

Focus reading: Ephesians 6:10–20 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=392355912>)

Other lectionary readings: 1 Kings 8:(1, 6, 10–11), 22–30, 41–43; Psalm 84; John 6:56–69

Theme: Love Is Our Defense

We conclude our time with the letter to the Ephesians with this familiar passage about the challenges of living out our faith and the protection and assistance that God provides to help us do that. This letter has given us practical advice about living more Christ-like lives and being one with others in the faith community. We need to be kind, use our gifts for the common good, and encourage those who are different from us as they use their particular gifts. Who would disagree? Yet, doing what these words say each and every day is not easy. This passage suggests that, in part, it is not easy because there are forces at work against us. Those who first received this letter personified these forces as “Satan,” the adversary. They believed that powerful spirits were at work on earth and in heaven. The author of this letter invokes military imagery, using a suit of armor as a metaphor for the protection and assistance that God provides for us. The image would have been familiar to those receiving the letter, as they lived in Roman occupied territory and were often subjected to violence at the hand of those who wore the armor of the Roman army. What a contrast! Their source of strength and protection - the peace and justice they longed for - would come not from military power, as demonstrated in the *Pax Romana* - but from the Spirit of God, to whom they are urged to pray.

NOTE TO PARENTS: The military imagery is troubling for some, perhaps particularly for parents who are concerned about images that are associated with violence. Remember that these words spoke to a culture in which such imagery was a fact of daily life and that the teaching here was one that took something associated with violence and transformed it into an image of peace and justice. It may be helpful to come up with your own ideas about images that are meaningful for your children today. The ideas here may help!

WHAT KEEPS ME SAFE AND PREPARED?

Rather than a suit of armor, help your child to come up with a new metaphor. What helps you to feel safe? Does your child have a special stuffed friend or blanket? How is God like that friend? What helps us prepare for our day? (Bible study might be like a weather forecast and prayer like an umbrella.) How do we prepare to do something difficult? What prepares us to be more like Jesus?

PRAYER

Powerful God,
Knowing that you love us
makes us to feel strong and safe.
Help us to share your love everywhere we go,
so that all people may be strong and safe.
Amen.

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