

Believers are to Put On the Whole Armor of God

Ephesians 6:10-17

Ephesians 6:10-17 – *“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

Background Notes

How many of you remember hearing about the armor of God in your Sunday school days - when it was demonstrated by flannel graph lessons, or with Sunday school coloring pages? I remember, as the armor was put up, piece by piece, on the soldier who was sketched on the flannel background, invariably the teacher would say, “Now notice that there is no armor for the soldier’s back - so don’t run away scared. You must stand firm for the Lord and fight the good fight!”

That’s still a good lesson for today! We’re involved in spiritual warfare. We need to put on the armor of God - and we need to remember that there is no piece of armor for our backs. We are not to run away! We are to stand firm - and resist - and fight the good fight. As James 4:7 says, *“Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”*

Where did the apostle Paul see this or object lesson, of putting on armor? There are two possibilities, and probably both of them are part of the answer. Those of you who have Bibles with marginal notes will notice that there are several quotations from the Book of Isaiah in this armor passage. There’s no doubt that Paul, an Old Testament scholar, was thinking of those Old Testament Scriptures as he wrote this section of Ephesians.

Also remember Paul’s situation when he wrote this epistle. He was under house arrest in Rome, and he was chained to a Roman guard, probably 24 hours a day. The apostle would have seen the Roman armor up close, and he would have understood the specific purpose and importance of every piece. The armor would have reminded the apostle of those Old Testament armor passages from Isaiah. And of course, the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to use this valuable object lesson for our instruction - to help us understand that we are involved in a battle. We are involved in spiritual warfare!

Doctrinal Point

Believers should put on the whole armor of God.

Verse 11: *“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”* And verse 13: *“Therefore take up the whole armor of God.”* Here we have further instruction for believers. These verses are commands – they are not an option. Believers are to put on the whole armor of God and be ready to fight.

a. The purpose of the armor (v11-13). *“Take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”* What is the purpose of the armor? The purpose of the armor is so that we will be able to stand and fight spiritual battles.

We are involved in spiritual warfare. Our warfare is not in the physical realm (referred to here as “flesh and blood”). Our battle is in the spiritual realm (referred to here as the “heavenly places”). Satan and his fallen angels or demons are described here as “principalities,” “powers,” “rulers of the darkness of this age,” and “spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places.” Satan’s forces have infiltrated the world system and they will use every trick in the book to try to defeat us. We are to put on the armor of God so we can stand against the *wiles* – the schemes - the tricks - of the devil. 1 Peter 5:8 tell us that the devil prowls about, seeking someone to devour. And 1 Corinthians 7:14 says that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, in order to deceive us. So the purpose of the armor of God is protection so we will be prepared, and so that we will not be deceived by Satan’s schemes and fall when he attacks us. If we understand and recognize his evil strategies, we will be ready to stand and fight.

The good news here is that once we are believers, Satan can never take away our salvation. And more good news - we never have to be defeated! God guarantees to give us strength and power and victory in spiritual warfare - if we put on the entire armor that He has provided for us. We never have to be defeated in spiritual warfare.

The bad news is that we often fail to put on the whole armor of God. We may put on part of the armor, and sometimes we may even take off some of the pieces of the armor. When this happens, there are chinks or openings in our armor. We’re not protected in the places that have no armor. Satan sees those gaps, and he knows where we are vulnerable. He knows exactly where and how to attack us. Because of the chinks in our armor he is able to defeat us in spiritual warfare. The purpose of the armor, then, is obvious – to be protected from Satan’s schemes, and to be able to stand and fight - and win the victory - in spiritual warfare.

Before we move on to the next point, let me just mention this. Don't confuse our illustration here with the literal actions we are told to take in certain areas of spiritual warfare. For example, in times of sexual temptation we are commanded to flee. *Flee fornication* (1 Corinthians 6:18). *Flee from lust* (2 Timothy 3:22). Don't stand around and test your will power – get away from sexual temptation as quickly as you can! So, in terms of the illustration, “fleeing the flesh” is resisting satanic attack in that area.

b. The pieces of the armor (v14-17).

