

**STANDING FIRM**

EPHESIANS 6:13-15

HEART OF THE MATTER - A WORD FROM KEN

It was the summer of 1862 when Abraham Lincoln took his leave from the White House. Up on a hill overlooking the Capitol Dome (still under construction) and the wide Potomac River, from his Soldier's Home porch, he labored over a document that would change America forever. It was the *Emancipation Proclamation*, presented to Congress in September and then enacted into law January 1863.

Did he know how many lives would yet be lost? What pressures would he face as Commander in Chief? (The war didn't end for another two years.) And yet, how is he remembered? Abraham Lincoln took a strong stand. He stood tall. Many people argue that he was the greatest of all the Presidents.

You may not agree. That's not surprising. Strength of conviction can be perceived by some as obstinacy or stubbornness or shortsightedness. One person's backbone is another person's contempt.

But strength of character is an essential quality of leadership. Strong leaders know the risk. Some may misunderstand. Opposition will emerge. But leadership requires courage.

Paul, the veteran church planter, understood. He weathered many storms – on the high seas and in the conference room and in the town square. He understood his mission. He affirmed a wide variety of styles and approaches. He encouraged diversity. But when it came to the essentials, there was no compromise.

He was familiar with the Roman armies that occupied not only Jerusalem and Judea, but the major cities where churches were planted, including Ephesus. He was himself a Roman citizen (which spoke to his pedigree and his broad education). He witnessed the competition of the games. He knew about the chariot races and the long distance marathons and the athletic contests that drew such crowds. He sat in the arenas and watched the spectacle. He knew the thunder of grand armies marching in formation, the cadence of the drums and the pounding of the spears and the rattling of the swords in their sheaths as they moved in iron might along the city streets. He understood the intimidation it caused residents; especially non-Romans. He admired a carefully fit suit of armor – how the metal glistened in the sun-light as a soldier clanked by. The helmet with a brush of bright red. It spelled wealth and power and superiority.

That brings us to the **heart of the matter**. For the believer, the battle is on. Great leaders will all agree – standing strong is the beginning. Even Abraham Lincoln got help from Paul. "Stand your ground," the apostle said. And then he identified the full armor God provides.

**DISCUSSION GUIDE**
 AUTHENTIC INTERACTION · COMPELLING CONNECTION · IRRESISTIBLE EXPERIENCE  
 LOVING ACCEPTANCE · EVANGELISTIC INFLUENCE

"Put it on. All of it," he ordered.

The day of trial and testing will certainly come. Be ready.

**BACKGROUND** – Paul knows from experience that the tension and conflict never ends. God put his plan in place; there is an enemy whose eternal mission is to frustrate that plan. The heat is on. God has equipped believers for the fight. It's not a question of "if" but "are you ready"? Be prepared.

Read EPHESIANS 6:13-15

Think it over...

1. Paul tells his readers to put on the "full armor." Why? (What is the inference of *partial* armor?)
2. What does it mean to "stand your ground"? (cf. Romans 5:1-2)
3. How familiar would the first century reader be with armor? What function would armor perform? What advantage?
4. Three part of the suit of armor are identified. Each stands for some aspect of our spiritual equipment. What are the three – and what do they signify?
5. Why is each essential?

Bring it home...

1. What is the evidence that a believer is only partially armed?
2. Paul doesn't call for attack; that is - to go on offense. He tells us to stand. Why?
3. What are some of the modern equivalents to the Roman suit of armor? How might Paul have illustrated the same point for us moderns?
4. How are truth, righteousness and peace good for our protection against Satan's attacks? Talk about each.
5. What have been some evidences in your life that the attacks are real? Share them.
6. How can we stand together against those attacks?

**SHARE. SUPPORT. AFFIRM. PRAY.**