



STRONG IN HIS MIGHT

A 30-DAY DEVOTIONAL
ON THE ARMOR OF GOD

COASTAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

STRONG
IN
HIS
MIGHT



COASTAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

Before you begin this 30-day devotional, we want to give you instructions on how to read this short book. The first thing you will notice when you turn the page is a section on spiritual warfare and demonology. The reason we wanted to include this article is because we anticipate that this is a question you may have as you study Ephesians 6:10-20. The article is meant to give you some handles on how to biblically think through the issue of spiritual warfare and demonology and will help you navigate you away from common pitfalls.

Secondly, you will notice that we call each reading a *meditation*. We have long believed that meditation is a neglected spiritual discipline. Biblical meditation is to fill your mind with Scripture so that you may internalize, digest, and be changed by the Holy Spirit to conform more into the image of Jesus. This book is designed to take small chunks of Ephesians 6:10-20 or what you probably know as “The Armor of God” and help you to meditate on each part of the passage. Our prayer is that above everything else you will see that to put on the armor of God is to be *in Christ*. Christ is our armor and the Apostle Paul gives us the particular benefits in this section on what it means for a believer to operate as one who is in Christ. These meditations aren’t meant to be technical commentaries. They are meant to be devotional. Our prayer is that this important passage of Scripture will wash over you as you slowly mediate on what it means to be *in Christ*.

— The Coastal Ministry Staff

PART ONE

AN INTRODUCTORY ARTICLE

AN INTRODUCTORY ARTICLE

SOME THOUGHTS ON SPIRITUAL WARFARE AND DEMONOLOGY

JOEY TOMLINSON

SPIRITUAL WARFARE, PARTICULARLY IN THE AREA OF DEMONOLOGY IS QUITE NEGLECTED IN MANY REFORMED CHURCHES. This is a problem because it creates a vacuum for those whose position on demons and spiritual warfare is influenced more by unchecked testimonials and Hollywood than by the careful instruction of the Apostles documented in God's Word. C.S. Lewis said it best:

"There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel and excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight" (Lewis 1942, ix).

Christians are guilty of both extremes. Christians who are excessive about spiritual warfare and demonic activity make an unbiblical idol out of it and are in danger of living unproductive lives for the kingdom of God. Those who ignore it, are in danger of the sin of unbelief.

Charles Hodge cautions, "The rule of interpretation which gets rid of the doctrine of Satan and his influence, if carried out, would blot all the peculiar doctrines of the Scripture from the Bible"

(Hodge, 1879). And J.C. Ryle agrees, "Unbelief about the existence and personality of Satan has often proved the first step to unbelief about God" (Ryle, 1955). Therefore, we begin this brief look at the influence of demonic activity, but we must be tethered to a text (and we will ground ourselves more as we move along).

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil 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 firm" (The Apostle Paul, Ephesians 6:10-13 ESV).

WHERE DID THE DEVIL AND DEMONS COME FROM?

Before we go any further in looking at the Ephesians 6 passage of Scripture, we must identify the Devil and his demons and briefly identify their origin. We understand that the serpent in Genesis 3 is in the Garden of Eden before the fall of man. This serpent is analogous to Satan and his work as he tempts Adam and Eve to distrust God and worship the creature rather than the Creator (Romans 1). Because the serpent is in the Garden before the fall of man, we must deduce that the serpent is older than man. Revelation 20:2 confirms this when the Apostle John states, "And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years..."

Although we know that Satan, and consequently demons, and demonic activity existed prior to the creation of man and life as we know it, the Scripture doesn't give any sort of narrative about how this all came about. The closest thing to a narrative is found in two Old Testament passages. Theologian John Frames says of

these two passages, "Scripture does not narrate the fall of Satan and his angels, but Isaiah 14:3-21 and Ezekiel 28:2-19 deal with the defeat of the kings of Babylon and Tyre, respectively, using imagery suggesting analogies with the fall of Satan" (Frame 2013, 775).

Reverend and Professor Frederick S. Leahy seeks to give us a bit more insight into the origin of Satan and I am indebted to him for his careful handling on the subject. He states:

Satan revolted against God and became the leader of all other rebel angels. Under his rule they are joined in a confederacy of evil and consequently we read of 'the devil and his angels' and 'the prince of demons'. He is given such names as Satan (adversary), Devil (slanderer), Apollyon (destroyer) and Belial (worthlessness or wickedness). The Jews called him Beelzebub and regarded him as Prince of the demons. Satan is also termed the Dragon (a name associated with pagan powers in their opposition to the people of God, Ezekiel 29:3; Jeremiah 51:34) and Serpent (Revelation 20:2), a name which reminds us of his cunning (Leahy 1975, 19-0).

Later Leahy asserts that Satan is known for his "power, malice, cunning and hostility (20). It is important for us to see the biblical evidence for Leahy's comments. Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12-15), is in fact called the Devil and Satan which means "accuser" or "slanderer". He is in fact crafty (Genesis 3:1) and can "anticipate well the plans of God" (Frame 2013, 776). And he is accompanied by his fallen angels that promote hostility toward God and his plan (Luke 13:11, 16; Acts 10:38; 2 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:18). Jude 6 gives us some insight into the origin of demons, "And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day..."

