



STUDY 3

UNITED WITH CHRIST

BE STRONG IN THE LORD

That is what the apostle Paul exhorts us to do. To be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might so that we may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. In this the third and final of our **3-part** study series '**United with Christ**' we will explore how we do just that.

OBSERVE

Read **Ephesians 6:10-13** and:

- underline any *COMMANDS* given.
- circle every reference to *STAND / WITHSTAND*.

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

¹¹ Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

¹³ Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

Ephesians 6:10-13

DISCUSS

6:10 – What are we exhorted to do?

6:11a & 6:13a – How do we do that?

6:11b & 6:12 & 6:13b – Why do we need it?

As saints we are in a spiritual battle whether we like or not. There is no spiritual neutral zone but a continual call to stand firm against the devil's schemes as he seeks to *demolish* our faith in God, *discredit* our testimony and *destroy* the unity of God's people. However, we do not wrestle against Satan in our own strength, but as those equipped with the Lord's armour to stand firm in the fight. As those who are in Christ and seated with Him in the heavenly places, standing in His victory over the evil one, and who has sent the Spirit, who dwells in us, to empower us to live in a manner worthy of our calling.

Let's look now at the armour that we have been given to stand firm.

ARMOUR OF GOD

OBSERVE

Read **Ephesians 6:14-15** and:

- underline the word *STAND*.
- circle the phrases *HAVING FASTENED* / *HAVING PUT ON*.

¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

Ephesians 6:14-15

DISCUSS

6:14-15 – List the *pieces of armour* with which we have been equipped to stand firm?

Let's look now at each of these pieces of armour in more detail:

THE BELT OF TRUTH

^{14a} Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth,

HAVING FASTENED - STRONGS 4024 (perizonnyimi) - to gird all around. The metaphor here is one of the ancient practice of fastening their long flowing tunics about their loins with a belt, so that they were ready for action. So we too are ready for action, to stand firm, as our minds are girded with the truth of the Gospel - of who we now are and have in Christ (**Eph 1-3; 1 Peter 1:13**) and in walking in a manner worthy of our calling (**Eph 4-6**).

OBSERVE

Prophecy about the divine Saviour-King who would come to save His people from their sins:

Read **Isaiah 11:5**:

⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

Isaiah 11:5

DISCUSS

11:5 – How would the Saviour-King live to save us?

FAITHFULNESS - "Significantly, the Greek translation of the Old Testament renders "faithfulness" here as *aletheia*, the same Greek word that Paul use in Ephesians 6, and which our English versions translate as "truth". Through his foundational righteousness and faithfulness to God's Word, this messianic king will save his people and bring in the final blessing of peace - a peace that extends throughout creation." - Iain M. Duguid

OBSERVE

Read **Ephesians 1:13**:

¹³ In him [Jesus Christ] you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,

Ephesians 1:13

DISCUSS

1:13 – What is the Gospel (Good News) called?

1:13 – Who does the Gospel call us to put our confidence in to save us?

So, here we have the first piece of armour - the *belt of truth*. Those united with Christ, the Truth (**John 14:6**), our sinless Saviour-King who through His righteous life and faithfulness to the Father has done everything needed to save us. Our hearts resting in the truth of who we now are and have in Him.

THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

^{14b} and having put on the breastplate of righteousness

Ephesians 6:14b

OBSERVE

Read **Isaiah 59:17a**:

^{17a} He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head;

Isaiah 59:17a

DISCUSS

59:17a – What did Jesus, our Saviour-King, wear to save us from sin and Satan?

OBSERVE

Read **Romans 5:19**:

¹⁹ For as by the one man's [Adams's] disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's [Jesus's] obedience the many will be made righteous.

Romans 5:19

DISCUSS

5:19 – What comparison is being made?

MADE RIGHTEOUS - Those who through faith in Christ (see **Romans 3:21-26**) are no longer under God's condemnation (justified) because God the Father has punished Christ for our sins who bore them for us on the cross and credited us with the perfect righteousness of His Son. What a glorious exchange!!

OBSERVE

Read **Romans 8:1-4** and:

- underline every reference to *IN CHRIST JESUS*.
- circle the phrase *IN ORDER THAT*.

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,

⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Romans 8:1-4

LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE / LAW OF SIN & DEATH - in verse 2 the apostle Paul uses the word law (nomos) to refer to a power at work in us i.e. power of the Spirit / power of sin and death, whereas in verses 3-4 he uses it to refer to God's Law.

DISCUSS

8:1-2 – What is true now (and forever) for those who are in Christ Jesus?

8:3 – What has God done so that we could be justified (no longer condemned) in His sight?

8:4 – What is the evidence that we have been justified?

So, here we have the *breastplate of righteousness*. Those united with Christ, our Righteousness, whose divine acceptance in Him is evidenced by a life lived worthy of our calling and our refuge when Satan tempts us to despair our ongoing failures to do so.

GOSPEL SHOES

¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

Ephesians 6:15

6:15 – What is the effect of being shod with the gospel of peace?

OBSERVE

Read **Ephesians 2:13-17** and:

- underline every reference to *CHRIST* (including pronouns).
- circle every reference to *ONE*.

