

## WORLD QUAKER DAY PRESENTATION

October 4, 2020: World Quaker Day- What Does it Mean to be a Quaker Today?

“Resilience and Faith,” Getry Agizah, Peace team Kenya

With the suicide rate climbing in our communities of believers and non-believers, and the depression due to various life stressors, not forgetting the natural calamities and diseases such as Covid19, there is need for education on spiritual resilience.

**The dangers of ignoring the little stresses in life that can quickly snowball into a heightened state of distress which can lead to feelings of despair, hopelessness and depression. The communities recognize that one of the best tools there is to cope with trouble is faith. In order to be proactive they are provided with help learning how to build spiritual resiliency that will see them through even the challenges of their life challenges.**

Faith is so crucial to our everyday functioning, yet faith can be fragile. Maybe you know someone who lost their faith after going through a long difficult stretch. **Resilient faith** is a quality of faith that's able to see us through trouble, temptation and trials and even come through stronger.

Resiliency is the ability to cope with stress and adversity and bounce back to a previous state of normal functioning, or using the exposure to adversity to produce a “steeling effect” and function better than expected. Resilience is a process and not an individual trait that some have and others don't.

For some people life feels like a battle field...and they're constantly being engaged in conflict or fighting, at work, at school, or at home. For some folks, the war they fight is within themselves, battling addiction, battling criticism and negativity and fear. You've heard it said that some people are their own worst enemy.

Maybe you know someone who's tired of the fight, tired of getting up every day to face the left over struggle from the day before, to try to appease an abusive spouse, to face the prejudice of hateful ignorance, to face a temptation that's beat them before, to face the same fears that never go away, or face the failures and mistakes of the past.

You don't have to look very far to see why we need faith that's tough and strong. We can have faith that's resilient and strong. God provided some help for us in this area. **Listen to the encouragement of Ephesians 6: 10-18.**

*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 and 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 belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.*

*In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for the entire Lord's people.*

In Ephesians, Paul talks about how to have power for living and what right relationships look like for Christians. Now he illustrates how to have faith that's fully equipped to protect us from any attack. He begins by telling us to be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. We don't have to rely on our own strength to deal with things, in fact if we do; we're vulnerable to disillusionment and doubt. Be strong means to be continually strengthened in the Lord and his mighty power.

### **But how exactly do you do that?**

He says, 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 and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

There's two things here to help us to take our stand; **wearing the right armor and understanding where the struggle comes from.**

We can't fight what we don't understand. You know we can spend a lot of time and energy struggling with and being mad at things that aren't even the real issue. Maybe the thing we think is the problem isn't really the true source of our problem.

Paul says, our struggle isn't always against people, it's against the powers of spiritual forces...He calls it the devils schemes. So what are those schemes and how do we fight them? Jesus said, that Satan comes to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10) and to take away the word (Mark 4:15)

Through the parable of the sower, Jesus illustrates how Satan sows confusion and misunderstanding in the hearts of those who after hearing scripture are not able to understand and put into action what they heard. The enemy comes and snatches the word right back out of their hearts.

It's a sobering thought that Paul is trying to convey that there is a very real enemy that presents opposition to believers through temptation and troubles. He creates adversity by snatching God's words of hope from the heart of the believer planting seeds of doubt and disbelief.

In 2 Cor. 2: 10 Paul warned that we have to be alert and aware of Satan's schemes so he does not outwit us and so we don't give him a foothold (Eph 4:27)

This is why Paul says a fight against the unseen is harder to fight than a person we can see. And for that reason he says; 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.

To put on the full armor is to be enveloped in, to hide in, to be wholly and fully armed. "The idea is that in addition to divine equipment, we need it in its completeness, without the lack of any single part. In order to meet or spiritual foe, we need to take to ourselves all that God provides for living and for overcoming our problems. Paul a Roman citizen uses the image of a heavily armed Roman soldier and portrays a figure of the Christian as a warrior," who is able to stand against or stand their ground against the cunning arts, deceit, craftiness or trickery of the enemy.

God's armor, is not just armor that he fashioned and provided for us, but armor he wears himself. The pieces of armor are character traits of God...truth, righteousness, and salvation. Before going into battle, every military member goes through a deployment line to receive their specific instructions for the kind of armor and weapons they will receive in the field, each specific for the location and mission.

The armor God provides has 7 specific pieces for the task of spiritual warfare. We can look at the armor two ways, as gifts from God and as a call to obedient action. Our action is to resist, oppose and, stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, we belt on God's truth and we practice God's truth.

Another translation here for buckling is girding. We use a belt to keep things in place. The belt holds all the armor together, with clips for various attachments. Our attachments are everything that's influenced by God's word, our attitude, our relationships and choices.

