

THE ARMOR OF GOD: PUTTING ON THE STRENGTH OF OUR LORD

Introduction

- No one likes getting gypped. **Illustration:** *the first time you opened a motorized toy as a kid and realized that it didn't come with batteries—gypped both by the fact that it was lacking something and by the nature of what was lacking.*
- The letters to the Colossians and to the Ephesians have often been considered sister-books, because they contain so much duplicate information, if not in the details, at least in the major themes – especially in the second half of each book. However, one noticeable section is missing from Colossians, and it seems to be, then, that the Colossians got gypped—both by the fact that their letter was missing a section and by the nature of what was lacking. Fortunately, they would eventually receive the letter to the Ephesians and have the blanks filled-in for them (cf. Colossians 4:16), and they would discover that the section they had been lacking was nothing other than the *batteries*. Here's what we mean – consider the sections shared by the two books, with the one notable exception to which we've turned today (i.e., a passage found only in Ephesians):
 - Ephesians 4:17-6:9 = Colossians 3:1-4:1 – *Jesus-wrapped living* [will discuss later]
 - [Ephesians 6:10-18 = n/a]
 - Ephesians 6:19-20 = Colossians 4:2-4 – *exhortation to pray*
 - Ephesians 6:21-22 = Colossians 4:7-9 – *greeting and news through Tychicus*
 - Ephesians 6:10-18 = no Colossians correlation
- In the section that is unique to Ephesians, we discover the necessary complement to the “Jesus-wrapped” emphasis that we spent so much time on during our study in Colossians 3:1-4:6 (also found in Ephesians 4:17-6:9). **Illustration:** *Just as a book has two covers, this “book” on being Jesus-wrapped has two covers—*
 - The “front cover” is Ephesians 4:17-6:9/Colossians 3:1-4:1 – “put on the Person of Jesus Christ”
 - In both books, this section exhorts us to submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ, not just in our profession (with our lips), but in our practice (with our lives) – “Lord” 12x/“Christ” 13x/“Jesus” 2x/“Savior” 1x in the Ephesians passage; “Lord” 9x/“Christ” 9x/“Jesus” 1x in the Colossians passage.
 - “Jesus-wrapped” personal lives (Ephesians 4:17-5:16; Colossians 3:1-11)
 - “Jesus-wrapped” church (Ephesians 5:17-21; Colossians 3:12-17)
 - “Jesus-wrapped” family (Ephesians 5:22-6:4; Colossians 3:18-21)
 - “Jesus-wrapped” employment (Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22-4:1)
 - “Jesus-wrapped” community involvement (Ephesians 4:7-16; Colossians 4:2-6)
 - We could also have traced Paul's use of “walk” throughout Ephesians (2:2, 10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15). We must “walk” not like the Gentiles (4:17), but how we “learned” from Christ (4:20)—becoming who we are.
 - The “back cover” is Ephesians 6:10-18 – “put on the power of Jesus Christ” (esp. v. 10) [the *batteries*]

- In other words, the “new man” has a “new might”! We cannot hope to put on the Person of Christ in our own power, but that is how many of us approach sanctification. We understand that the initial clothing of ourselves in the Person of Christ was totally outside of ourselves and purely by the power of God; however, in sanctification, we know that we have some kind of responsibility (Philippians 2:12), but we often fail to consider that even those necessary efforts are insufficient, for we’re talking about sinful humans putting on the perfect person of Jesus. Our natures needed a total overhaul, and so God in His power gave us a new nature; our strength is also completely deficient and needs to be energized with divine omnipotence.
 - Are you desperate?
 - Do you cry to God to change you?
 - Do you work at your personal life, church relationships, family life, and work interactions with complete mental dependence upon God to enable you?

This passage was inspired (“breathed-out”) by God to change the way you view Christlikeness, to adjust the way you engage in sanctification, and to convince you of your need for Jesus to be your Lord in both practice and power.

- This passage demonstrates those needs, not only by clearly commanding us to “put on the power of Jesus” but also by demonstrating just how difficult sanctification is.
 - We often think of sanctification as being my old man against my new man (cf. Romans 7:14-24) – and it is that. *ENEMY 1—“flesh”*
 - We often think of sanctification as being us against the world (cf. John 15:18-20; I John 2:15-17) – and it is that. *ENEMY 2—“world”*
 - We often neglect to think of sanctification as being us against Satan – but it is that. *ENEMY 3—“Devil”*
- See, the issue in sanctification is who will be Lord – cf. Ephesians 2:2 vs. 2:10; cf. 4:17-19 vs. 4:20-24. We have a new Lord/Master (cf. 6:9), but the old one refuses to let us go without a fight, and he seeks to constantly allure us from that Master.
 - Fundamentally, then, sanctification is a battle between us—or Christ in us—and Satan’s forces of evil (cf. 6:12). Sanctification is spiritual warfare!
 - The Ephesian would have sat up and listened intently to this section. They would have understood what Paul was teaching here. Cf. Acts 19:1-20.
 - **Illustration:** *Frank Peretti’s novels – imaginative and illustrative, but instructive.*
 - Why do we think, then, that we can put on the person of Jesus in our own power? That goal is being opposed by the second greatest power in the universe, who used to be our “lord.” So, why do we think that we ourselves can actually engage in the warfare called sanctification successfully?
 - Yes, we must put on a new man—the Person of Jesus Christ; but we must also put on a new might—the power of Jesus Christ.
 - Incidentally, then, our foe is not any politician, nation, abortion clinic worker, gay agenda pusher, etc. but the Evil One who energizes those forces.