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you [Gentiles] who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴ For he himself is our [Jew & Gentile] peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility

¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,

¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.

Ephesians 2:13-17

DISCUSS

2:13-15 – What is now true for all who are in Christ Jesus? How?

2:16 – How have we, the saints, been reconciled to God? What does this exclude?

OBSERVE

Read **Romans 10:12-15** and:

- underline every reference to *CALL / CALLS*.
- circle every reference to *PREACHING / PREACH*.

¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek [Gentile]; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.

¹³ For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” [Isaiah 52:7]

Romans 10:12-15

DISCUSS

10:12-13 – What is true for all people, without distinction?

10:14-15 – How will people call on the name of the Lord and be saved?

Here we see the wonder of the Church - those united together with Christ our Peace, reconciled to God and to one another through the cross, made ready to declare Christ's victory over Satan in the heavenly realm and to be ambassadors for Christ who proclaim the Gospel of peace to all.

Let's turn now to look at the final pieces of armour and weaponry we are to take up to be strong in the Lord and so able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil:

OBSERVE

Read **Ephesians 6:16-17** and:

- underline every reference to *TAKE UP / TAKE*.

¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;

¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

Ephesians 6:16-17

6:16-17 – What are we to take up?

SHIELD OF FAITH

¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;

Ephesians 6:16

6:16 – When are to take up the shield of faith? Why?

OBSERVE

Read **Proverbs 30:5**:

⁵ Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

Proverbs 30:5

DISCUSS

30:5 – Who is God a shield to?

OBSERVE

Read **Hebrews 11:1 & Ephesians 2:8-9**:

- underline every reference to *FAITH*.

¹ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

DISCUSS

11:1 – What is faith?

2:8-9 – How are we saved? Who gives us faith? What does this exclude?

OBSERVE

Read **Hebrews 12:1-2**:

- underline every occurrence of the phrase *LET US*.
- circle the phrase *LOOKING TO JESUS*.

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2

DISCUSS

12:1-2a – How are we to run the *race of faith*?

12:2b – How was Jesus the perfect example of faith?

So, here we have the command to take up the *shield of faith* or in a switch of metaphor to run the *race of faith* - both of which call for endurance. In all the circumstances of life to keep looking to Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith, taking refuge in Him, and so extinguish all the flaming darts the evil one throws at us:

To extinguish the flaming dart to get us to *doubt God's love* - resting by faith in the truth of who we now are in Christ, beloved children of the Father, in whom He delights, and who is working all things together for the good of making us more like Jesus.

To extinguish the flaming dart to get us to *doubt God's power* - resting by faith in the truth that the Spirit, the guarantee of our inheritance, is mightily at work in us, empowering us to live in a manner worthy of our calling, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God.

HELMET OF SALVATION

Read **Ephesians 6:17** and **Isaiah 59:17a**:

¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

Ephesians 6:17

^{17a} He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head;

Isaiah 59:17a

OBSERVE

Read **1 Thessalonians 5:8-9**:

⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

⁹ For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

1 Thessalonians 5:8-9

DISCUSS

5:8 – What more do we learn about the *helmet of salvation*?

5:9 – What is our hope, our confident expectation?

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION - The assurance of our salvation is no idle matter and is something that Satan will attack. For it is the assurance of our calling that leads to greater thankfulness to God, gives us joy and peace in life's storms, and empowers us to live godly lives. And something we are to diligently pursue (**2 Peter 1:10-11**). To study this further have a look at the [Assurance of our Calling](#) section in **United with Christ (study 2)**.

SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

Read **Ephesians 6:17**:

¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

Ephesians 6:17

DISCUSS

6:17 – What is the sword of the Spirit? Who makes it effective?

Let's turn now and a look at how Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, successfully wielded the sword of the Spirit in His own battle against the devil in the wilderness:

OBSERVE

Read **Matthew 4:1-11** and:

- underline every reference to *JESUS* (including pronouns).
- circle the phrase *IT IS WRITTEN*.

¹ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

³ And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.”

⁴ But he answered, “It is written, ““Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.””

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple

⁶ and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, ““He will command his angels concerning you’, and ““On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.””

⁷ Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

⁹ And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.”

¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, ““You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.””

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

4:3 – How did Satan tempt Jesus to sinfully satisfy His hunger?

4:5-6 – How did Satan tempt Jesus to prove the Father loved Him?

4:8-9 – How did Satan tempt Jesus to gain glory?

4:4,7,10 – What did Jesus know and use to overcome the temptations of Satan?

So much more could be studied in these verses - laden with theological significance. That Jesus is the True Israel, the Last Adam, who succeeded where both failed in His faithfulness to God's Word. However, the Good News for us is that Jesus did prevail. Not just in the wilderness but whose perfect obedience to the Father would lead Him to the cross where He died for our sins, triumphing over the evil one, and whom the Father raised to life again and exalted at His right hand in the heavenly places, where those in Christ are now seated with Him and have every spiritual blessing. Hallelujah!! What a Saviour!!