WHAT IS THEIR GOAL?

Having briefly surveyed the origin of Satan and his fellow demons, we must give attention to their goal. In this we interact with our original passage in Ephesians 6. According to our primary text, they promote evil so that the man of God may not be strong in the Lord. Now, this is a very broad job description but other passages of Scripture can give us specifics about the cunning plan of Satan and his demons. Satan and demons "ceaselessly oppose God and strive to deflect his will" (Leahy, 19). In Genesis 3 we see Satan convincing Eve and consequently Adam to distrust God and to become jealous of His knowledge and position. In Job, Satan attempts to take everything good from Job in an attempt to convince Job to curse God. Ephesians 6:16 says that Satan and his demons throw "flaming darts" at believers. In 1 Peter 5:8-9, the Apostle Peter warns, "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world."

The ultimate goal of Satan is to *make man like him in his refusal to worship the only true and Sovereign God, Yahweh*. The Apostle Paul puts language around this goal:

"For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles." Late Paul goes on to say, "And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done" (Romans 1:21-23; 28).

Satan's goal for the unbeliever is to keep them in their unbelief by tempting them to continue to suppress the knowledge of God that

is plain to them (Romans 1). He may do this through a myriad of practical tactics. Two main idols that promote unbelief is sexual immorality and greed. Our culture can't get enough of either and the church must speak to these so that the broader culture may repent of the sin of unbelief.

For the believer, the aim is that of the Accuser. Accusations may come like this: "Christ's sacrifice did not atone for this sin" or "God would never use someone as messed up as you". The temptation from Satan isn't always accusatory though. It may come in the form of "you are forgiven, so indulge your flesh a little more" (see Romans 6:1). "You can't expect to pursue sexual morality in today's culture" (1 Corinthians 6:12-20). Satan's aim is to steal the joy of the believer and replace it with a withered, cheap, unquenchable idol.

WE WILL OVERCOME BECAUSE CHRIST CRUSHED THE HEAD OF THE SERPENT

A brief survey of spiritual warfare and demonology would not be biblical or complete unless we acknowledge the universal Lordship of Jesus Christ. Two passages are of primary importance for us in our fight against "rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12). God says to Satan in Genesis 3:15:

"I will put enmity between you [Satan] and the woman [Eve], and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

God is preaching the triumphant message of the gospel of Jesus Christ immediately after the fall of man. Jesus is the great Snake Crusher. Through his life, death and resurrection He has crushed Satan and his limitless deceiving power. The work of Christ is accomplished and applied to His Church. He is now seated and ruling and reigning over heaven and earth. Hebrews 10:12-13

gives us a glimpse into this:

"But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet."

Jesus is seated and He won't return until all enemies are made his footstool. That tells us that there is still a spiritual war for Christians to engage in. However, the war has already been fought and won. Our job is to announce the victory of war to the nations (Matthew 28:18-20) and to allow the triumphant message of the gospel make Christ's enemies his footstool.

WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE SATAN?

Satan is bound. I preached a sermon not too long ago where I attempted to illustrate the current position of Satan. When I was a young teenager growing up in Southern Georgia, I killed a rattlesnake with the help of an older teenage friend. After we killed the snake, my friend and I thought that it would be funny to put the snake on my parent's front porch and knock on the door. I remember vividly my mom's reaction to seeing a snake on her porch. Now, if you aren't familiar with killing snakes, when they first die they still move and they can still bite you. In some ways, the bite of a dead rattlesnake can be more harmful than the bite of a live snake. This is because a snake's venom is unregulated after death. I learned that valuable lesson from my parents who later explained that to me.

The point is, the snake was defeated, but not powerless. I believe this is an appropriate way to view the work of Satan. Christ has defeated him, but the New Testament writers still warn us to resist and flee him. The beauty of this is that God has deposited His Holy Spirit in every believer and with that comes the ability to resist the devil for the glory of God. It is a Christian's joy to do so.

This article was originally published by Pastor Joey in an online journal called "Theology for Life". The original article can be found here: <http://servantsofgrace.org/spiritual-warfare-how-christians-should-think-of-satan-and-his-demons/>.

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PART TWO

MEDITATIONS

MEDITATION ONE | EPHESIANS 6:10a

FINALLY, BE STRONG IN THE LORD...

JOEY TOMLINSON

TODAY WE BEGIN A ONE-MONTH MEDITATION ON THE ARMOR OF GOD AND WE WOULD LIKE TO CHALLENGE YOU IN THESE DAILY SHORT MEDITATIONS. When you hear "Armor of God" you should think; as a believer I am 'in Christ'. *He* is my armor. We cannot stand against supernatural forces on our own. As a people who are in Christ, we must 'be strong in the Lord'. Certainly, that is the significance of the phrase, 'in the Lord'. Today, meditate on your neediness for the Lord. Confess your neediness to Him. Spend time memorizing Ephesians 6:10, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might" and turn that into a daily prayer as you journey through the next 30 days.

