

“The Full Armor of God”

Ephesians 6:10-24

by Pastor Tim Dodson
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Ephesians 6:10-24 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 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. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— 19 and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. 21 But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you; 22 whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and that he may comfort your hearts. 23 Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

6:10

Clearly, Paul...after all that he has confronted these church believers concerning, is now calling on them...and us, to man-up...to be strong. Such a simply premise and yet one so readily dismissed in wider Christianity today. We just can't let go of the idea that Christianity should be easy and peaceful. Even a cursory review of scripture would see this call as one of the foundational aspects of successful living in Christ. When this “stone” is removed from our spiritual foundation, a cascade begins almost immediately.

We must see however that this matter is not a rendition of the “little engine that could.” Our strength is not merely an issue of own power and tenacity. That is a fatal mistake! This is the leaning in on **His** strength and power running through us. However, it is also not a matter of sitting back and waiting for our crown to arrive via amazon delivery. The strength is His, yet it is ours to ‘put on.’ We must choose to act. This is our ‘grace driven effort.’

Every true and successful child of God soon learns that the Christian life is a war. The army of Satan is committed to hinder and obstruct the work of Christ and to knock the individual soldier out of the field of



combat. Moreover, the more effective a believer is for the Lord, the greater the focused attacks of the enemy: the devil does not waste his ammunition on nominal Christians. No doubt that is why many cling to that position and seek to stay in the shallow end of the pool.

You might be thinking, "That doesn't seem right at all! I thought that when I became a Christian, Jesus would set me free from the presence of Satan so that he could no longer get to me! I thought that conversion would relieve me of the battles of this world, not thrust me deeper into the conflict!" If that is your concept of the Christian life, someone misled you! In truth, when you become a Christian the war really begins!

"Be strong." In its original we find the Greek word "dunamis." It refers to an inherent strength residing in a thing by virtue of its nature. The best spiritual example of this inherent power is the "gospel" which has the mysterious, inherent, omnipotent power of God that brings about the salvation of a lost sinner who hears and receives this truth. Success in this walk of strength is simply a matter of this dunamis appropriation.

We need to understand three things... First, *it is* a war. However, *two*, the power to win is available. Yet there is a third aspect; *you have to appropriate that power*. You can choose to be impotent and fruitless, even though available to you is the power to do beyond what you can even ask or think (Eph. 3:20). I suppose it is possible to live out your life in a lethargic, indifferent, and cold manner... drifting in and out of church. But if you choose to live that way, you will certainly forfeit the blessing God has for you in this life. And of course you will fail to glorify God to the extent that you should. You can turn your back on all that available power, blunt the energy of the Spirit of God, and say no to the incomprehensible work that God wants to do through you if you so choose. Certainly a generation of Israel did it. They had the evidences and the promises of God right before them and they chose to remain in the wandering wilderness instead of crossing over the river Jordan into the promised land. And they did this because of one thing: *fear*.

You cannot empower yourself for this spiritual struggle. You must forfeit your life. You have to embrace this crucial aspect of salvation and redemption: you must surrender yourself to the Spirit and let God have control. He is the source of all spiritual power. He is the key to a successful life run. But the fact that we cast everything upon God does not give the soldier a free pass...the ability to sit back and to do nothing. We must engage the enemy. Cromwell's advice to his troops was "*Trust in God, ...and keep your powder dry.*"

Spiritual battles are not natural to this world and thus require supernatural spiritual intervention. It is a continual and dynamic process that is synonymous with being filled with and controlled by the Spirit (note Eph 5:18). It means continually "walking in the Spirit (note Gal 5:16) so that we will not fulfill the desires of the flesh." The inexplicable result is supernatural strength for a supernatural life.

6:11

A couple of things jump out at us immediately in this verse: One; we are responsible for 'putting on' this stuff. And second, this 'stuff' is **God's** stuff. We need to understand that what we need cannot be acquired from within, or even outside, of our natural selves or mustered up under our own strength. It does however encompass the step of Lordship that so many of us have yet to take. It does mean having to "cross that river." Truth is, many of us haven't "suited up" with the weapons of the Spirit of God, because the fact is, we really have no intention of going to war. We're simply too busy with our own plans to get overtly involved in God's!

But know this today, the war is going to come whether we attempt to stand down or not. Once Israel's next generation made up their mind that they were not going to live their lives walking around in circles, there was still 2 and ½ tribes that decided they wanted to stay on the wilderness side of the river and they were the first to fall when the enemy came knocking.

We are herein clearly called to “put on” this armor of God so we can “stand.” So it goes without saying... without it, *we won't*. We *won't* stand. We'll fall. This will therefore explain why so many of us are spending our Christian lives on our faces.

Moreover, we are called to put *all* the armor on. All of it. It won't matter if we put on a helmet, and then step out in shorts and a t-shirt. We're finished. It takes the full armor to be protected, because whatever area we leave unprotected is sure to be where Satan attacks. It doesn't take long to discover that truth! God expects us to put the whole armor on... nothing lacking. However, there IS one apparent absence; there is no covering herein for our backs. Perhaps that's because we are expected to always face our enemy?

Our “standing” is a military term meaning to hold one's position. Holding our ground. Not giving an inch to the enemy. In chapter 4, verse 14 of this letter, Paul has already told us that we “*should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting...*” The “wiles” of the devil, is the “schemes” of Satan. We must make no mistake. Our enemy is methodical. He literally *schemes* as to how he can bring you down.