The belt of truth (v14). The Roman soldier's belt was not used to hold his pants up, as we use a belt today. The wide leather belt of the Roman soldier was placed over his tunic to cinch up the loose folds of cloth and prepare him up for action. So, the idea of the belt here is that the truth should prepare us for action. We must not only know and hold to the truth, but the belt of truth must hold us if we are going to be effective in the good fight.

The breastplate of righteousness (v14). The “righteousness” mentioned here is not our position in Christ, but practical everyday-living righteousness. As believers, we don't have to put on our righteous position in Christ; that's already settled. But we do have to put on practical righteous living - every day! If you cheat on your income tax return, or lie on a job application form, or sneak through unmanned tollbooths without paying, or call in sick to get a day off - watch out! You are vulnerable to satanic attack and defeat if you're not wearing the breastplate of righteousness.

The sandals of the preparation of the gospel of peace (v15). Back in those days, sturdy sandals protected the feet of Roman soldiers. In spiritual warfare, being ready and prepared to share the gospel is actually a piece of armor. Have you experienced how knowing the gospel and sharing it with your neighbors, or the people you work with, actually protects you? It won't protect you from attack, but it will protect you from defeat. Try it - it works! Romans 10:15 says, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings...”

The shield of faith (v16). The shield that's mentioned here is not a small circular shield –like the metal garbage can lids we used for shields as kids! The shield of the Roman soldier was a large full-body shield. And the “faith” that's mentioned here is not our own subjective faith, but rather the whole revealed body of truth – The Faith. Are you rooted in The Faith? Are you rooted in the great body of truth that was “*once for all delivered unto the saints*” (Jude 3)? And notice - the shield of faith not only blocks the fiery darts of Satan - it extinguishes them!

What are the fiery darts of Satan? Let me list a few: doubt, distrust, disappointment, discouragement, demoralization, despair - these are just some of Satan's fiery darts that will be blocked and extinguished by the shield of faith. These “D” darts - and all other darts of Satan - will fail when we are rooted in The Faith. The shield of faith will extinguish all the fiery darts!

The helmet of salvation (v17). Knowing that you're saved for sure, and knowing that you have eternal security in Jesus is an important piece of armor. To put it another way, if you have doubts about your salvation, or if you're fearful that you'll lose your salvation, you're not wearing the helmet – and Satan will be able to defeat you in spiritual battles! You won't lose your salvation, but you won't be effective in spiritual warfare. You will experience defeat.

The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (v17). Remember how our Lord Jesus used the Word to defeat Satan in the wilderness temptations? Three times He quoted Scripture: It is written...it is written...it is written. But remember – in order to quote Scripture, you must know Scripture. We must study and know the Word or we will not be able to effectively wield the sword of the Spirit in spiritual battles.

Practical Application

Let's memorize more Scripture!

Are you involved in some kind of Scripture memorization program – not just when you were a child, but right now? When you're involved in spiritual warfare, the Holy Spirit can't bring Scriptures to your mind unless you know them! And there's no better way to really *know* Scripture than to memorize it.

In His temptations in the wilderness, the Lord quoted three times from the book of Deuteronomy. Could you do that? Do you even know three verses from the book of Deuteronomy? Do you know them well enough to quote them when needed? You might say, "Well yeah, but the Lord is God, so of course He knows Scripture!" Yes - the Lord is God, but He is also Man. As he was growing up in Nazareth, the boy Jesus would have memorized Scripture. And by the way, He didn't have a Bible in His home, and He didn't have a "pocket Old Testament" to carry around with Him all the time! To study the Word, the Lord would have had to go down to the synagogue where the scrolls were kept, and "burn the midnight oil" to study and memorize Scripture.

Memorization of Scripture is not easy - and it gets harder as you get older. So, let's get with it! Let's memorize more Scripture.