FINALLY,
BE STRONG
IN THE LORD...

JOEY TOMLINSON

HOW ARE WE STRONG? WE ARE ONLY STRONG *IN THE LORD*. That means that it is His strength, not our strength. Any sense of strength we may think we have is a counterfeit strength. And our counterfeit strength is not an enduring strength. God alone produces an enduring strength. Paul reminds Timothy of this as he encourages Timothy to persevere in faith and ministry in 2 Timothy 2:1, "You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus." So then, as believers, the enduring strength that God provides is found in the grace of Christ Jesus. So, we must abide in Christ (John 15). That is where God gives us enduring strength. Meditate today on what it means to abide in Christ. Use John 15 to help navigate your thoughts biblically.

FINALLY,
BE STRONG
IN THE LORD...

JOEY TOMLINSON

IT WOULD BE A SHAME TO CONCLUDE A MEDITATION ON THE FIRST PART OF THIS VERSE WITHOUT ACKNOWLEDGING THE WORD 'FINALLY'. What is this passage connected to? Ephesians 4-6 are the implications of a life totally changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. You cannot begin to understand Ephesians 6, if you have not internalized the truth contained in chapters 1-3. I believe the heart of Ephesians is summed up in Ephesians 1:3-10: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him [in Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth." Spend today thanking God that you can be strong in Him, because Christ's blood has provided redemption and forgiveness for your trespasses.

...AND IN THE STRENGTH OF HIS MIGHT...

SHAUN BROWN

HAS THERE EVER BEEN A TIME IN YOUR LIFE THAT YOU FELT YOU COULD NOT KEEP GOING, LET ALONE MUSTER UP THE STRENGTH TO ENGAGE IN SPIRITUAL BATTLE? Bills, kids, loneliness, disunity, family issues, physical pain, etcetera all pile up to leave us without strength. And then we are called to fight a spiritual battle. Where are we to get strength?

There is great news for the believer. A believer's strength does not come from within. And believers don't need to hope for strength or muster up internal fortitude to fight the spiritual battle. Believers need to be in Christ. The strength to stand firm is *His* strength freely given when we repent of sin and believe in Jesus Christ our Mighty Warrior. He has overcome all our enemies: the world, our sinful flesh, and the devil. Repent of your sin, believe in Him, and be strong in *His* might.

...AND IN THE STRENGTH OF HIS MIGHT...

SHAUN BROWN

WHEN WE TAKE THE TIME TO READ THE LIFE OF CHRIST, ESPECIALLY HIS SUFFERING AND THE COURAGE AND STRENGTH WITH WHICH HE FACED SUFFERING, IT LEAVES US WITH AWE AND WONDER. The Creator of the universe humbled himself. He had the authority and ability to call legions of angels to prevent His suffering (Matt 26:53), but He willingly suffered to fulfill the will of the Father. Jesus's humility shows great strength.

And we are called by the Apostle Paul to stand in that same strength. Literally stand in Christ's "mighty power." When we stand in Christ and put on the armor of God we can be content no matter how difficult our circumstance (Phil 4:13). We can endure suffering knowing that this life is short, and our suffering produces eternal fruit (2 Cor 4:17). We can know that in Christ even the grave is not to be feared. Why? Because in Christ the same Spirit of God that raised Jesus from the dead now lives in us (Rom 8:11). Brothers and sisters in Christ, stand strong in the Lord and in the strength of *His* might.

...AND IN THE STRENGTH OF HIS MIGHT.

SHAUN BROWN

YOU MAY BE ASKING YOURSELF, WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE PRACTICALLY TO STAND IN CHRIST AND IN THE STRENGTH OF HIS MIGHT? The New Testament is clear on how to do this. We need to repent of sin and believe in who Jesus says He is and what He says He has done for us in the gospel.

There are several disciplines we can establish to practically stand in Christ. First, we need to regularly saturate our minds with Scripture. The Holy Spirit uses God's Word to transform our thinking to know, trust, and adjust our behavior to do the will of God (Rom. 12:1-2). Second, we stand in Christ by making corporate worship a weekly discipline. Third, we stand in Christ by being in a small group (which is a modern-day method we use to promote biblical fellowship), where like-minded believers help to encourage and challenge us to right thinking about God and His. Fourth, we stand in Christ by serving the local church with our spiritual gifts so that the body of Christ might be encouraged.

Finally, but not lastly, we stand in Christ by praying. We pray as Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6. We are to pray kingdom prayers, that seek to honor Christ and further His name and fame until His return. May Coastal Community Church stand strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD....

