



Letters About Strength

Ephesians 6:10-18, 1 Peter 5:8-10

Ranger Reggie strode in the open door and waved to the campers. "Hello campers! It's so good to see you. Welcome to the Mail Center."

"Ranger Reggie, Ranger Reggie! You're standing on your own two feet! Are you healed?"

"Hi, Safari Sam," Ranger Reggie greeted his friend. He stood up tall. "I feel stronger!"

"You sure look stronger. I'll bet you're strong enough to carry a whole bag full of mail!"

"We're about to find out, because it's Mail Time!" Ranger Reggie removed the Bible from the mailbag. "It's Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus! It says, '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.'"

"The full armor of God?" Safari Sam looked confused. "What is the full armor of God?"

"I'll show you," Ranger Reggie told him. He waved for a young camper to join them in front of the counter. "You stand next to me. Safari Sam, you go over to that trunk and take out what I tell you."

Safari Sam peered inside the heavy wooden trunk. "Wow, this is full of cool stuff!"

"Just take out what I read in the Bible," Ranger Reggie instructed. "The Word of God tells us to put on the full armor of God. Listen to what it tells us. 'Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place . . .'"

Safari Sam picked up a shiny, metal vest and a leather belt. "This must be the breastplate. This belt holds it in place!" He waved for the camper to stand next to him. "Hold still while I get you suited up." He slid the breastplate over the camper's head and secured the belt.

"You look great!" said Ranger Reggie. "The breastplate of righteousness protects your heart."

"Aha!" Safari Sam's eyes lit up with understanding. "So, doing what is right in God's eyes protects our heart from wanting what is wrong."

"And your heart can be filled with his righteousness!" Ranger Reggie added.

"What about the belt?" Safari Sam asked.

"The belt represents God's truth," Ranger Reggie explained. "Wrapping ourselves in God's truth keeps us close to Jesus."

Safari Sam nodded. "I like that! What's next?"

Ranger Reggie continued reading, ". . . your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace."

Safari Sam held up shoes with "Good News" written on them. "Look! Gospel shoes!" He put the shoes on the floor in front of the camper. "Here you go. Slip these on."

"Perfect!" Ranger Reggie noted. "Now, you will be showing others God's 'Good News' with every step you take!" He found his place in the Bible and continued to read, ". . . take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one."

Sam handed the camper a shield. "That makes perfect sense. The faith God gives us protects us from Satan's lies."

Ranger Reggie nodded. "Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

"Here's your helmet and your sword." Safari Sam gave the camper a helmet with a large red feather and a sword. He could see the armor was starting to get a bit heavy.

"Sometimes, Satan tries to make us doubt in our mind that God truly loves us enough to save us," Ranger Reggie explained. "The helmet protects our minds. No matter what lies we hear, we always know in our minds that God is with us!"

"Then we can use the sword to chase Satan away?" Safari Sam guessed.

"Precisely, there's no better weapon than the Word of God!" Ranger Reggie agreed. "Satan tries to fool us with lies, but we know every word of the Bible is true. Satan cannot stand against the truth of God's Word. He has to run for the hills!"

Safari Sam looked at the camper covered in armor. "Well, you look like a real godly warrior!"

"As we remove the armor, let's see if you can remember what each piece stands for." Ranger Reggie removed the helmet. "You know in your mind that you are saved by God!" He took the belt and held it up. "You have the truth wrapped around you."

Safari Sam removed the breastplate and held it in front of him. "God's righteousness protects your heart."

The camper removed the shoes and handed them to Ranger Reggie. "The Gospel guides every step you take!" Ranger Reggie said.

Safari Sam took the heavy shield. "No attack can get past the faith God gives you!" Finally, he took the sword. "And God's Word can chase away all lies and sin!"

"Let's hear it for our fearless warrior!" Ranger Reggie said. Everyone clapped as the camper scurried back to join the group. "Now campers, you all have that same armor and those same weapons available to you."

"You may not have a trunk full of goodies like these, but we can all put on God's spiritual armor by praying and reading His Word!" Safari Sam said.

"It's time to find out which animal is super strong. It's Creature Feature time!" Ranger Reggie announced. "Wild William, give us a clue."

Wild William appeared in the doorway with a large shield covering him from head to toe. He peered over the shield at the campers. "So much stronger than the rest, he beats his fists upon his chest."

"It's gotta' be a gorilla!" Safari Sam announced confidently.

"Is it a gorilla?" Ranger Reggie asked. Suddenly, a huge black gorilla burst through the door from behind Wild William. The gorilla spied Ranger Reggie and leapt toward him. Ranger Reggie tried to run, but the gorilla caught him up in a tight bear hug. "Ow! Get your paws off me you dirty ape! Help! Can't breathe!"

"Back! Back! Let go! Bad monkey!" Safari Sam pulled Ranger Reggie free from the gorilla and stood between them. He took the gorilla by the arm and led him to Wild William, who pulled the hulking animal out the door. Safari Sam turned to Ranger Reggie. "Ranger Reggie! Are you all right?"

"Now, I'm going to smell like bananas all day," Ranger Reggie huffed.

Safari Sam shook his head. "Wow, Ranger Reggie, you sure do suffer for your faith."

"Suffer!" Ranger Reggie lifted a finger into the air. "That reminds of the letter Orville showed me."

The campers and counselors called out, "Hey Orville, come on down!"

Orville peeked over the edge of his perch on a rafter and dropped an egg into Safari Sam's hands. Safari Sam opened the egg and read, "And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast."

"Of course!" Ranger Reggie announced. "It's Jesus that makes us strong. Just like the apostles, we can always count on Him to restore our strength."

"Amen!" Safari Sam agreed. He looked at the campers. "I think it's time for the Camper's Code. Everyone stand and raise your right hand."

All the campers and counselors recited together, "I will love God with all my heart. I will love my neighbor as myself. I will be a light wherever I go!"

Sam began to lead the campers outside when he noticed Ranger Reggie standing next to the chest putting on the armor. "Ranger Reggie, what are you doing?"

"I'm protecting myself in case that gorilla is still out there," he explained. With that he marched out the door, his shield raised and ready, with Safari Sam and the campers following close behind.