The Strength for Spiritual Warfare (v. 10)

- **The need for Jesus' strength**

- In light of everything we discussed in the introduction, we cannot afford to be casual with this passage, and we cannot afford to be merely educational here. We must be affected by this passage; we must be rewired; we must be jump started; we must become dependent and infused with a power that is not our own.
- As our new Lord, Jesus wants to strengthen us with Himself (remember, His lordship is not just His person, but His power). We are fools to reject!

- **The nature of Jesus' strength**

Paul exhorts us to find our strength "in the Lord" (cf. I Samuel 30:6). Consider the strength of our Lord!

- Words for *power*:
 - [IT IS] "power" (Gk. *kratos*) – *resident might showing one's dominion and often demonstrated in deeds* (e.g., in "mighty" miracles)
 - [IT IS] "might" (Gk. *ischus*) – ability (capability to function effectively) and activity of power
 - [IT DOES] "be strong" (Gk. *endunamoo*—"be strengthened" is better, because the verb is passive) – *caused to be able to do something* (cf. Philippians 4:13; I Timothy 1:12; II Timothy 4:17)...this "something" that we are "able" to do is to "stand" (cf. vv. 11, 13).
- Picture of *power*:
 - Ephesians 1:19 – Paul prays that his readers might know "what is the exceeding greatness of [God's] power [*dunamis*] toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty [*ischus*] power [*kratos*]..." – How has He demonstrated and thus proved this incredible power?
 - (1) "...which He wrought in Christ when He (a) raised Him from the dead and (b) set Him at His own right hand in the *heavenly places* [cf. 6:11], far above all principality and power [cf. 6:11] and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come..." (1:20-21)
 - (2) "...and you hath (a) He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins...and hath raised us up together and (b) made us sit together in *heavenly places* in Christ Jesus" (2:1, 6).
 - God's power is that of (a) resurrection and (b) triumph, for both Jesus and those "in Him." It is nothing short of this absolute authority and power that Jesus offers to those who claim Him as Lord. He offers not merely His person as their own, but also His power! And this power is invincible, for it has already triumphed over its greatest enemy (cf. Colossians 2:15—"And having spoiled [or *disarmed*] principalities and powers [cf. Eph. 6:11], [God] made a show [or *public spectacle*] of them openly, triumphing over them in it [i.e., *the cross* or *Jesus*"]; I Corinthians 15:24)!
 - That's why Paul prays that we will know this divine power (Ephesians 1:18-19) and experience it internally (Ephesians 3:16; Colossians 1:11 – *dunamis* and *krataioo*) so that we might trust in its ability (Ephesians 3:20 – *dunamis*).

- Deficient *power*:
 - Think about your struggle to maintain Christ as Lord in your personal life, home, church relationships, workplace, and community involvement. How have you “strengthened” yourself to “stand”? Are you trying to “be strengthened in _____”:
 - Your will-power
 - Your desire
 - Your discipline
 - Your habits
 - Your book reading
 - Your accountability group
 - Your Scripture memory
 - Your consistency
 - These are deficient sources of strength! You must allow Christ to be your Lord, not only in your practice, but in the power behind it. You cannot _____! He can!

The Struggle of Spiritual Warfare (vv. 11-12)

In this spiritual warfare of sanctification through the Lordship of Christ and “Jesus-wrapped living,” our “wrestling” or struggling is not against people (i.e., “flesh and blood”—I Corinthians 15:50; Galatians 1:16; Hebrews 2:14). No, as we’ve already mentioned, it’s against a much deadlier foe.

1. Warfare against spiritual powers

- Paul consistently uses “principalities” and “powers” to refer to the unseen hosts (1:21; 2:2; 3:10).
- “Rulers of the darkness of this world” parallels “the Prince of the power of the air [i.e., Satan], the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (2:2).
- “Spiritual wickedness in high [lit. *heavenly*] places” demonstrates that our opponents are not “earthly” (cf. Paul’s use of “heavenly” to refer to the unseen arena in Ephesians 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; Philippians 2:10).

2. Warfare against strong powers

- “Principalities” (Gk. *archa*) – *one who begins something as its leader and thus ruler/authority*
- “Powers” (Gk. *exousia*) – *authority, both in right and activity*
- “Rulers of the darkness of this world” – cf. John 12:31 “prince [lit. *ruler*] of this world”
- These are the “power behind the power” (cf. Isaiah 14:3-27; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Daniel 10:13).

3. Warfare against sinister powers

- They rule the “darkness” (cf. Ephesians 5:8, 11 – cf. 5:6 with 2:2).
- They are “evil” (cf. Ephesians 5:16)
- Their leader is called the “Devil” (lit. Adversary or Slanderer) and the “Evil One” (v. 16).

4. Warfare against scheming powers

- We are warned about the Devil’s “wiles” or schemes (Gk. *methodeia*).
- The Devil uses scheming people who teach a false doctrine in order to deceive (Ephesians 4:14).