JOEL ARCIERI

AS PAUL PENNED THESE WORDS HE WAS MOST LIKELY CHAINED TO A ROMAN SOLDIER. Thus, he certainly had an intricate and intimate relationship with armor. What is the purpose of armor? To protect the wearer in battle and conflict! How sorry the soldier would be if he entered into battle without every piece of armor! How vulnerable he would be to the attacks of the enemy! Every piece, every item that a soldier bears, provides the necessary protection and advantage over the enemy's attacks. Yet, even with armor made by the hands of man, it eventually corrodes, cracks, bends, becomes dented, broken, and in need of repair or replacement. Unless one is a blacksmith, this task, the task of forging and repairing armor is impossible. That is why this armor does not come from the hands of men but from Christ. We clothe ourselves with the righteousness of Christ (Gal. 3:27). This holy armor, distinctly designed to fight against sin, comes to us by grace through faith (Phil. 3:9). This graciously gifted armor is perfectly fitted, complete in every aspect and unyielding in every circumstance. Remember church, your armor – your protection and weaponry – is Christ by Christ.

MEDITATION EIGHT | EPHESIANS 6:11b

...THAT YOU MAY BE ABLE TO
STAND AGAINST THE SCHEMES
OF THE DEVIL.

JOEY TOMLINSON

THE SCHEMES OF THE DEVIL IN THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS IS THE SPREADING OF FALSE DOCTRINE. Although we are not the church at Ephesus, we are still plagued by false teachers. As one who is in Christ, how can you identify and stand against false doctrine that the Bible says is a devious scheme of the devil? One way to spot false teaching is to ask yourself, “does this make much of Christ or much of man?” Another way to identify false doctrine so that you can resist being influenced by it is by internalizing the Scripture. Daily digest it. Allow it to renew your mind (Romans 12). Test everything you hear by Scripture. A third helpful way to identify and flee false doctrine is by reading books by preachers and teachers you trust or listening to sermons by pastors you trust. As one who is in Christ you really do have the capacity to stand against the schemes of the devil.

MEDITATION NINE | EPHESIANS 6:13b

...THAT YOU MAY BE ABLE
TO WITHSTAND
IN THE EVIL DAY...

AMANDA WILSON

THE ARMOR GIVES US THE ABILITY TO STAND. Ephesians 6:12 can be overwhelming to meditate on—it’s sobering and intimidating to give recognition to the reality of “this present darkness” and the “spiritual forces of evil”, BUT Ephesians 6:13 breaks into this darkness with the light and truth that we are not without hope and we are not without the equipment to withstand in the evil day. The day is evil *therefore* take up whole armor of God *that you may be able* to withstand. Without the armor, we are defenseless and vulnerable to being overcome by the enemy, but God has provided a way for us to stand strong in His might through the spiritual armor outlined in the rest of this passage. What a joy it is to know that though I am unable, God has given me His armor to stand. May we all be encouraged by the sufficiency of Christ and our ability to feast on Him, to put on spiritual armor, and to withstand in the evil day.

MEDITATION TEN | EPHESIANS 6:13b

...THAT YOU MAY BE ABLE TO WITHSTAND IN THE EVIL DAY...

AMANDA WILSON

TO WITHSTAND IS TO HOLD FAST. The end of verse 13 tells us that with the armor of God we can withstand in the evil day — we can overcome the present darkness — *having done all, to stand firm*. This kind of battle is active and requires us to hold fast—we must give every effort to hold our ground. Paul charges the Ephesians to stand, to overcome fear with valor. I can't help but see a picture of Roman soldiers on the front lines of battle, linking shields, standing strong—beads of sweat falling on their faces, teeth clinched tight as they press on with grit: courage and resolve. It's a lot easier to be brave and stand when we know there is a firm foundation at our feet, an impenetrable armor shielding us, and victory is promised. As Christians rooted in Christ, with the armor of God put on, we are in that exact situation. Hebrews 10 tells of the assurance of faith we have as Christians and exhorts us, "let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful." We've been given this opportunity to stand in His might because Christ ransomed that right for us. With faithful discipline, hold fast to the truth of the Gospel without wavering by putting on each and every piece of the armor He has provided and standing firm with the assurance that you are not standing alone, but with the strength of His might.

MEDITATION ELEVEN | EPHESIANS 6:14a

...HAVING YOUR LOINS GIRT ABOUT WITH TRUTH...

JOEL ARCEIRI

WHILE MANY OF US TODAY MAY ONLY SEE THE IMPORTANCE OF BELTS AS NOTHING MORE THAN A FASHION STATEMENT, IN PAUL'S DAY, GAZING AT THE BELT OR GIRDLE OF THE SOLDIER TO WHICH HE WAS CHAINED, MADE HIM UNDERSTAND THE NECESSITY OF A SOLDIER'S BELT. A soldier's sword and knives are securely fastened to the belt, providing the soldier with his means of combat should the need arise. This piece of armor holds all others in place; it ensures the protection of the body! If the belt is out of place, even slightly, it can be the difference between life and death! This girdle is so integral to every soldier that the existence of an ungirded soldier would be a contradiction. How foolish are we if we exist untethered to the truth, the same truth to which Christ was girded, ebbing and flowing in the turmoil of life? This truth; the truth of His Deity, the truth of the resurrection, the remainder. O Christian, these are the same truths to which you must fasten yourselves. With determination, like Odysseus to his mast, secure yourselves tightly to the truth, that nothing in this entire world would cause you to waver.