Once everything's in place and the belt is secure we can move about with greater freedom and confidence. We put on the belt of **truth** by studying and focusing on what's true according to God's word.

The centre of righteousness, covers the vulnerable chest and heart, providing security. Our security is the righteousness of Christ referring to both the righteousness that justifies us before

God which is the grace given to us by Christ when we believe, and it's also, the ongoing sanctifying righteousness that the Holy Spirit continues to work in the submitted believer. This security assures that even if we stumble, we will not fall, our wounds will not be fatal. It is His righteousness that keeps our heart and will safe from spiritual attack.

Having our feet fitted or shod with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace, is crucial for success. Every military member knows the importance of taking care of their feet and their boots, especially during a deployment. The Roman soldier wore sandals which were bound by thongs over the instep around the ankle, and the soles were thickly studded with nails. This would give him a firm footing in case of attack.

Just as the right soles on our shoes or boots help us to be ready for muddy road or icy sidewalks, having our feet fitted is a way of saying our stability and readiness for each day comes from our confidence in the gospel message and the assurance of the peace we have with God. In addition to all that, we have the shield of faith with which we can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. The Shield Paul is talking about is that of a Roman infantry used to protect their whole bodies. They were about four feet tall and two and one half feet wide and were constructed of leather stretched over wood, reinforced with metal at the top and bottom. The leather on the front was often soaked in water, which immediately extinguished flaming arrows. When linked together, no enemy could penetrate the shield. God's faithfulness is our shield and we pick up our shield when we chose to believe and trust in his faithfulness. We can tell if that's the case by how we talk and act. Do we talk and act like we have faith, or are we fearful, angry and panicky?

If we're shielded, we're ok and we can say, "It's all good" even when it isn't yet, because we know he's with us. When we gather with other believers in prayer, we literally link our shields together. Individually, it's our faith and our ability to trust God that acts as a shield against the fiery arrows that tempt us to err or do wrong. The helmet of salvation is salvation from the power of sin. One author suggested the helmet is a ceremonial helmet of victory which indicates the battle has already be won.

You know, if you were on the battlefield and every time you looked out at your fellow soldiers and saw a sea of helmets that said, "we've already won," that could be pretty inspiring. Well, that's true for us, Jesus already won the battle over Satan and sin, then he gave us a helmet with a victory statement on it. We wear it when we believe.

In Isaiah, God strapped on a breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation, to bring righteousness and salvation together. But in Ephesians, the believer puts them on in order to "do righteousness" and "receive salvation."

With the introduction of the sword of the Spirit, something different happens. The sword is the word of God, and the holy Spirit empowers it. Jesus quoted the “word” to defeat the temptation of Satan when he was in the wilderness. Every time Satan tried to tempt Jesus, he replied with the Word, saying... “It is written...” Hebrews Chapter 4 says, God’s word is “alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” (Heb. 4:12-13)

In Rev. 1: 12-18 John describes his first encounter with Jesus in a vision. He describes his clothes, his chest, his feet, his head and hair, his face, his eyes and the sound of his voice, and he said, “coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword...and I fell at his feet as though dead.” The way we “take the sword,” is by always being ready with the Word of God. We might need some training to be effective in handling it well. Timothy tells us to do our best to present ourselves to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15) Knowing what the Word of God says about whatever we’re going through helps us to know how to think about it and how to respond.

Being alert and praying on all occasions, in all seasons with all kinds of prayers and requests is one way for the Holy Spirit to empower us and strengthen us in our inner being. Powerful things happen when we pray, we are changed, encouraged, strengthened, what seemed impossible becomes possible, comfort is obtained and battles are won. The armor is God’s gift to us, but it’s only effective if we wear it. Then, we will be equipped to face life’s difficulties with courage and faith that’s strong and resilient enough to meet any need.

#### **LET’S PRAY:**

Dear Lord, Ephesian 6:10-18 shows us that there will be tough times in life, and there may be some that we’re not sure we can survive. But whether tragedy or temptation, you don’t leave us defenseless. Thank you for armor that unleashes your power so we can stand strong. Help us to be able to recognize the unseen elements at work trying to confuse or deceive us. Make us wise to the tricks of the enemy, trying to make us doubt your promises and distract our focus. Give us power to be alert and vigilant. Help us to know what your word of truth says for us in every situation, that we might experience the peace you made possible for us. May we always remember that picking up our shield is as simple as trusting in you and your words of promise. And, may we store up those words in our heart so they will be available for us to quote, as we intercede for others and ourselves in times of need. In Jesus name. Amen.