Transition

- At this point, we should be asking ourselves, “How do I get strengthened by God?” Is it something mystical that happens when we just really need it? Do we need to ask a specific way for it? Is it something that we just *hope* God will hurry up and give?
 - Notice what he doesn’t say – he doesn’t tell them to engage in warfare prayer, to identify and pray against the demons, to exorcise, to do a prayer walk, etc.
 - We must fight THIS way (6:13-17), otherwise we will be distracted (focused on spiritual warfare, but in the wrong way) or defeated (without a recognition of the spiritual warfare).
- Notice the progression in this passage – [1.] “Put on the whole armor of God” (v. 11) / “take unto you the whole armor of God” (v. 13) ... [2.] “be strengthened in the Lord and in the power of His might” (v. 10) ... [3.] “that you may be able to stand” (v. 11) / “that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (v. 13)
 - The GOAL – “to stand” [as Jesus-wrapped] (active): man’s part
 - The MEANS – “to be strengthened” (passive): God’s part → How?
 - The METHOD – “to put on the full armor of God” (active): man’s part
- So, we can work progressively here – are you having a difficult time “standing” in Christ at home, in your personal life, at work, in church, etc.? It is because you are not “being strengthened.” And you are not “being strengthened” because you are not “putting on the armor of God and His strength.”
- We want to focus on the strengthening “armor of God” that we can be putting on. But, it’s important to start by recognizing that at the heart of man’s part to “stand” and “put on the armor” is God’s part (desire and plan) to “strengthen us.” Understand at the outset that God wants to strengthen you and without His strength, sanctification is impossible, because you are dealing with powers and realities much greater than yourself. We need Jesus’ strength – we must “be strengthened in the Lord”! (**Application:** Start by praying for it—Ephesians 1:18-19; 3:16; Colossians 1:11.)
- With that said, we must notice the tension/balance in this passage between God’s responsibility and man’s responsibility. For while God wants to be the Source of strength to us, His power is channeled to us through something that we must do. This is evident in a few grammatical considerations from the passage:
 - The Greek word underlying “having done [all]” means “to bring about a result by doing something” (BDAG). The “doing something” refers to the putting on of each and every piece of the armor of God. This is what we must do, and we must do it all! We learn here, then, that divine enablement doesn’t negate human energy. No, the promise of divine enablement encourages human energy, for it is through the putting on of God’s armor that strength is discovered. This phrase shows us that this is the *only* way to stand through strength.
 - Furthermore, the active imperatives in verse 11 (“put on”), verse 13 (“take unto you”), verse 14 (“stand”), and verse 17 (“take”) clearly demonstrate that God has given us a responsibility when it comes to “being strengthened in the Lord and in the power of His might.”
 - Finally, the participles “having girt” (v. 14), “having on” (v. 14), “having shod” (v. 15), and “taking” (v. 16) demonstrate that our Commander in Chief expects His soldiers to be constantly clothed in this way. Since the warfare won’t end until Jesus’ complete victory in the future, there will never be a time when the believer can let his guard down and relinquish the armor.

The Supplies for Spiritual Warfare (vv. 13-17)

1. **Belt of Truth: Be prepared with truth.** – “Stand...having your loins girt about [having fastened your waist about] with truth.”

- **Belt:**
 - Roman soldiers (as well as the typical citizen) wore a long outer garment (i.e., a tunic) that hung loose around his body. During activity (i.e., work or combat), the tunic was tucked into a thick leather belt.
 - Therefore, the picture is one of preparedness – cf. Exodus 12:11 (prepared for fleeing Egypt on Passover night); Luke 12:35 (prepared for Jesus’ second coming)
 - This preparedness begins in the mind (I Peter 1:13).

- **Truth:**
 - Commentators are divided as to whether Paul had in mind objective (i.e. the word of truth [II Timothy 2:25] embodied in Jesus Christ [John 14:6] and summarized in the gospel [Colossians 1:5-6])¹ or subjective truth here (i.e., being truthful or faithful), but as some suggest, perhaps we don’t need to draw a dichotomy. For, when God’s soldiers have wrapped themselves up with revealed truth, their very character will manifest truth in honest and faithful integrity...that’s just the nature of truth (cf. John 8:32; 17:17).²
 - Notice how Paul has used “truth” throughout Ephesians:
 - *Objective truth* – 1:13; 4:21 (vs. the deception of 4:14)
 - *Subjective truth* – 4:25; 5:9
 - God intends *objective truth* to result in *subjective truth* – 4:24
 - In order to identify the enemy and his tactics and to stand against his onslaught, we must gird ourselves with truth (John 8:44). We must allow the truth to become our truth so that we live lives of truth, with nothing undermining our faithfulness to God.

¹ This Greek word refers to “the content of that which is true” (MacArthur) or “reality that is reliable and trustworthy as opposed to that which is false” (Hoehner) [cf. Mark 5:33]. The NT gets more specific in what “truth” it is communicating:

- John 1:14, 17 – Truth is embodied in Jesus Christ, who communicated something that the Law could not, and testified to the truth (cf. 18:37).
- John 5:32-33 – John bore witness to the Truth, which was Jesus (cf. 1:7, 15).
- John 8:14, 17 – Truth is embodied in Jesus Christ, who communicated something that the Law could not, and testified to the truth (cf. 18:37).
- John 5:32-33 – John bore witness to the Truth, which was Jesus (cf. 1:7, 15).
- John 8:32 – Truth is equated with the Son, both which can set one free (v. 36).
- John 14:6 – Jesus is the truth, and His words of truth can sanctify (cf. 15:3; 17:17).
- John 1:9-12 – This True Light is rejected by men, who are therefore condemned (cf. Romans 1:18, 25; I Timothy 6:5; II Thessalonians 2:10; II Timothy 3:8; 4:4; Titus 1:4).
- II Timothy 3:7 – Paul (and the other NT writers) recognized that the truth was more than just some random body of real information (cf. Pilate’s “What is truth?”), and specified this truth as the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:5, “truth of the gospel”; Colossians 1:5-6, “the word of truth, the gospel...the grace of God in truth”; II Thessalonians 2:12-13, whether or not they “believed the truth” is the basis of condemnation or salvation; I Timothy 2:4, “to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” [Hebrews 10:26]; II Timothy 2:25, “repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth”; James 1:18, “brought us forth by the word of truth”).

