

Ephesians 6:10-20 • The Full Armor of God

Introduction

How does one apply a concept like “salvation” or “faith” or “righteousness” in practical, daily life? Can ideas or teachings take physical hold in our walk with Christ? Most of these things exist in the unseen arena of our hearts, thoughts and mind. Another way of describing this is “spiritual warfare.” In Paul’s teaching of the whole armor of God, we learn that these things can be engaged to tangibly make battle on all levels, seen and unseen.

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

[Read 6:10]

Q: Where in Ephesians has Paul already defined “the strength of His might”?

A: Read Ephesians 1:19b-23:

^{19b}These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might ²⁰which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²²And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, ²³which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

It’s the end result of the power of the resurrection wherein Christ is seated with God ruling both heaven and earth. Note that this encompasses both the **present** time and all ages **to come**. It’s the fact that Christ has already conquered all earthly and heavenly authorities and all things are subject to Him. As our “*strength*”, He has already overcome the forces to which we are drawn to battle, both physical and spiritual.

Q: The phrase “be strong” can also be translated “be strengthened”. What does this mean for us? How do we apply this?

A: Not of ourselves but of Him Who has already demonstrated the strength needed to overcome.

¹¹Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

[Read 6:11]

Q: Why is it significant that Paul says twice in this passage (here and again in 6:13) to take up the FULL armor of God?

A: The whole armor is a complete system, both for offense and defense, that protects all the potential areas of vulnerability. Who would want to go to battle wearing all the armor **EXCEPT** a sword? Or everything except the helmet? All of these things depend on and work with each other to provide a complete system.

Q: Who is our enemy and how does he fight?

A: The enemy is Satan. His strategy is to employ “*schemes*.” The clear implication is that Satan cannot defeat outright the full armor of God. He can only hope to deceive or trick us into relaxing our guard, to not properly use the **WHOLE** armor, or to seek some weakness in our defense.

[Continued on next page]

Q: Why does Paul say our goal is “to stand firm”? Why isn’t our goal to attack and overcome?

A: We are called to battle where we live, to withstand in the vicinity of our daily life. The battle comes to us and is an indication that it’s about living a consistent, obedient day-to-day life.

Have you noticed throughout the Old Testament that it was usually only at the command of God that an attack was initiated?

¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

[Read 6:12]

Note: Verse 12 is the key to interpreting this passage correctly. By clearly identifying that our real battle is a **spiritual** battle, the illustrations of the armor of God are understood in their correct context as the tools with which we wage spiritual warfare.

Q: Our 4 enemies are identified in v.12. Who are they?

- “...the rulers...of this darkness...”
- “...the powers...of this darkness...”
- “...the world forces...of this darkness...”
- “...the spiritual forces of wickedness...”

Q: Where do these enemies strike from? Where do they reside?

A: “...in the heavenly places.”

Q: What can be inferred from this as we consider the events that have, are, and will take place here on earth?

A: They’re the result of spiritual war.

Q: Therefore, can “the war” be won on earth using earthly weapons and strategies?

A: No. It can only be won by spiritual weapons, the ultimate victory coming through the Person of Christ.

¹³Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

[Read 6:13]

Q: What is Paul trying to convey in requesting we “take up” the armor of God?

A: It’s totally and completely supplied by God. This might be an important distinction to the people of that day as mythology commonly told tales of gods giving armor and/or special weaponry to mortals. Paul’s allusion would have been particularly potent that it comes not from man but God.

Q: Why does Paul describe our action “to resist” and “stand” rather than “to pursue and conquer”?

A: Read James 4:7:

⁷Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

First, Satan is bringing the battle to us. Resisting him and standing firm is enough to drive Satan away. We are required only to hold our ground. Christ will win the overall victory.

¹⁴Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, ¹⁵and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; ¹⁶in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

[Read 6:14-17]

Q: Some translations say “having girded your loins with truth”, some “tightened the belt of truth about your loins”. The point is that this is the method by which upper and lower body armor along with the soldier’s robe/tunic is tied together. How do you see the significance of this illustration beginning with truth?

A: For the believer, truth is not relative. Of the 7 qualities represented in God’s full armor (truth, righteousness, the Gospel, faith, salvation, the Word, prayer) God’s truth is the common denominator linking all these things together.

Q: What’s the most important organ protected by the breastplate? What is the significance in the application of righteousness to this item of the armor?

A: The breastplate protects the heart, which must remain righteous, completely devoted and obedient to God’s ways. Contrast this to how Satan attacks through the use of “schemes” and “flaming arrows” wherein he wants to corrupt the heart.

Read 1 John 3:7-10:

⁷Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; ⁸the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. ¹⁰By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

Q: Verse 15 doesn’t say to shod one’s feet “with the gospel” but “with the preparation of the gospel.” What is the distinction Paul is trying to make?