...HAVING YOUR LOINS GIRT ABOUT WITH TRUTH...

JOEL ARCEIRI

THE AREA ENCOMPASSED WITHIN THE LOINS WOULD HAVE BEEN APPARENT AND OBVIOUS TO THE EPHESIAN CHURCH, BUT IT IS A CONCEPT LOST ON MOST LAYMEN TODAY. The loins, the region of the body from the hipbone to the lowest rib, is the most vulnerable part of the body. Every organ, from vital to reproductive is housed within the loins. If any part, any inch of the loins is exposed to a skilled enemy; it is surely to be exploited. O Church, we face a skilled adversary; one who attacks from multiple fronts, but always directs its attention and might towards the most vulnerable parts. This truth that lays within our loins, within the deepest, most vulnerable part of our being, is our sincerity, our purity. This is our integrity, the lifeblood of our profession. If the enemy can succeed in compromising our integrity, he has surely won. While our union with Christ provides us with the belt, we must remain unwaveringly protectant of our sincerity and purity. Christian, are you protecting your integrity or inviting spies within your walls, diseases with your loins, to corrupt, decay, and degrade the truth? Hold fast to Jesus in truth

...HAVING FASTENED ON THE BELT OF TRUTH...

JOEL ARCEIRI

TRUTH IS OFTEN PORTRAYED AS RELATIVE AND MALLEABLE, YET ALL THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE WE SEE TRUTH AS CONSTANT, UNYIELDING, ABSOLUTE, AND RESILIENT IN THE MIDST OF CALAMITY. Even the notion of a fastened belt still leaves much to be desired for belts loosen and wear with age. Many of you began this series wondering what it meant to fasten on the belt of truth. Some of you, like Pontius Pilate may even wonder what is truth? (John 18:37, ESV) Believer, you can rest knowing that Christ gave you the answer. When Christ answered doubting Thomas' question with "I am the truth" it was in comfort. O how great a comfort truth is to the soul that wrestles with constant worries and anxiety! Just as all manner of clothing is secured by a belt, our hearts- so prone to wander and deceive us- can be tethered to truth. Hold fast, dear reader, knowing that Christ holds you fast. Daily wash in His word- let every syllable be another line securing you to Him. Bride of Christ, let every word that comes out of your mouth be an affirmation of your most vulnerable and inward profession of His truth.

...HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS...

BETHANY LAY

THE ORDER OF THE ARMOR IS SIGNIFICANT. It follows the order with which the Roman soldiers put on their armor for battle. Spiritually, why do you think it is important to put on the Belt of Truth before the Breastplate of Righteousness? I would suggest that it is because without truth, righteousness is not possible.

Priscilla Schrier puts it like this. "While the lifestyle of a [person] girded in the belt of truth affirms God's standard, a [person] who puts on the breastplate of righteousness aligns [his]/her life to it."

Righteousness is living a life measured by God's absolute standard. If we do not know the truth, we do not know God's standard, and, therefore, we are unable to take up the Breastplate of Righteousness. This can be critical. For the Roman soldier, the breastplate protected his most vital organ, the heart.

Proverbs 4:23 says, "Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life." (NLT) If we do not guard our hearts, the course of our lives will turn away from God, and this path leads to death. (Romans 6:23)

Bottom line: Put on the Breastplate of Righteousness to align your life with the truth of God's Word so that your heart is guarded.

...HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS...

BETHANY LAY

PERFECTIONIST. DOES THIS WORD DESCRIBE YOU? In the Christian life, we often equate righteousness with perfection. We strive to be the perfect Christians. The problem is that we constantly fail. It is impossible! How can we put on the Breastplate of Righteousness if we are not perfect?!

Perhaps you are not a perfectionist, but you can relate to this statement. "At least I am more righteous than so and so." This righteousness can work until we become the "so and so's" to someone more righteous than us. How can we put on the breastplate if we are not the *most* righteous?

God's standard for righteousness cannot be satisfied by any human being. That's not fair! He tells us to put on the Breastplate of Righteousness, but Romans 3:23 tells us that we will always fall short of God's standard.

Jesus lived a perfectly sinless life, so He could pay our penalty. This is called *imputed righteousness*. He paid the price for our sin. When we accept Him, He gives us His righteousness and *that* is not fair. It is grace!

This imputed righteousness is our breastplate and there is nothing that can penetrate it. When we align our lives with this truth, *the Truth*, we have put on the Breastplate of Righteousness.

...AS SHOES FOR YOUR FEET,
HAVING PUT ON THE READINESS
GIVEN BY THE GOSPEL OF PEACE.