² “Believers have girded their waists with God’s objective truth, which in turn has become a part of them. This enables them to be reliable and faithful as God is reliable and faithful. This piece of armor is basic to all other pieces because truth and trustworthiness are basic to all the other qualities that believers need in order to withstand diabolical attacks” (Hoehner). “To put on the belt of truth can be understood as accepting the truth of the Bible and choosing to follow it with integrity” (HNTC).

- **Application:**
 - It is perhaps for this reason that Paul reminded Timothy, a later pastor at Ephesus, that the church is the “pillar and ground of the Truth” (II Timothy 3:15). This is one of its weapons! Being girded with truth assures us that we’re always prepared to face the onslaught of doubt and deception. Therefore, we the church must both corporately and individually gird ourselves with truth. This is more than just saying that “we’re all about truth at our church”; it’s a corporate and personal commitment to truth-preparedness.
 - So, husbands must lead their wives into a mutual understanding of the Word of Truth; parents must guide their children into believing and walking in the truth; high school and college students must recognize God’s truth to be unchanging and binding and must submit to it in their decisions; children should be learning truth at church that will shape their worldview and arm them in sanctification.
 - Together—corporately as a body and privately as individuals—we must:
 - *Believe the truth*...for grace freedom, salvation, and new life (John 1:14, 17; 8:32; II Thessalonians 2:12-13; I Timothy 2:4; James 1:18) – How do you think that you can resist the Evil One if you haven’t even believed in the power of Jesus Christ, the Truth? Do you believe that the greatest battle out there is for the restoration of God’s image in you, or do you still think it’s the promotion in the workplace? Do you truly believe that truth is the most precious commodity in the world today, because it is nothing less than the revelation of your Creator, Savior God? Has your belief of the truth set your heart longing for invisible things, eternal things? If not, you are not girded for battle, and defeat is on your horizon.
 - *Study the truth* (II Timothy 2:15 vs. 4:4) – What is the truth about God’s love and holiness? What is the truth about how someone is saved? What is the truth about a believer’s position before God? What is the truth about how professing believers ought to live? What is the truth about our purpose in life? What is the truth about the importance of the church? What is the truth about the purpose of the church? What is the truth about our stuff? What is the truth about how a Jesus-wrapped home should function? What is the truth about what my goals should be for my children? What is the truth about the souls of people around me? What is the truth about what will happen to *me* after I die? What is the truth about my own personal relationship and walk with Jesus Christ?
 - *Be washed by the truth* (John 17:17) – If you are not being sanctified, changed, and transformed, then you are truth-deficient. When was the last time that you noticed your thinking patterns changing, your attitude being adjusted, your spirit being transformed? If it’s been a while, then perhaps you’ve laid aside this most important belt of truth.
 - *Practice truth* (Titus 1:1; Galatians 2:14; III John 4) – There are “hearers”-only of truth, and then there are “hearers/doers” of truth. Only one of those groups have actually girded themselves. Are you exposing the Evil One who is devoid of truth through your own humble obedience to the truth?
 - *Speak the truth* (Ephesians 4:25) – Demonstrate with the way you talk that the Lord of truth is your Lord. If you don’t, this verse suggests that you’re disarming the whole church!

- *Think upon the truth* (Philippians 4:8) – Personally, friends, this is where your daily battle starts with truth vs. spiritual darkness. Chose to take every thought captive to the knowledge of and obedience to Christ (cf. II Corinthians 10:4-6).
- *Share the truth* (Titus 1:1; II Corinthians 4:2; 6:7) – The way that the church perpetuates saving, transforming, hell-defeating truth is by passing it on. We must spread truth through evangelism, but we must also call one another to submit to truth (cf. Galatians 2:14). This is how we come full circle in girding ourselves with truth.

2. Breastplate of Righteousness: Be practicing righteousness. – “Stand...having [put] on the breastplate of righteousness.”

- *Breastplate:*
 - The breastplate was a sleeveless piece of leather that covered the torso of the soldier; it often had pieces of bone, hoof, or metal sewn into it to add further protection. The breastplate obviously served to protect the vital organs.
 - “In ancient Jewish thinking, the *heart* represented the mind and the will and the *bowels* were considered the seat of emotions and feelings” (MacArthur). These are the vital organs of our spiritual warfare, too – our mind, will, and emotions (the inner man).
- *Righteousness:*
 - God wants our vital organs to be protected by righteousness. We might similarly ask here whether Paul is speaking of objective (i.e., positional) or subjective (i.e., practical) righteousness. We are more easily helped on this answer, but still discover that the two cannot be easily separated.
 - Positionally, we have already “put on” Jesus’ perfect righteousness (Romans 3:21-24; 4:5, 6, 11, 22-24; I Corinthians 1:30; II Corinthians 5:21), even as the song-writers wrote: “When He shall come with trumpet sound, Oh may I then in Him be found. Dressed in His righteousness alone, Faultless to stand before the throne” and “Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness My beauty are, my glorious dress.”
 - Practically, however, we must still clothe ourselves with righteousness. This is what Paul has in mind here.
 - This is not self-righteousness, for self-righteousness is actually a misnomer (Isaiah 64:6; Philippians 3:6-9), demonstrates a rejection of God’s grace and Christ’s sacrifice (Galatians 2:21), and is always insufficient (Matthew 5:20). A breastplate of self-righteousness will never protect against the enemy, but will rather give him a foothold to keep us in either pride or guilt, contexts in which victory is never known.
 - This practical righteousness is still the righteousness of God, but now actually lived out in us. It was first lived out in Christ who credited it to our account (Matthew 3:15; II Corinthians 5:21). Now, it is being recreated in us (Ephesians 4:24; Philippians 1:11) as we walk as children of light (Ephesians 5:1, 8-9). Therefore, it is *only because* of imputed, positional righteousness that we can put on this breastplate of imitational, practical righteousness (Romans 6:11-13; 6:17-18). This righteousness gives us victory in sanctification (Romans 6:19).

