

PASSAGE

- 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.
- 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.
- 19 Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel,
- 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

INTRODUCTION

The imagery of war and armor is common in the NT. For example, consider 1 Timothy 1:18-19; 6:12 and 2 Corinthians 10:4. Other examples are Romans 13:12 and 1 Thessalonians 5:8. Most of the battle imagery of the NT comes from the OT. For example, see Isaiah 59:17. Isaiah 11:5 says of the Messiah, “**Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.**” Paul therefore uses traditional imagery to make several points: 1) Christians are in a real battle against spiritual forces; 2) These forces can be overcome, but only through spiritual weapons that have their effectiveness rooted in God; and 3) Prayer is essential for the appropriation of spiritual armor.

COMMENTARY

Verse 10. “**Be strong in the Lord**” literally means “**find your strength in the Lord.**” This empowerment is possible because of the resources that the Lord supplies. God’s mighty power mentioned here is the same power (i.e., the Holy Spirit) that raised Jesus Christ from the dead (Ephesians 1:19-20). Ephesians 6:10 contains 3 Greek words for power—*endynamoō* based on *dynamis* (power), *kratos* (power or strength), and *ischys* (mighty—*actually a noun*). These words are synonyms, and it is not always possible to distinguish between them.

Verse 11. This verse instructs the reader how to “**be strong in the Lord.**” The believer is to “**put on the full armor of God.**” To attempt to stand against the enemy in one’s natural strength is to invite destruction into one’s life. Recall the words of James 4:7. The devil can be resisted and withstood when the believer has submitted himself/herself to God. “Full armor” reminds us that God’s weapons are adequate to meet all the challenges (*methodeia* = schemes, cunning subtlety, scheming cleverness, wiles, stratagems) of the devil. Some of these schemes can be found in Ephesians 4.

Verse 12. In addition to the devil, a host of other evil forces face believers: rulers (*archōn*), authorities (*exousia*), and powers (*kosmokrator*) of this dark world. Although Ephesians 1:21 describes these forces as subject to the ultimate authority of Jesus Christ, they still seek to assert their influence in the world.

Verse 13. Because the spiritual battle is a real one, it is imperative that believers put on the full armor of God. The military metaphor serves to demonstrate the immediacy of the battle.

“Stand against” (*antistēnai*) in verse 11 means to aggressively hold back.

“Struggle” in verse 12 means to engage in one-to-one combat.

“Stand” in verse 13 means to remain standing after a battle.

“Stand” in verse 14 means to stand ready for the next battle.

Verse 14. Paul now begins a discussion of the individual pieces of armor. The precise correspondence of literal armor to spiritual equipment is not important (E.g., see Isaiah 11:5 and 1 Thessalonians 5:8). What is important is the totality of the equipment. The first two pieces of armor deal with Christian character:

Belt of Truth—Truth (*alētheia*) refers to genuineness, faithfulness, reliability, and integrity.

Breastplate of righteousness—Righteousness (*dikaiosynē*) refers to right action or conduct. When we live holy lives, we obey the words of Ephesians 4:27, “**and do not give the devil a foothold.**”

Verse 15. The believer’s readiness or preparedness for combat and for standing in battle is bestowed by the **Gospel of peace**. The reference is from Isaiah 52:7. See also Nahum 1:15 and Romans 10:15.

Verse 16. The shield of faith. —Faith (*pistis*) is complete reliance upon and trust in God. It has less to do with the belief for a particular outcome than it has to do with implicit trust in God himself.

Verse 17. Two more pieces of armor are described.

The helmet of salvation—God wears the helmet in Isaiah 59:17, so in such a context, the helmet would be the helmet of victory. In Ephesians, salvation (*soterion*) is accomplished in Christ (Ephesians 2:5, 8), so salvation is available for the protection of believers. See also 1 Thessalonians 5:8. Our assurance of salvation protects us against the devil’s lies about our position in Christ. Battles related to our assurance of salvation take place in the mind.

The sword of the Spirit—The Word (*rhema*) of God is given as the only offensive weapon (it’s actually both offensive and defensive).

Verses 18-20. The putting on and utilization of the armor require prayer. According to these verses, prayer should be unceasing (also, 1 Thessalonians 5:17), directed by the Holy Spirit (also, Romans 8:26), intense (also, James 5:16b), and intercessory (also, Colossians 1:3). Paul then makes his needs known, expressing his belief that prayer makes the preaching of the Gospel effective.

QUESTIONS

1. How does being individuals of character protect us from the wiles of the devil?
2. What is faith? Why is it important?
3. How do we protect our minds from the attacks of Satan?
4. Specifically, how do you "put on" the armor of God in your daily life? When do you do it?
5. What does it mean to pray in the Spirit?
6. How “real” has the spiritual battle been to you? What types of “flaming arrows” has the enemy directed toward you? How did you obtain victory?