A: The Amplified New Testament™ translates this verse as: “*And having shod your feet in preparation [to face the enemy with the firm-footed stability, the promptness, and the readiness produced by the good news] of the Gospel of peace.*” The enemy is successful if he can get us to begin to retreat, to move our feet so as to withdraw from our stance on the Gospel.

Q: The word shield used in verse 16 is not the small “buckler” shield we might think of a Gladiator using but refers to the large Roman shield measuring approximately 4’ tall by 2-1/2’ wide. What is the significance of wielding our faith as a large, Roman shield?

A: It covers most of the body, can be moved to meet the direction of the attack (especially flaming arrows), and is something you either have or don’t. (Think about this in regards to faith. It’s there or it’s not.) It’s the chief defensive weapon wielded by the left hand and is often used in conjunction with the chief weapon – the sword – of the right hand.

Read 1 Peter 5:9-10:

⁹But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. ¹⁰After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

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Q: What lessons can we draw from Satan's use of "fiery arrows"?

A: He is looking for weaknesses in our armor, he looks for every opportunity to inflame us, and he is specific in his attacks. (An arrow is a specifically aimed weapon.) Faith strengthens weakness, builds resistance, and meets the attack head on.

Q: What does the helmet protect?

A: Besides our mind, also all the critical organs of communication: Eyes, ears, nose, mouth. Just as the head is the most vulnerable to a fatal blow, so it is the most vulnerable to Satan's attacks of deception, temptation, false doctrine, etc.

Q: Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:8 and compare how Paul describes the helmet.

A: "...a helmet, the **hope** of salvation." The Biblical definition of "hope" is different than how we often translate "hope" to mean "wish". Biblical "hope" means that faith in our future deliverance by God is so real that it has become tangible, palpable, as concrete as a physical thing. It's the simultaneous protection of both our present and our future.

Q: What is different about the function of a sword from all the other pieces of armor?

A: Although it can be used defensively to ward off blows, it's chiefly an offensive weapon.

Q: How does the sword imply the participation and role of the Trinity in the armor?

A: The sword of the Word is supplied by the Spirit, salvation in Christ, and the whole armor is called "*the full armor of God.*"

Q: Is our knowledge of God's Word important? How does it enter battle with Satan and authorities in heavenly places?

A: Read Hebrews 4:12 and discuss:

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

Q: Have you noticed that for believers this sword is wielded in the believer's hand, but for Christ it is wielded in His mouth?

A: Read Isaiah 49:2:

²He has made My mouth like a sharp sword, In the shadow of His hand He has concealed Me; And He has also made Me a select arrow, He has hidden Me in His quiver.

Read Revelation 1:16:

¹⁶In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

Read Revelation 19:15:

¹⁵From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

It's not only confirmation that "the Word" as explained already in John 1 is Christ Himself, but the difference between our standing ground against Satan versus Christ as the source of complete victory.

Q: How did Christ use “the sword” in the temptation by Satan? (See Matthew 4:1-11)

A: For all 3 attacks Jesus responded each time, “...it is written...” Christ provides us an example in His use of Scripture to rebut and defeat Satan’s personal attacks on Him. Also note that Satan sought Christ out where He stood and how Christ stood His ground.

Q: What part of the body has no armor? What seems to be left completely unprotected?

A: The back. It implies that we must never turn our back on our foe. Our only safety is ceaseless resistance and being able to see how and from where the enemy is coming.

¹⁸With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, ¹⁹and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

[Read 6:18-20]

Q: “Ancient World Military Machinery for \$1,000, Alex.” An astute student of this analogy of armor might conclude that an essential item carried into battle by all soldiers of the ancient world is missing. What is it?

A: The spear. The sword is for close-in fighting and commonly worn on the belt, ready to be pulled out when needed. The spear is for keeping the enemy at a distance (it wasn’t actually “thrown” except in more desperate situations but used more like a lance) and was the primary weapon.

Q: Paul doesn’t state it as such, but what might we take as being the “spear” that compliments the armor of God?

A: Prayer.

Q: In this passage, is Paul advising personal prayer?

A: He suggests 2 groups: All saints (believers) and their leaders. It’s easier for an army to face and repel the enemy if they’re **ALL** focused on the direction, type and intensity of the attack, along with shared knowledge of the enemy’s schemes/strategy. The difference between an “army” and a “mob” is discipline and training – in this case exemplified by prayer.

Q: Contrast Paul’s words in Ephesians 6:18-20 with Christ’s words in Luke 21:36. What is the end result that both Paul and Christ seek for believers?

A: That they would be able to stand.

Overall Application

The history of warfare is often defined by peak moments, milestones of several great battles with little mention of the struggle between them. This is not the expectation for Christian soldiers. Standing firm in our daily life is all that is required. What elements of the whole armor of God do you need to strengthen to enable you to stand in your daily life? For what can we pray on your behalf that you might be strengthened together with us?