- What this actually looks like is better known to us simply as *obedience* (Romans 6:16) or *submission* (Romans 6:19). Cf. I Peter 1:14-15.
 - Read Romans 3:15-22. *Question:* How do you “let sin reign” after salvation? *Answer:* You “present your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness.” Therefore, we must “present our members to God unto righteousness,” and “sin will not have dominion over us.”
 - Verses 15-22, then, have bad news for the person who presents himself as a slave to sin. A change of master will provoke a change of “presenting.” Without that change of practical slavery, the individual may still have the old master. The nature of the service proves the nature of the master.
 - The Bible depicts a true believer as being a “slave to righteousness” (Romans 6:18) and a “slave to God” (Romans 6:22). Thus, true freedom is not the lack of a master, but having the right master—a master, not of expensive sin unto death, but of grace-given righteousness unto life (Romans 6:20-23).
- **Application:**
 - **Illustration:** On *Lost*, there is a secret hatch where the keeper, Desmond, must continue to enter numbers into a computer in order to avoid some unknown “catastrophe.” A key point of tension between some of the characters is whether or not anything will really happen if the numbers are not entered. While the illustration breaks down here, because we discover that an incident does follow the failure to enter the numbers, we see a parallel in our obedience to sin. A rejection of its lordship may be what we simply need in order to discover its futility and powerlessness.
 - In this point, we are learning that the best defense is a good offense – if you and I would stand against the power of the enemy, then we must stand in the strengthening garments of righteous living, for that is how our Lord stood (cf. Isaiah 11:5; 59:17). Submission to our new grace-given master of righteousness has been ordained of God to be an efficient means of strength and victory in sanctification. James wrote in James 4:7, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”
 - Put simply, what we are learning is that the effective way to fight sin is with righteousness, that the obedience of Christ through us is still powerful against the disobedience of our flesh, that submission to God will make us victorious over the draw of the Evil One, for the one Master is inherently greater than the other. It is when we are practicing our position that the strength of Jesus in us enables us to stand when that practice is tested.
 - **Illustration:** In the NBA playoffs, you hear a lot of talk when the matchup is a veteran team against a young team, for the veteran team has learned through experience and habit how to be victorious by sticking with their game plan no matter what the circumstances. Likewise, the author of Hebrews contrasts those who are “inexperienced in the message of righteousness” with the “mature, whose perceptions are trained by practice to discern both good and evil” (5:13-14). You must train yourself to stand in the war of sanctification by winning the daily battles of choosing good or bad. The promise from this passage is that God will strengthen the righteous choice.

- If we fail to use this seemingly obvious weapon of active, practical righteousness, our vital organs will be harmed! Our heart will lose its delight in the satisfaction of holiness, our will will be hardened by hypocrisy, our conscience will either accuse or be seared, and our entire life will be characterized by apathy and insincerity. In short, we will be weakened in our pursuit of God-pleasing, Jesus-wrapped living.
- Therefore, we must protect our heart, will, and emotions with moment-by-moment submission to our new Master and obedience to His will. Submit to the lordship of Christ, chose to do His will, and trust that those decisions will be the channel through which Christ will strengthen you in Himself (cf. Romans 13:12, 14).

3. Shoes of the Gospel: Be proclaiming the gospel. – “Stand...[having] your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”

- *Shoes:*
 - A soldier’s shoes are vitally important to his ability to march long distances and fight effectively. While poor footwear would hinder him in his calling, the right shoes ensured that he was ready for whatever may be expected in the fight.
 - Caesar’s forces were renowned for their advanced footwear that would enable them to endure longer marches at faster paces.
 - Thus, shoes also indicate preparation, as do all the pieces of armor, but they specifically seem to stress stability and advancing.
 - Likewise, believers must be prepared (lit. *ready*) to be steadfast and to endure via the “gospel of peace.”

- *Gospel of Peace:*
 - The “gospel of peace” “refers to the good news that believers are at peace with God. The unsaved person is helpless, ungodly, sinful, and an enemy of God (Rom. 5:6–10). The saved person, on the other hand, is reconciled to God through faith in His Son (vv. 10–11). [Thus,] Paul had proclaimed a few verses earlier, ‘We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ’ (5:1)...[In summary, it] is the marvelous truth that in Christ we are now at peace with God and are one with Him” (MacArthur).
 - This knowledge readies us to stand in the confidence that God loves us unendingly (Romans 8:37-39), is on our side unremittingly (Romans 8:31), and is fighting for us victoriously (II Chronicles 20:15; John 16:33). Furthermore, the gospel of peace reminds us that the only enemy worth fearing is “[He that] is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28), and that He is no longer our enemy, but our Father. The gospel of peace provides us with the solid ground of confidence that our greatest enemy now has already been defeated by He who is now our Defender, and because of the gospel of peace, victory is assured! No matter what the powers of darkness may throw at us via doubt or deception, the gospel of peace proclaims the powerful hope of triumph! Truly, in the gospel of peace is great strength!

