy of being able to stand firm in you.

[55 : 35] May you show them their great need. Their need of sins forgiven. Their need of a loving heavenly Father. May you break into their hearts and their lives this day, right now.

And may they come to know you as their Savior. And may they know the joy of a Lord who will help them to be strong. And enable them to stand in all the mess of this life and the life to come.

