

When You Have Done All You Can Do to Stand: Stand Firm

Droughts, floods, earthquakes, mudslides, hurricanes, wars, sicknesses, accidents, broken relationships, economic woes, poverty, crime, unemployment, fatigue, fear, doubt, troubled children, death of loved ones, facing death ourselves, moral degradation, sinfulness, addictions, or you name it; we all face situations on a daily basis that are bigger than we are and are often out of our control. The battles, the challenges and the enemy we face are too tough, too frequent and too intense to overcome in our own strength.

The good news is that God knows we cannot face the giants and battles of life alone and it was never His intent that we do so. There are numerous places in Scripture where this truth is laid out for us. He has instructed us how to face life's issues and He has promised that if we put our lives in His hands, putting all of our faith in Him, He will give us the strength, courage, protection and perseverance we need to not only face our enemies, but to be victorious over them.

There are all kind of battles that we each face during our lifetimes. The battles may be physical, moral, relational, financial, or emotional, but I think they are all spiritual or at least have spiritual significance. The battles we face are against the enemy who is out to steal, kill and destroy all that God wants to do for us, in us and through us. Other battles we face because there is a God who loves us, who has a plan for our lives: *"For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* (Jeremiah 29:11). I am glad that our heavenly Father loves you and me enough to discipline us when we go against His will or His plan for our lives. Discipline is never pleasant, but is necessary to bring us to the point that we seek God and turn or return to Him and His plan for our lives. Discipline is always for our good.

Too often in my life, when the battles are so intense, the pain is so great, the giants are so big, the work is so hard; I find myself too tired and too weak to fight on my own. Unless God intervenes, victory is hopeless. Unless He shows up, nothing is going to work. It is during these times that I go back to God's Word, to His promises and to the realization that as long as I live for Him, the battles are His.

I often find it helpful to go back to the prayer of Jehoshaphat, the King of Judah, as recorded in 2 Chronicles 20 as he claims God's promises for the nation during a time when vast armies were planning an attack and were certainly going to crush the nation of Judah unless God intervened. King Jehoshaphat and the people gathered together and prayed: *"O our God, we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you."* God's response to their prayer was: *"Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's. (vs 15b). "You will not have to fight this battle.*

Take up your positions, stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you. O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you. “(vs 17). As the story goes, the invading armies ended up killing one another and when the men of Judah went to seek out the attackers, all they found were dead bodies! The battle was the Lord’s, but the people still had to have enough faith to fulfill their responsibility, to put on their battle gear, and march out and take their stand on the battlefield! (vs.17) They still had to face the enemy, though it was the Lord who fought the battle and defeated the enemy! God did not tell them to just stay home, relax, and enjoy life, but He told them to prepare for battle, to go and face the enemy, and trust Him with the results!

How do we prepare ourselves for spiritual battles? How do we position ourselves so that we are beneficiaries of God’s might, power, provision and protection in the face of attacks, in the face of enemies who are out to destroy us? The answer is found in Ephesians 6: *“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, 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 have done everything to stand. Stand firm then, with the (1)belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the (2)breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your (3) feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the Gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the (4)shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the (5)helmet of salvation and the (6)sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. And (7)pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.”*

Because I belong to Him, He dwells in me. When all my strength is gone, when I do not see any hope for going forward, when I get hurt, sick or discouraged and can no longer stand or fight for myself, it is then that He gives me His strength, His stamina, His courage, His perseverance, His wisdom, His ability and the confidence to stand, until I finish the race and until my opportunities to serve Him on this earth are over. As long as I am here, as long as He allows me to be engaged in the battle, I am determined to put on my spiritual armor, to fight the good fight and to finish the race that He has set before me. I know that He will always meet my every need because His Word tells me so, and He has experientially proven that He is always faithful. He will never leave me nor forsake me because I am His and He cares for me. He also cares for you!

“Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

(1)Belt: Satan fights with lies; God’s Word is truth.

(2)Breastplate: God's righteousness protects our hearts.

(3)Footgear: Go and tell everyone about Christ.

(4)Shield: Faith in God assures our victory.

(5)Helmet: Jesus IS our salvation.

(6)Sword: God's Word is truth and our only weapon.

(7)Pray: Prayer moves the hand of God.