ANDREW OATES

WHY ARE THE SHOES IMPORTANT? They protect your feet, but what about Roman soldier sandals? The Apostle Paul in writing Ephesians from prison must have seen plenty of uniformed Roman soldiers, especially the spiked shoes they wore that gripped the earth. Each set of Roman shoes, called the Caligae were the heavy soled boot-like sandals worn by the soldiers with iron spikes at the bottom for battlefield traction. These shoes minimized blisters, helped with chronic foot disabilities, and were customized helping with tinea and trench foot through regular use of these shoes. The Apostle Paul knew that as Christians we would have to go onto many different battlegrounds in order to stand. The Apostle Paul used the word “stand” four times in the proceeding verses (6:10-14) for Christians to stand on the battlefield against the attacks of evil. A shoeless soldier could not stand on uncertain. The terrain of rocks, twigs or even a sharp pebble could cause the mightiest soldier to fall down in wreathing pain rendering the remaining armor useless on the ground. The Apostle Paul chose the “gospel of peace” as the very foundation of a Christian to stand upon.

...PUT ON THE
READINESS GIVEN BY
THE GOSPEL...

ANDREW OATES

THE SHOES THAT A SPIRITUAL SOLDIER WEARS PROVIDE THE NECESSARY FOOTING ON THE BATTLEFIELD. A spiritual battle exists as we advance the gospel that brings peace to our souls and peace to all those who have believed (Rom. 10:9-10) and received (Jn. 1:12) the gospel. Our job as we wear these shoes in our beautiful obedient feet is to share the gospel, as the Apostle Paul stated in Romans 10:15 “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!” What is this gospel? The three core facts of the gospel from 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 we must believe and receive are: (1) Jesus is God— deity, (2) Jesus died on the Cross for our sins—atonement, (3) Jesus bodily came back from the dead after 3 days—resurrection. This is the message that we must share in the midst of the spiritual battle that will deliver peace, as this peace can only be found on the other side of the battle. Only when we personally have believed and received this message ourselves will we be ready to proclaim the gospel that will bring peace.

...PUT ON THE READINESS GIVEN BY THE GOSPEL...

ANDREW OATES

"Whoever claims to abide in [Christ] must walk as Jesus walked.."
— 1 John 2:6 —

WHEN WE WALK IN THE SHOES OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE WE ARE WALKING IN JESUS CHRIST, OUR SOLID FOUNDATION. In Luke 6:46-49 Jesus tells the story of 2 houses in a storm built on different foundations, and as a result the house built on foundation of sand did not stand. Only the foundation built upon the rock stood the storm. The gospel of Jesus Christ is our peace in the midst of a raging storm or battle, our sure footedness as every other ground is shifting and changing. God's Church is sent to announce the gospel of God's Kingdom, which will spread His way of peace around the whole world. Having our shoes on, we are ready to move, to spread these glad tidings to others just as Jesus did and taught his disciples. The gospel will fix the world, the shoes provide our foundation and our ability to share and bring peace to this broken world. Are we ready to go? Jesus did command it (Matt. 28:19-20) and we can do together in the power of His might (Eph. 6:10).

IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES TAKE UP THE SHIELD OF FAITH...

DAVID WILSON

IF, WHEN YOU READ "SHIELD OF FAITH," YOU PICTURE LARGE SHIELDS (MAYBE 2 ½ BY 4 ½ FEET) LIKE THE ONES YOU RECOGNIZE FROM MOVIES DEPICTING ROMAN BATTLES (GLADIATOR), YOU ARE PICTURING THE WORD USED BY PAUL IN EPHESIANS 6:16. The smaller shield (2 feet and round) was used for direct, hand to hand combat. This larger shield was wooden, likely covered in an animal skin that was soaked in water if possible. This shield was designed to hide behind.

Here, it is called the shield of faith. Not "THE faith" as in a body of beliefs, but "faith" referring the general necessity of trusting God and His Word to be true. If we want to be prepared to go into battle with the Evil One, we must start with a wholehearted confidence in the God who saved us. Without that protection, we will waver at the first sign of conflict. This kind of faith comes in many forms but is only as good as the object of the faith. In facing spiritual warfare, it is essential that my faith be solidly grounded in God and His Word.

MEDITATION TWENTY | EPHESIANS 6:16

IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES TAKE UP THE SHIELD OF FAITH...

DAVID WILSON

THE PICTURE OF THE “FLAMING DARTS” OF THE WICKED ONE CARRIES ON THE IMAGE THAT WE SAW ABOUT THE SHIELD OF FAITH. In battle, arrows would be dipped in pitch or tar, then lit on fire before being shot at the enemy troops. When they landed, the burning substance would stick and even splatter, causing maximum injury. If it landed on the shield, it would not penetrate, and damage would be accordingly minimized. The greatest danger for the soldier was to get out from behind this shield.

Standing behind the certain confidence that God is faithful, and His Word is true, we are able to quench the fiery arrows that Satan is shooting at us from enemy territory. We all face various temptations and struggles. If we attempt to defeat them on our own we will surely suffer, as will those who are around us. Jesus himself used this defense during his temptation when he used the Scripture to answer the direct assault of Satan. The faithfulness of God and the truth of Scripture are our sure defense.

MEDITATION TWENTY-ONE | EPHESIANS 6:17

...AND TAKE THE HELMET OF SALVATION...