- I think there is another aspect of this strengthening piece of armor that should be considered.
 - It appears that Paul may have chosen this imagery based upon Isaiah 52:7, “How lovely on the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace And brings good news of happiness, Who announces salvation!”
 - Some would deny this connection because the context of Ephesians 6:10-18 is not evangelism, but Christian living; it’s not advancing, but standing; it’s not about proclaiming, but about fighting. They would, therefore, relegate the application of this piece of armor to advancing oneself in the gospel message.
 - However, I believe that a legitimate application of this passage is to see in it a strength that comes through evangelism – the advancing of the gospel toward others. I think this is allowable (1) because of the many other Old Testament allusions in this passage, (2) because the main point of the context is actually less about fighting Satan and more about “being strengthened in the Lord,” (3) because the imagery of the shoes seems to suggest some kind of activity, (4) because this helps draw a distinction between the Shoes of the Gospel of Peace and the Helmet of Salvation, and (5) because verse 19 bookends this passage with Paul’s burden of evangelism.
 - The connection between this passage and Isaiah 52, if allowed, would cause us to conclude that God wants to strengthen us to stand by our own readiness to proclaim the good news of peace. In other words, as we chose to be ready to proclaim the gospel to others, God will strengthen us to stand ourselves in that message. Or to put it a third way, God has ordained to strengthen us through our own proclamation of the gospel to others.
 - **Illustration:** And don’t we know that by experience? When we are living missionally, prepared to pass along to others the good news in which we stand, hasn’t God strengthened our own hearts in that message and caused us to stand? Don’t we discover a parallel between our own tenderness to fulfill the purpose of discipleship that God’s entrusted to us and our personal commitment to obeying Christ? Can we not often draw a line from our harshness or apathy in our walk with Christ and our unwillingness to speak on the behalf of Christ? When we are readying ourselves to share the gospel of peace, we are readying ourselves indeed to stand!
- **Application:**
 - There’s power in the gospel (Romans 1:16)! Preach it to yourself every day. Plumb its depths and search its facets! Let it’s message of “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” provide you with endurance and advance you beyond guilt, sin, and meaninglessness. Let God’s peace empower you!
 - There’s power in the gospel (Romans 1:16)! Proclaim it to others every day. Be ready and active in giving Christ’s message of “peace to him who is afar off” to others, so that by that mission you might be strengthened to stand.

4. Shield of Faith: Be persuaded in God. – “Stand...taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”

- *Shield*
 - “This shield was about two and half feet wide and four and a half feet high, designed to protect the entire body of the soldier....The soldiers who carried these shields were in the front lines of battle, and normally stood side by side with their shields together, forming a huge phalanx extending as long as a mile or more. The archers stood behind this protective wall of shields and shot their arrows as they advanced against the enemy. Anyone who stood or crouched behind such shields was protected from the barrage of enemy arrows and spears” (MacArthur). Believers need this full-body coverage against the devil’s “fiery arrows” of temptation.
 - Corporately, another parallel should be considered. When each individual takes his great shield of faith, he together with the rest of the shielded assembly forms an impenetrable phalanx of victory. Individually, we must take up the shield of faith; corporately, we must join as a company of faith. Individual shield-holders are not protected enough; they must surround themselves with other shielded believers.

- *Faith*
 - This full-body coverage is faith—not an objective body of faith, but basic trust in God (cf. Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38). It is trusting in the veracity of God’s Word as it explains reality and teaches morality—“The word of the Lord is tried; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him” (Psalm 18:30)—because of confidence in its Author and what God’s Word reveals about Him.
 - Every one of Satan’s temptations, “directly or indirectly, is the temptation to doubt and distrust God” (MacArthur). Since the garden, this has been the tactic of the Evil One—to undermine our submission and obedience to God by casting doubt on His sovereignty, wisdom, and goodness and deceiving us into trusting ourselves.
 - Faith claims those biblically-revealed realities even when sight undermines them (cf. Hebrews 10:36-11:1). This is powerful “soul-saving” faith.
 - *Faith* concludes that our earthly home and job is just a shadow of our heavenly house and occupation. *Faith* convinces us that the future is “where it’s at,” not the present. *Faith* compels us to arrange our day in light of God’s agenda, not our Google Calendar. *Faith* reminds us to not invest so much in our stuff, when a real treasure in heaven awaits us and will make our earthly stuff look like children’s toys. *Faith* empowers us to simply say “no” to temptation because we realize that what we cannot see is that, behind the scenes, the puppeteer of that temptation is himself defeated. *Faith* assures us that no matter how dark the night, it is just that—a night that will pass, if not in this life, then certainly in the next when the blinding brightness of eternal glorious day will greet us. *Faith* belittles the rejection of men because it sees the invisible God as “for me” and “loving me with an everlasting love” and “never forsaking me.”
 - Faith is simply taking the REALITIES of Scripture at face value and treating them like we can see them. Because, after all, just because we can’t see them doesn’t make them any less real. No, they are more REAL than what we see around us—indeed, they are eternal!

- **Illustration:** “When John Paton was translating the Bible for a South Seas island tribe, he discovered that they had no word for trust or faith. One day a native who had been running hard came into the missionary’s house, flopped himself in a large chair and said, ‘It’s good to rest my whole weight on this chair.’ ‘That’s it,’ said Paton. ‘I’ll translate faith as “resting one’s whole weight on God”” (McArthur).
- **Application:**
 - What do you do when God’s Word confronts your desire to marry an unbeliever? What do you do when God’s Word challenges you to sacrificially and joyfully give in spite of your economic excuses? How do you respond when sight argues against submitting to your husband? How do you stand when your fleshly appetites are powerfully excusing a secret indulgence? What will strengthen you when tragedy seems to take a deathblow at the wise, sovereign, goodness of God? How will you be empowered to verbally represent your king when you’re “just certain” that the individual will reject you? What will challenge you to lovingly confront someone even when no one else in the church seems concerned about presenting everyone perfect in Christ Jesus? How do you start being the spouse, employee, sibling, etc. that you’re supposed to be, even when your track record to date has been pretty lousy?
 - Friend, you must “rest your whole weight upon God” and show it by acting. You must believe that the invisible realities of this world carry more weight than anything that you’re seeing. You must always wrestle your mind, will, and emotions—your whole person—back into anchoring itself upon the proven Word of God, even when your changing circumstances fool you into thinking that God has changed. You must be strong to fight temptation—in both its subtle and overwhelming forms—and Christ wants to strengthen you through your persuaded confidence in Him.
 - It is true that your confidence in God in the past will compel you to trust in God in the present. But there may be times when persuasion in the wise and good sovereignty of God is met with continued silence and confusion. At those times (“in all”), you must hope in the “big picture” of God and His plan, and wait patiently for the Lord. At the very least, you must be persuaded that your faith will be rewarded in the end. There is strength indeed – the Scripture-given assurance that the day *is* coming when faith *will be* sight!

