

Put on the full armor of God Ephesians 6:10-17

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² 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. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

With one word *finally* Paul is coming to the end of this letter to Christians living in Ephesus. Paul had been speaking to them about the blessed effect that God's saving grace has on the life of his believers. The new life that children of God show is a life of holiness. Their holiness is committed to keeping the Spirit-worked bond of unity. It leads to a life of personal purity. Holiness shows itself in being willing to shoulder the responsibilities God has given them as husbands and wives, as children and parents, as a slave or master or in our society an employer and employee. Paul closes his letter by pointing out one final effect of God's saving grace. It make God's people willing to contend for the faith and fight against evil. Paul shows us in these few verses that we can't do this alone. We need some special equipment that only God can supply. So we take Paul's words to heart and put on the full armor of God.

As long as we live in this world, there is always danger of becoming separated from God's grace. This is all out war. The forces we battle against are not flesh and blood. They are powerful enemies. We cannot rely on ourselves to save us. We must keep turning to our Lord.

We need to turn to the Lord for strength because of the one who is out to undermine our relationship with the Lord. It's the devil of course. Since his first appearance in the garden, he's been attacking us with his lies. He has a bag full of tricks. If he cannot undermine our beliefs, he try to get us to relax our moral standards. If he cannot overthrow our faith, he'll give us false hope till we let down our guard. He'll try and convince us to compromise. He'll inject a little false teaching that we may accept as strongly as we would any of God's truth. He may lead us to become Pharisees looking down on others, showing little concern for lost souls.

But the Lord has prepared a full armor for us. Paul knew firsthand the full battle equipment that a Roman soldier wore. As he is writing this letter, he may have been chained to a Roman soldier. Paul will shortly describe each piece that we Christians are to wear. But first Paul shows us why that equipment is so necessary. Paul writes, *"Put on the full armor of God, so that you can stand against the schemes of the Devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."* We are involved in a struggle against powerful foes. This is life and death. On our own we are no match for these opponents. Too often we underestimate the opposition. We know we are surrounded by temptation. But we

think we are too wise to be taken in. We won't go too far. We won't let it happen a second time. So we tell ourselves. But the devil and his evil forces have thousands of years of experience in leading people astray. Those trying to rely on their own cleverness are in for a big fall.

So we can withstand the attacks, we need God's strength. We need his full armor. When you put on God's full armor you are able to withstand the evil day. The evil day is every day until our Lord Jesus returns. There may be periods of calm. But then comes a crisis, a catastrophe, some great loss. On that evil day faith is severely tested. Job had his evil day when he was struck by catastrophe after catastrophe. Joseph had it when he was tempted by Potiphar's wife. Though he resisted sinning against God, he still ended up in jail. David had his evil day when he saw Bathsheba bathing. Peter had his in the high priest's courtyard during Jesus' trial.

But our Lord's has equipped up with his full armor so we will be able to withstand the evil day. If we employ God's full armor, when all is said and done, we will stand victorious. That's because Lord will not leave us alone in the fight. The Lord fights for us.

Paul goes on to list the items that make up the full armor that God supplies believers. *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.* The first item is the heavy belt that supported and protected the midsection. For the believer this weapon is truth. The devil is a liar and the father of lies. He comes at us with lies to undermine our faith and godly living. The only thing that can expose his lies is God's truth. Jesus used that truth in the wilderness when he opposed the devil's lies.

The next item is the breastplate of righteousness. The devil tries to get us to despair because we don't measure up to God's standard. If Satan succeeds in plunging us into some sin, he'll quickly follow up by telling us we can never be forgiven. What are we to do? Use the breastplate of righteousness. Admit the sin. Then remember your Savior's suffering and death that won you perfect righteousness. Paul told the Romans, *"Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us"* (8:33, 34).

The next item are the boots that a soldier wears. They keep us prepared and ready with the gospel of peace. The gospel proclaims the peace that Jesus established between God and mankind. He did this with his reconciling work on the cross. When a believer has the gospel of peace, he is ready and equipped to stand up against the tempter. He has a firm footing. Paul ended his great resurrection chapter by telling Christians in Corinth, *"Stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain"* (1 Corinthians 15:58).

The shield of faith also needs to be taken up. With it we are able to ward off and extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. With flaming arrows the devil tries to imbed in us a some

doubt or a sinful desire. He knows that if he can gain a foothold, unbelief will spread in us like gangrene. But if we hold to the faith, to all that God has promised us in his word, we can resist Satan and extinguish his fiery arrows.

What would a soldier do without his helmet? So we soldiers of Christ wear one too. It's salvation. We were rescued us from guilt and the punishment that our sin deserved. Jesus did that for us. With a helmet we are reminded of the crown of thorns that our Savior wore as he won our salvation from a cross. Holding on to our salvation in Christ, we are able to ward off the assaults of Satan. Our salvation is so precious. Our Lord once asked, *"What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul"* (Mark 8:36).

The final item is a sword. It's a weapon that can be used for defense or to go on the attack. It's the word of God. God's word works well as a defensive weapon. Certainly we are no match for the tempter. But oppose him with the word of God, and we'll come out victorious. Consider again how our Savior did this when he faced off with Satan in the wilderness. The word can also serve as an offensive weapon. Let the word shape your thinking. Repel Satan before he can even approach us with his lies. James wrote: *"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you"* (4:7). When the devil sees Christ ruling your heart and life, he'll want nothing to do with you. That roaring lion will run away scared.

While the word is not mentioned until verse 17, all the other items are closely related to that word. If we are to be strong and safe, we need to live in the word. If we want to remain strong, we must be deeply rooted in the word. Remain in the word and you'll always be well equipped for battle.

I wish I could tell you that if you stay deeply rooted in God's Word, you'll never have a single problem in life. That is something God has never promised. We must always remember that deep within us is an enemy. It's our sinful flesh. And sinful flesh works for devil. Flesh can only turn us away from God and his word. We must never let down our guard. God's word has remain a our top priority. We heard how Jesus resisted the devil's flaming arrows. He fired back with the powerful word of God. "It is written," he said and the devil was defeated. The devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh want nothing to do with God's Word. But that precious word must stay in our life. It's the only place where we can find true strength. Battles will come from all around. We must be ready. Wield that sword, the saving word of God, you'll surely be victorious.

Faith comes to us by hearing the message. Sheep stay close to the Shepherd by listening to his voice. As ambassadors for Christ we serve our Lord by sharing his word with the people in our life. That way they too can have access to God's armor. Then we'll all be equipped to battle any forces of evil. The battles may get fierce. But take heart. Your Lord has been fighting for his people from day one. Destruction seem certain for Israel. But God fought for them at the Red Sea leaving no reason to lose heart. All humanity was lost in sin. But God fought for them with a valiant death on a cross and his glorious return to life on Easter. And he'll fight for you too. So stay ready. Stay alert. Stay equipped. With the full armor of God you're sure of victory.