

13<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (Proper 17)  
August 30, a.D. 2009  
Ephesians 6: 10 – 20

Christians are joined to a Lord, who made heaven and earth and whose power and strength cannot be matched. St. Paul who in his letter to the Christians of Ephesus, often spoke of our unity in Christ, **one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all**, now brings his letter to a close with these words: **Finally, be powerful in the Lord and in the strength of his might!**

Therefore, Christians dare never be weaklings. As long as we are one in Christ, we have been given his power, his strength and his might. This goes against the world's understanding of Christianity as a religion for the weak and the unsuccessful. The thinking goes like this: people who cannot succeed in the world, fall back on the hope that things will get better in the life to come. Karl Marx portrayed Christianity as opium for the masses, in other words, it was like a strong drug by which people can escape their miserable lives and to think of a better life while riding a spiritual high.

And so how are we to be strong Christians? If we listen to the world, it speaks quite convincingly how to be strong and successful. In the world of finance, there are endless books and seminars how to get rich. In the world of sports, the importance of strength conditioning is universally accepted as is the constant temptation to get stronger using steroids, HGH and other illegal methods. In war, the arms race to invent more lethal weapons of destruction never diminishes.

We are trained to think that the stronger the financial position, the stronger the athlete or the stronger the military, the greater chance of success and glory in the world. Now God comes to us today and turns the world's thinking upside down. He says that those who rely on their own strength will fail. (Psalm 33:16ff) **No king is saved is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength. A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its strength it cannot save. But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.**

Isn't that a fresh way of thinking and believing? The strength of a Christian is not his own. It doesn't come from wise investments, hitting the weight room after everyone

hits the showers or purchasing the latest weapons of mass destruction. The strength of a Christian never comes from trying harder. In fact the more we try to rely on our own strength the more certain we are to fall.

The first reason for this is the nature of the enemy. Our battle is not against blood and flesh. What kind of military match would it be with us compared to spiritual powers, principalities and the world's tyrants of this spiritual darkness? We need to be reminded that our war is not against people, a poor economy or global warming but against Satan.

His military tactics include building us up so that we can rely on our own strength and thinking that we know best and can work out everything on our own. He teaches us to pray that we are fine Christians because of all the good we do and how faithful we are to do our devotions. He has won when the church thinks she can manage on her own, grow like any other business and is self-sufficient.

Any method to entice us away from God is fine with him. His target is faith, that is, a complete dependence on God. And he is not alone. Satan commands generals and legions of demons.

If we are going to fight in this holy war, then we need the proper armour. God lists the Christian's armour and weapons. They are: the **Truth** that holds everything together, Jesus is Truth, and his divine, objective wonderful truth is that He died and lives for His church; **Righteousness** that protects the heart, which is a free gift of God for all who believe in Christ, never self-generated; the **gospel of Peace**, that our feet are to bring to the world that Christ has won the greatest battle of making peace with heavenly Father; **Faith**, a gift of God that He loves us no matter what and a shield to swallow Satan's arrows that we are never good enough; **Salvation**, that protects the head from mortal wounds and finally **the Sword of the Spirit**, that is the Word of God, every utterance that comes from the mouth of God can slay that ancient dragon, Satan.

Your armour is all a gift of God. It is his power, his might and his strength. Therefore you dare never be weak. If you think you need to fight harder, train longer, do more, than you have missed the point. If we rely on ourselves, we are bound to fail. If we trust in God, we receive the crown of life. Christ has done it all for you. He gives you this holy armour to fight. His is the victory. His is the glory. His is the power, might and strength. To Him be all glory forever and ever. Amen