5. **Helmet of Salvation: Be persevering in hope.** – “Stand...and take the helmet of salvation.”

- **Helmet**
 - Made of bronze or iron, with a spongy lining on the inside, sometimes with a visor.
 - The helmet protects the head; therefore, in its spiritual corollary, this helmet of salvation will spare one’s very life, assure one’s very identity, and secure his final triumph.

- **Salvation**
 - Our God is attired this way in Isaiah 59:17.
 - Salvation = past (emphasized by Paul in this book, cf. Ephesians 2:5-9), present (Philippians 2:12-13), and future (Romans 13:11) → It is total and guaranteed, when viewed by faith.
 - “Putting on the helmet of salvation means that when you’re attacked, besieged, tried, tempted, and the Devil comes to you and says, ‘There’s nothing in it; [you might as well get out of it; Christianity makes false promises; it doesn’t fulfill them; leave!]’; you answer, ‘No, I have not been led astray by this teaching. I have always known there are steps and stages in salvation – I know that I am saved from sin’s penalty; I know that I am being saved from sin’s power; and I know that I will be completely saved from sin’s presence.’ Remind yourself of the hymnwriter’s words, ‘To him that overcometh, a crown of life shall be; he with the King of glory shall reign eternally’” (D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones).
 - Thus, the point of the helmet of salvation is hopeful endurance. The one who has put on the helmet of salvation refuses to allow discouragement or doubt (i.e., the lack of assurance of salvation) to weaken him – no, he stands firm in the hope of victory whether it looks that way or not.
 - Cf. Luke 2:30 – Simeon, upon seeing Jesus, said, “Mine eyes have seen thy salvation,” even though nothing had changed.
 - Cf. I Thessalonians 5:8-11 – “But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ...Wherefore comfort [Gk. *parakaleo*—strengthen] yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.”
 - Cf. Philippians 1:6 – “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”
 - This is the power of God that protects us (I Peter 1:3-5; Jude 24)!

- **Application:**
 - I Timothy 6:12 – “Lay hold on eternal life”
 - “The settled assurance that one is truly saved and cannot be eternally harmed by the adversary is a strong helmet for the head in the time of spiritual battle” (Kent).
 - We sing of this assurance in Samuel Stone’s beloved hymn “The Church’s One Foundation”: “Mid toil and tribulation, and tumult of her war, She waits the consummation of peace for evermore; Till, with the vision glorious, her longing eyes are blest, And the great church victorious shall be the church at rest.”

6. *Sword of the Spirit: Be permeated with Scripture.* – “Stand...and take...the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”

- *Sword*
 - This was not the two-handed broad-sword. Rather, “the sword to which Paul refers here is the *machaira*, which varied in length from six to eighteen inches. It was the common sword carried by Roman foot soldiers and was the principal weapon in hand-to-hand combat. Carried in a sheath or scabbard attached to their belts, it was always at hand and ready for use” (MacArthur).
 - It is the only offensive piece of weaponry mentioned in this passage.

- *(Spiritual) Word of God*
 - “Of the Spirit” can simply be translated “spiritual” as it is in Ephesians 1:3, 5:19. Thus, while the Spirit is obviously the Source of this sword, God’s Word, the phrase highlights its nature—that it’s a spiritual weapon, to be used in our struggle against spiritual enemies (cf. II Corinthians 10:3-5).
 - This is the best kind of weapon, because our greatest dangers and blessings lie in that spiritual world which we cannot yet see, except by faith.
 - Thomas Guthrie said, “The Bible is an armory of heavenly weapons, a laboratory of infallible medicines, a mine of exhaustless wealth. It is a guidebook for every road, a chart for every sea, a medicine for every malady, and a balm for every wound. Rob us of our Bible and our sky has lost its sun.”
 - God’s Word is the source of truth (John 17:17), happiness (Proverbs 8:34; Luke 11:28), spiritual growth (I Peter 2:2), guidance (Psalm 119:105), comfort (Romans 15:4), perfection (II Timothy 3:16), and power (Hebrews 4:12). Indeed, it is the means of victory over our great spiritual enemy, our most powerful weapon against Satan! Without a firm grip on God’s Word, you will not be strengthened to stand!
 - “The term Paul uses here for *word* is not *logos*, which refers to general statements or messages, but is *rhēma*, which refers to individual words or particular statements. The apostle is therefore not talking here about general knowledge of Scripture, but is emphasizing again the precision that comes by knowledge and understanding of specific truths” (MacArthur). Cf. I Peter 1:25; Ephesians 5:26; Romans 10:8, 17.
 - Thus, we see that this final piece of weaponry bookends with the first—the Belt of Truth. God’s soldiers must arm themselves once and evermore with the truth of God’s Work through Christ spelled out in the Scriptures, so that they are strengthened to stand.
 - Without question, the soldier who is so armored will stand. So powerful are the statements of truth in God’s Word that this is where the great enemy mounts his most fervent attacks (Genesis 3:1-5; Matthew 13:19-22; II Timothy 4:1-5).
 - A further observation should be explicitly stated here that might have been missed in the previous pieces of armor – we’ve been given weaponry that our Messiah Himself has found successful in using (cf. Isaiah 11:4; Revelation 19:15).