OBSERVE

Read **Hebrews 4:11-13** and:

- underline the phrase *STRIVE TO ENTER THAT REST*.
- circle the phrase *WORD OF GOD*.

¹¹ Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

STRIVE TO ENTER THAT REST - God's salvation rest entered through faith in Christ - realised in part now and fully in the age to come. That those who hear the Gospel but don't believe it do not enter (**Heb 4:2;6**), and those who do exhort to keep resting in it, to keep looking to Christ, their hope in Him testified to in lives of holiness and love.

DISCERNING - STRONGS 2924 (kritikos) - skilled in judging, assesses what is good or bad.

4:11 – What are we exhorted to do?

4:12 - What sustains our faith in Christ and directs our obedience to Him? How?

Strive to enter God's salvation rest through faith in Christ - that is the warning in these verses. Then to keep trusting in Christ, resting in the promises of the Gospel - promises of God's forgiveness, presence, and power now and a glorious future to come. The battle to do this is not easy. We face daily the challenge to resist sin, in all its deceitfulness, and to not let bitterness and unbelief take root in our heart.

However, it is here that the author of Hebrews directs us to put our out *confidence in God's Word* - the living and active Word which penetrates deep within, exposing the sinful thoughts and intentions of our heart, sustains our faith in Christ, and has the power to transform us to become more like Him from the inside-out.

KEEP PRAYING

The apostle Paul after outlining the armour and weaponry we have been given to stand firm against the devil's schemes concludes with a call for us, as saints, to persevere in prayer. Not introducing an additional piece of armour but the means by which we look to God and depend on Him to sustain our desire to use it.

OBSERVE

Read **Ephesians 6:18-20** and:

- underline every reference to *ALL*.

¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,
¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,
²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak

6:18 – What do we learn about prayer?

6:19-20 – What does Paul ask the saints to pray for him?

PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT - “Praying in the Spirit is prayer that conforms to the will and purpose of the Spirit” - Sinclair Ferguson

The apostle Paul has already given us two Spirit-inspired prayers that he prayed for the Church (**Eph 1:15-23; 3:14-21**). Prayers for the Spirit to empower us to know God more deeply and to strengthen our desire to stand firm as we grow in our grasp of Christ’s love for us. Now the apostle Paul asks the saints to pray that he would know the words and strength to proclaim the Gospel clearly and boldly.

“Love for God provides the zeal needed to employ the weapons he provides. This does not mean that the battle will be without effort or pain. It is, after all, spiritual *warfare*...But, with the faith that God has given us sufficient armor to resist the assault of Satan, we can stand so long as we truly desire to do so. That desire is also the gift of God, as His Spirit for which we pray stirs within us the love for God that is more compelling than the love for sin.” - Bryan Chapell

Why not take time now to pray for the saints you know and those you don’t? That they would know God more deeply, have a greater grasp of His love for them, and have the words and strength to proclaim the Gospel clearly and boldly.

Well, we’ve come to the end of our study and the last in our series - **United with Christ**. We hope these studies have been a blessing to you as you have been reminded of God’s amazing grace to you in Christ. And that your faith in Christ has been strengthened, confident that as you seek to walk in a manner worthy of His calling and to stand firm against the devil’s schemes you have everything you need in Him. To Him be all the glory - now and forever.

About this study...

This resource has been designed to allow you to jump into God's Word and study it closely. It requires no preparation, and provides you with a structure to study a passage, with questions to help you think and reflect on it.

This study gives you a small insight into the world of inductive Bible study through three key parts:

Observe - *What does the text say?*

Understand - *What does the text mean?*

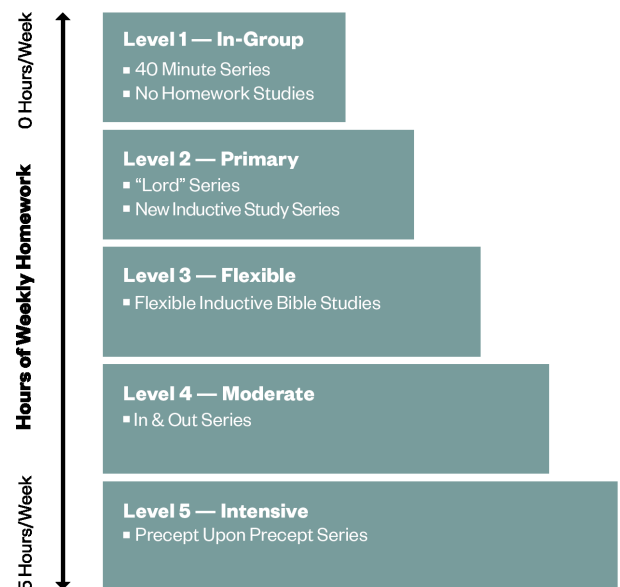
Apply - *What does this mean for me?*

By using this approach, we can study the Bible in a way that allows us to know God deeply, and to live differently.

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PRECEPT IRELAND

www.preceptireland.org
+44 (028) 9074 6082
info@preceptireland.org
Unit 9A, NCM House, 218 York Street,
Belfast, NI, BT15 1GY