

Taking Our Stand

By Linda Rex

August 25, 2024, Proper 16 / After Pentecost—Lately, the Lord has brought me back to an immersion in everyday day-long prayer. The life of prayer can easily be lost in this active, busy, stressed-filled existence. It takes being intentional about remaining in conversation with the Lord in the midst of our everyday activities, just like it requires being intentional about staying in conversation with our spouse and loved ones in order to keep our relationships strong and healthy.

The good news is that prayer does not begin with us. Prayer actually begins within the Triune life and love, in the face-to-face communion between the Father and his Son in the Spirit. As we are prompted by the Spirit to pray, as we are attentive to the Spirit's leading (remain alert), we participate in Jesus' own life of prayer. The Spirit places concerns on our minds and hearts, and in response, we pray. This is how we can remain in prayer "in every season" or "at all times."

In our New Testament passage for this Sunday, Ephesians 6:10–20, the apostle Paul summarizes what he has shared throughout his epistle regarding life in the Spirit, the triumphant victorious life which is ours in Christ because of what he has accomplished in his life, death, resurrection, and ascension, and which is ours in the gift of his Holy Spirit. Notice how the different parts of the "armor of God" reflect topics he has brought up elsewhere in his letter—truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, and the gospel or good news of Jesus Christ.

Paul has encouraged us to "be filled with the Spirit" and so now he is encouraging us to wield the "sword of the Spirit" which is the Word of God and prayer. In the light of the evil one at work in this world and the forces of evil impacting every level of society and corrupting every institution, government, and industry, Paul encourages us to remain on our guard, with our feet planted firmly on the gospel of Jesus, and the Word of God and prayer on our lips.

Look closely at each piece of the armor Paul tells us to take up and put on: we actually take up and put on Christ. Jesus is our righteousness, which we need as a breastplate of protection over our hearts. Our Lord is the truth of who we are as God's beloved, forgiven, and redeemed children; his Spirit is the Spirit of Truth, and our God is the God of truth, who loves us and forgives us and has made us his own. Christ is our salvation, our assurance that we are forgiven, accepted, and beloved, and included in God's life and love now and forever. It is the faith of Christ which shields us from the fiery attacks of our adversary and accuser—for Jesus is the trustworthy One we can assuredly trust in every moment, no matter how difficult things may get in our lives. As you can see, God has provided himself in Christ as our armor in the great spiritual battle in which we find ourselves.

Because of Jesus, all he has done in his life, death, resurrection, and ascension, and in the gift of God's Spirit, our feet are firmly planted on the ground, and we are able to weather every wind of combat that may come our way. The apostle Paul reminds us that it is not the people in our lives we are in combat against. Too often, when we experience difficulties in our relationships or circumstances, we turn against the people in our lives, when we should turn to Christ. This brings us back to prayer, and our need to remain in constant communication with the Lord.

As the apostle Paul remained for years chained to a Roman soldier, I'm certain he had plenty of time to ponder the significance of armor in relation to his walk with Christ. A Roman soldier's shield was designed to be used as protection in battle. When used together properly with all the other soldiers' shields, the army was kept safe from any of the arrows or flaming missiles thrown by the enemy. But each member of the army had to work together with the others for this strategy to work best. In the same way, as members of the body of Christ, we are called to

More devotionals may be found at <https://lifeinthetrinity.blog>

Subscribe to Our Life in the Trinity YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/@ourlifeinthetrinity>

pray—to work together in faith, for the movement forward of the good news of the gospel to be spread. The body of Christ today faces many obstacles and new opposition in ways it has not for many years. Paul calls us back to a life of prayer, and of actively putting on all that is ours in Christ, so that we may stand our ground in a world which pushes back against what is good, holy, loving, and right. May we remain alert, and pray always, in every season, in the Spirit.

*Heavenly Father, Dear Abba, God and Father of us all,
May your name be hallowed and glorified, now and forever, for you are worthy.
You are worthy of all glory, honor, and praise. You are a good God, kind, loving,
compassionate, and faithful. Thank you for loving us. May your kingdom come,
and your will be done, in us, in our loved ones, in our community, in our state, in
our nation, in this world, here on earth, as it is in heaven. Thank you for giving us
today all that we need for life and godliness—for giving us your Son, the Bread of
Life. Thank you for remembering those who are homeless and need the necessities
of life. Grant us the grace to remember them as well. Thank for being so forgiving
of us. We need your grace so desperately. Grant that we may ever be as forgiving
of others as we desire you to be forgiving of us. Thank for not leading us into
temptation, but delivering us from evil and the evil one through Jesus, our Lord
and Savior. Thank you for covering us with Jesus—our salvation—as a helmet.
Thank you for guarding us with Jesus as our breastplate of righteousness, holding
us in right relationship with you now and forever. Thank you for girding us with
your truth, the truth that is Jesus and giving us your Spirit of truth. Thank you for
shielding us with the faith of Christ, guarding us against the fiery darts of the evil
one. And thank you for giving us Jesus to put on, enabling us to walk in his shoes
of the preparation of the gospel of peace. Thank you for the sword of the Spirit—
for keeping us diligent and faithful in the Word of God and prayer. We need you
to fight these spiritual battles for us, for you are the divine Warrior, our Defender
and Protector. Thank you, dear Abba, that Jesus is in you, and we are in him, and
he is in us. In Christ we are held safe in your arms in the Spirit. For yours is the
kingdom, the glory, the honor, now and forever. Amen.*

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, ‘having girded your loins with truth,’ and ‘having put on the breastplate of righteousness,’ and having shod ‘your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;’ in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take ‘the helmet of salvation,’ and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” Ephesians 6:10–20 NASB