- **Illustration:** “H. P. Barker gives a graphic illustration that points up the need for both knowing and applying the Bible’s truths:
 - ‘As I looked out into the garden one day, I saw three things. First, I saw a butterfly. The butterfly was beautiful, and it would alight on a flower and then it would flutter to another flower and then to another, and only for a second or two it would sit and it would move on. It would touch as many lovely blossoms as it could, but derived absolutely no benefit from it. Then I watched a little longer out my window and there came a botanist. And the botanist had a big notebook under his arm and a great big magnifying glass. The botanist would lean over a certain flower and he would look for a long time and then he would write notes in his notebook. He was there for hours writing notes, closed them, stuck them under his arm, tucked his magnifying glass in his pocket and walked away. The third thing I noticed was a bee, just a little bee. But the bee would light on a flower and it would sink down deep into the flower and it would extract all the nectar and pollen that it could carry. It went in empty every time and came out full’ (A. Naismith, 1200 Notes, *Quotes and Anecdotes* [Chicago: Moody, 1962], p. 15).
 - Some Christians, like that butterfly, flit from Bible study to Bible study, from sermon to sermon, and from commentary to commentary, while gaining little more than a nice feeling and some good ideas. Others, like the botanist, study Scripture carefully and take copious notes. They gain much information but little truth. Others, like the bee, go to the Bible to be taught by God and to grow in knowledge of Him. Also like the bee, they never go away empty” (MacArthur).

- **Application:**
 - II Timothy 2:15 – “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth” (NASB).
 - Revelation 12:11 – “But they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the Word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives so much that they were afraid to die” (NET). → What do you love so much that it’s keeping you from “overcoming by the Word of their testimony”?

The Spirit in Spiritual Warfare (v. 18)

- I wondered as I studied through verse 18 how many times you and I have failed to stand simply because we weren't preparing ourselves to stand, or because we didn't consider it too big of a matter that we stand, or because we were not alert to the reality of a battle and our ability in Christ to win every time. And so we failed, because we weren't even thinking about a battle and about our need to be armored up.

“Rise my soul to watch and pray,
From thy sleep awaken,
Be not by the evil day
Unawares or taken.
For the foe well we know
Oft his harvest reapeth
While the Christian sleepeth.
Watch against the devil's snares
Lest asleep he find thee,
For indeed no pains he spares
To deceive and blind thee.
Satan's prey oft are they
Who secure are sleeping
And no watch are keeping.
But while watching also
Pray to the Lord unceasing.
O Lord, bless in distress
And let nothing swerve me
From the will to serve Thee”
(Johann Burchard Freystein).

“Christian, seek not yet repose,
Cast thy dreams of ease away;
Thou art in the midst of foes;
Watch and pray.

Principalities and power,
Mustering their unseen array,
Wait for thy unguarded hours;
Watch and pray.

Watch as if on that alone
Hung the issue of the day,
Pray that help may be sent down;
Watch and pray”
(Charlotte Elliot).

- This final verse resounds with the cry to lock in, engage, watch, and pray! Indeed, in this verse, we discover the spirit in which we should daily fight.

1. Dependence

- Notice the earnestness with which Paul urges the believers to pray: “With all prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit, and [to this end] be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints” (NASB, NET in parenthesis).
 - *Frequency* – ongoing, without ceasing (Luke 18:1; 21:36; Romans 12:12; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 4:2; I Thessalonians 5:17). Psalm 55:17, 19 – “There is no time when we do not need to pray and no time when God will not hear our prayers” (MacArthur). We won't do this unless Colossians 3:2 has become a reality for us— unless we're setting our minds on things above. Then, we will pray both when we feel we need to and when we don't—we will pray “at all times.”
 - *Recipients* – individual and corporate. While praying for oneself is assumed in Paul's command here, praying for others is explicitly commanded. This is the practice of the missional-minded, armor-wearing believer (Colossians 1:28-29; 4:12). Cf. I Samuel 12:23; II Timothy 1:3.

- In his *Pilgrim's Progress* John Bunyan tells of Christian's weapon called prayer, which, when everything else failed, would enable him to defeat the fiends in the valley of the shadow.

2. Alertness

- This was a constant call from Jesus to His disciples (Matthew 26:41; Mark 13:33).
- "Be on the alert with all perseverance" – persevere in alertness; never let your guard down (I Corinthians 10:12).
- This life is a war zone—live like it!

Conclusion

- What's on your agenda today? Tomorrow? Do you think this way – to arm yourself for battle so that God can strengthen you to stand complete in Christ?
- The Armor of God is a graciously-provided mnemonic device to help us enter each day (and each moment, since we must be "alert") prepared to stand by God's strength. We should consider:
 - **Belt of Truth:** be prepared with truth – *What am I thinking?* THOUGHTS
 - **Breastplate of Righteousness:** be practicing righteousness – *What am I choosing?* CHOICES
 - **Shoes of the Gospel of Peace:** be proclaiming the gospel – *What am I saying?* MISSION
 - **Shield of Faith:** be persuaded in God – *What am I believing?* BELIEF
 - **Helmet of Salvation:** be persevering in hope – *What am I seeing?* HOPE
 - **Sword of the Spirit:** be permeated with Scripture – *What am I doing?* WORD