

Daily Devotional, July 17, 2020 Victorious in the Lord

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. Ephesians 6:10-11 (NIV)

My first year of high school began when I reported early in the summer to football orientation and practice. I walked into the gym of my new high school with wide eyes, not knowing what to expect. In grade school, I had excelled in flag football. Our team won the Private School championship among suburban Lutheran schools. I recognized some of the students from other teams we played against. All of the first-year students sat down in the gym as the coaches brought us together for a heart-to-heart discussion on what we were about to experience.

The coaches described to us the hard work that was expected, what our schedules would be and the effort they expected out of us. Before we moved on the coaches gave us a serious warning! They told us that the older players were serious about this game of football and we better be too! They warned us that if we didn't pay attention, we would find ourselves getting hurt. They told us the older student were fast, strong and could hurt us if we didn't stay focused.

The next thing they did was issue us the equipment we needed to survive the horror they had just described to us. A helmet, shoulder pads, jersey and pants, pads for our pants, and a duffle bag to stuff it all into. We were expected to supply our own cleats for our feet. They did all of this so that we would still be standing at the end of the day. Without proper preparation – well it would not have been a pretty picture.

They gave us a rousing talk about how we were to expect a championship for our school and with excitement we took the field for our first day of practice. Although we were only the freshman team, it was now practice for what would be a battle for pride, esteem, and honor.

The Apostle Paul described much of life this way—an approaching battle. Each day we struggle against so many things. Our schedules and demands, the things that are beyond our control and bring us stress, those things that tempt us in our weakness and even the spiritual world is part of the struggles we wrestle with on a daily basis. Paul understood that life could be filled with joy as much as it could be filled with trials.

The good news is that we who are called to stand strong in the face of the overwhelming, we are not called to stand alone. To “Be Strong in the Lord” is not something we do by ourselves. It is something that comes from a relationship with Jesus. To be strong in the Lord comes as our faith is developed from day to day.

Paul continues Ephesians 6 by encouraging the faithful to put on, “The whole armor of God.” Each day, as we draw closer to God, we prepare ourselves for the work, the struggles and the trials at hand. As we begin this week, I want to encourage you to stay focused, and to put on the equipment that God has provided. Trials and joy are ahead, and God is with us through it all.

By the way, our Luther South Braves Freshman team, were not only undefeated, but *unscored* upon! With proper preparation, good coaching, faith, and determination in our goal, the championship of heaven can and *will* be achieved.

Prayer: God, I want to help build your kingdom and not my own. Believing that you have chosen me to be your child changes everything. Father, help me to believe that because you have chosen me, you will make me to bear fruit that will last and that I will be victorious in service to you. God, help me to walk in confidence that you have a plan and purpose for my life. In Christ's name. Amen.