ANDREW WILSON

“...having put on... for a helmet, the hope of salvation.”
— 1 Thessalonians 5:8 —

I REMEMBER RIDING MY BIKE AS A KID, I NEVER WANTED TO PUT ON MY HELMET BECAUSE I THOUGHT THAT I WOULD LOOK SILLY, BUT MY PARENTS INSISTED THAT I WEAR IT TO KEEP ME SAFE. This helmet of salvation that Paul is urging us to put on is a reminder of the hope that we have in heaven through Christ's sacrifice. Today, putting on the helmet of salvation might mean resisting temptation to do what seems normal in the world's eyes by not taking a step towards a stranger and giving a helping hand, or sharing the Gospel with them. This helmet of salvation that we get to put on changes our thoughts and reminds us that we don't have to worry about what the world will think of us because our hope is not here on earth, our hope is in heaven.

...AND TAKE THE HELMET OF SALVATION...

WILSON BEVER

THE HELMET OF SALVATION IS A VITAL PART OF OUR ABILITY TO PERSEVERE IN OUR CHRISTIAN JOURNEY. The lingering question of “am I truly saved?” can be debilitating to Christians and leave them in a state of anxiety and disarray. Fortunately, God has given Christians various confirmations that they have received salvation. In Ephesians 1:13, scripture states, “In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.” To be indwelt with the Holy Spirit upon professing faith in Jesus Christ is a secure reminder that we are truly saved and nothing will change that. Fortunately, professing Jesus as Christ and being filled with the Holy Spirit occurs instantaneously so there is no gap time where you can fall out of your salvation. Furthermore, we have a guarantee from Jesus Christ in Matthew 10:27-30, “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all[c]; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.” This is a clear and definitive statement that once we accept to follow Christ, our salvation is not safeguarded by a corrupt or mortal being but by God, who is “greater than all”, therefore it is impossible for anyone to remove what God has saved. For these reasons we can daily move forward in our Christian journey with the assurance that we are truly saved, protected by the helmet of salvation, after professing faith in Jesus Christ.

...THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, WHICH IS THE WORD OF GOD...

JEFF FRYE

LAST YEAR MY WIFE AND I WENT TO DISNEY WORLD WITH OUR TWO GRANDSONS. While we were there we ate at Cinderella’s Castle. Our daughter said that the boys wanted to go, but we knew she really wanted to go. When we sat down at the table, the waiter brought over a sword for them (this was part of the Castle experience). Instantly, our grandson became an “expert” sword fighter (at 3 years old I might add). That was adorable for us for about 2 seconds. Quickly we had to start giving him instructions on when and how to use his mighty sword for good and not evil! As Christians we also are given instructions so that we can live for God’s glory and have victory over Satan in Christ.

Paul tells the Ephesian church and consequently us to put on the “full armor of God” that will enable us to stand our ground against evil (6:13). As part of the armor, the sword is used for defense and offense.

The purpose of the sword of the Spirit, the Bible, is to make us strong and able to withstand Satan, our enemy (Ps 119:11, 33–40, 99–105). The Holy Spirit uses the power of the Word to save souls and give spiritual strength to be mature soldiers for the Lord. We live in a corrupt and evil world. The more we know and understand the Word of God, the more useful we will be in doing the will of God and the more effective we will be in standing against the enemy of our souls.

...THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, WHICH IS THE WORD OF GOD...

CHRIS LAY

IN EPHESIANS 6:17, IT SAYS WE ARE TO TAKE THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, THE WORD OF GOD, AS PART OF THE ARMOR OF GOD. In John 1 we see the Word was made flesh referring to Jesus Christ as the Word of God.

Because of this, when I think of using the Sword of the Spirit, I turn to the life of Jesus. Jesus, being the Word, is the best example I can think of to emulate.

In Matthew 4, Jesus is being tempted by the devil. During the encounter, Jesus was tempted three times. Each time Jesus is tempted, He responded by saying; "It is written," and proceeds to quote Old Testament Scripture. Jesus understood the only way to combat the devil's temptations was to use the Word of God.

Like Jesus, those who follow Him must use the Sword of the Spirit [the Word] to combat the temptations of the devil. Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." The world, flesh and the devil manipulate what the Word of God says, but this verse in Hebrews tells us that when we truly know and use God's Word it will give us discernment as we fight the spiritual battle.

...PRAYING AT ALL TIMES IN THE SPIRIT...

BETHANY LAY

EPHESIANS 6:18 EXHORTS US TO PRAY AT ALL TIMES. This is not the only place in Scripture where we are given this exhortation. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says to "pray without ceasing." How is this possible when we must work, take care of our families, eat, sleep...?

This is speaking of an attitude of prayer. When you awake each morning, do you start your day with thanksgiving to God for another opportunity to serve Him? As you prepare for your day, do you pray for wisdom in each situation you will face? When the stress of work is bearing down on you, do you cry out to God for strength and perseverance? In the evening, as you enjoy time with family and friends do you thank God for His blessings? When you put your head on your pillow at night, do you rejoice in another day that God has brought you through or cry out to Him as you bear a heavy burden?

"Pray without ceasing" does not mean that you go into your prayer closet and never come out. God has called us to "go" and not just sit. "Pray without ceasing" means that in all you do, you acknowledge God's presence and power seeking to do His will.

...PRAYING AT ALL TIMES IN THE SPIRIT...

BETHANY LAY

"THE WAR ROOM" IS A GREAT MOVIE ABOUT A PRAYER WARRIOR WHO HAS TRANSFORMED HER CLOSET INTO WHAT SHE CALLS HER "WAR ROOM." It gives us a fantastic picture of Matthew 6:6. "But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

Yesterday we saw that we are to pray at all times. This is an attitude of prayer everywhere, all the time. But there is also a time for us to "go into a room and shut the door." There is time to be still before God, quietly waiting. This is much more of a struggle for me, and maybe it is for you as well.

Here are some practical tips that may help:

- Scripture — Praying the Scripture is most effective. There are several books that teach this discipline.
- Journal — Write down your prayers or at least your prayer requests.
- Pictures — Put pictures on your wall or in your Bible to help focus you as you pray for others. (Ephesians 6:18)
- Color — "Praying in Color", by Sybil MacBeth is a tool that has helped some to bring focus to their prayer time.

Whatever you do, keep an attitude of prayer in all you do and carve out time to pray alone with God. Both are essential to the discipline of prayer.

...PROCLAIM THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL...

DAVID WILSON

THE END OF THE DISCUSSION ON THE ARMOR OF GOD TURNS OUR ATTENTION TO PAUL'S DESIRE TO BE FAITHFUL THE WORK THAT GOD HAD CALLED HIM TO. He does not list the pieces of the armor to tell others what to do but asks them to pray that he would be faithful in the execution of his assignment. His prayer now focuses on the temptation he surely faced to be quiet and alleviate the pain of his suffering in prison.

He wants them to pray for the words to speak and for the boldness to speak them. St. Francis of Assisi is often mis-quoted as suggesting that we preach the gospel with our lives and, if necessary using words. The quote is inaccurate, but the idea is unbiblical. Let's be sure we are praying for the right words to say in our evangelism and for boldness to actually say them. Paul asked us in Romans 10:14 how people could believe in a message they've never heard from anyone. Let's be the one to tell them the most important message they will ever hear.

...PROCLAIM THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL...

DAVID WILSON

WHY DOES PAUL CALL THE GOSPEL A MYSTERY? It's what he talks about in Romans 11. When he describes the inclusion of Gentiles in the grand scheme of the plan of God, it is mysterious to Jewish believers in the Messiah. When he talks about hardening a group of people so that another group of people will have opportunity to become a part of the people of God, it is mysterious. Any time we contemplate the sovereignty of God in redeeming a people for his own name throughout all of history, we confess that it is mysterious!

What is not mysterious is the content of the gospel. Jesus, the second person of the trinity came to earth, took on human flesh, lived the life we should have lived (in complete obedience to the law), died the death we should have died (carrying the weight of our sin) and rose again on the third day conquering death and making it possible for God to justify sinners through repentance and faith. It's actually mysteriously simple. I hope you are thankful for it today and I hope you are thinking of someone you want to share it with.

...PREACHING THIS MESSAGE AS GOD'S AMBASSADOR..

ELAINA MURO

ONE OF MY FAVORITE SHOWS ON NETFLIX IS "THE CROWN", WHICH IS ALL ABOUT THE SOVEREIGN OF ENGLAND, QUEEN ELIZABETH II. I love getting a glimpse into the life of Royalty! In today's passage we see that Paul has charged us to be Christ's ambassadors. An ambassador is an official who is chosen to represent a foreign sovereign, providing a link between his host country and the country he represents. Ambassadors work to build relations and they are given authority to speak on behalf of the one who sent him.

Isn't it so good to know this world is not our home? We are representatives of the Kingdom of Heaven! That means that even though we are in this world, we are not *of this world* and should live accordingly, representing Christ.

We must keep our eyes fixed on the home that awaits us, even if we are imprisoned and abused by our host country as Paul was. Ambassadors must also spread His message: that everyone is welcome to have such a relationship with God. To "declare it boldly!" Let us represent our Lord with all the authority and dignity bestowed on us!

...THAT I
MAY DECLARE
IT BOLDLY...

JANELLE FRICKE

LOOK CLOSELY AT HOW PAUL IDENTIFIES HIMSELF – AS AN AMBASSADOR. What is an ambassador? One who acts as a representative, of an idea or that of a king or leader to others, often sent to a foreign country. What is Paul representing? Jesus: His person and work. Paul is also asking for prayer that he may be bold (fearless) in speaking. As believers in Jesus, we share in this same identity. May we be clear about our identity and who we are representing. We, too, are ambassadors of Jesus and the saving power of the Gospel to those who do not yet know their need for a Savior. We represent our King Jesus as we tell others about Him. May we join in Paul's prayer for boldness – to share the Gospel with those around us as we live as foreigners in this world, waiting to join Jesus in our final home.

THE WHOLE
ARMOR OF GOD

EPHESIANS 6:10–20

¹⁰FINALLY, BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN THE STRENGTH OF HIS MIGHT. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ 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 firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.