How flippant we can be on this issue! Satan destroys by deceiving, by lying, by distorting, by counterfeiting, by masquerading, by clouding human minds with illusion and fantasy. All of that works because we are not watching. Ironically, we so often do not believe that Satan's army is really focused on us individually. We think it is a broad carpet bombing approach, when in fact he is a great fan of the sniper approach. It all comes together because he understand us often more than we understand ourselves. All he needs to pull this off, is our human tendency toward pride and rebellion. If he can't take your soul, he will take your joy, your peace, and he'll steal all of your fruit...

6:12

Note that this verse speaks in the “present tense.” What that means is that this “battle”...this “wrestling” we endure, is *daily and constant*. If we are convinced that occasionally we have to suit up for war but then we can let our guard down and ‘go on leave,’ we will be surprised when the enemy attacks when we least expect him.

We are apt to think that the battles we wage are against people. After all, doesn't it seem that way? It seems like our greatest pains always comes from other people one way or another. But Paul says that our war comes from deeper than that. From places far more nebulous and insidious. That is, of course, harder to get our minds around. In this verse Paul ‘pulls back the curtain’ a little to give us just a glimpse of what we are facing. We must remember, that behind every evil is the unseen power that motivates it. Thus we must be sure we are fighting the right enemy.

The wording here is critical if not inspirational. The word Paul uses is ‘wrestle.’ That conjures up pictures of hand-to-hand combat. Not far away indiscriminate bombs dropped on unseen enemies, but up close and personal. One on one. That's how the enemy is coming for you. Right up in your face and intimate. It can seem to be the loneliest place on earth in those moments. That's just one of the reasons we all need the church body and the unity of honest fellowship.

There are many folks who at this point start shouting at the devil, casting out demons, and ‘binding’ spirits. But let's remember who the general is, and the power that brings it all together, which is the Holy Spirit of God. Make sure you're fighting the right enemy, and make sure you're using the right weapons, and always know who is supplying them.

6:13

Because of the qualities...the “attributes” of our enemy, we can ill afford to let our guard down. Again, we are reminded that it is the armor *of God*. It’s not ours. We just get to borrow it. He loans us such an arsenal because He wants us to be able to stand. A person doesn’t bring his own gun to a war...he is issued one.

Know this. Jesus could bind Satan with merely a word. We read of how He did *just that* in the gospels. If He did, we would no longer have to deal with all of this warfare. Why doesn’t He then? Why if He is so powerful doesn’t He simply free us from the battles we fight? Because He actually wants us to *choose* to walk with Him, not to do so out of default or without care. And let’s face the truth...our enemy is free amongst us because mankind wanted Him free. If we don’t want to be a part of him now, we must fight. I am constantly reminded just how blind we are to this reality. I watch believers make blatant decisions to place their own desires and aspects of the world before Christ and then wonder why their life is in such disharmony. We have to wake up to the reality that Satan is indeed out to get you.

6:14

God’s armor begins with truth. Ironically, we tend to move right by this one as if it is a no-brainer. Yet for many of us, our battle is lost right out of the gate because we are unwilling to acknowledge the facts...unwilling to face reality. This *one lack* has taken scores of individuals out of this fellowship! Warren Wiersbe writes that...*Unless we are motivated and directed by truth, we will be defeated by the enemy. If we permit any deception to enter our lives, we have weakened our position and cannot fight the battle victoriously. The girdle of truth is not an offensive weapon; it is for protection. When the believer has what I call “an attitude of truth” in his life, this protects him from Satan’s attacks. It does not prevent these attacks; it keeps the believer from being harmed by them.* (Wiersbe, W: Strategy of Satan: How to Detect and Defeat Him)

It is critical that you all know what you believe, but that is not enough. You must know *why you believe it*. Not because I say so, or some other pastor or religious leader. But because the Bible says so, and if you are willing to look...so does science, history, and the evidence of changed lives. You do not have to check your brain at the door to be a Christian, and we do not hide our head in the sand. You want to debate the evidence? Bring it on! The truth is on our side. That’s why they want you to shut up Christian! Because they do not have the answers to argue your facts. Stand on the truth, and never move from it.

The Breastplate of righteousness. It’s been said that “*When a man is clothed in practical righteousness, he is impregnable. Words are no defense against accusation, but a good life is.*” If our conscience is void of offense toward God and man, the devil has nothing to shoot at. David put on the breastplate of righteousness in Psalm 7:3–5. The Lord Jesus wore it at all times (Isa. 59:17).

This is not an issue of grace, but a matter of holiness. We cannot excuse the latter for the sake of the former! God still expects us to seek to be like Him. Not just seek it, but to actually do it. Our lives and decisions are to be different than those of the world. Never forget that. That is going to actually take effort on our part, because again, such does not come naturally.

6:15

The soldier must have his “*feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.*” This suggests a readiness to go out with the good news of peace, and therefore an actual incursion ...if not *invasion*, into enemy territory. Your feet are to carry you, and in this case, to *carry you into*, battle. We must get over this idea that we can be a faithful Christian and have God and kingdom take a backseat to our personal pursuits! 2Timothy 2:4 “*Soldiers don’t get tied up in the affairs of civilian life, for then they cannot please the officer who enlisted them.*”

We must stop this ruse that we can negotiate with God...on what is His and what is ours. It's *all* His! Our money, our time, our families, and our careers. That's Christianity as the Bible paints it. If we don't have time for God and kingdom pursuits, or seek to control our time and resources, then we need to change our lives. Again, it will be the truth that will take you out, even if you fail to acknowledge it.

6:16

The scripture tells us that without faith, it is "impossible to please God." Not *unlikely*, but *impossible*. Paul knew no doubt of the Roman soldiers' practice of corporately raising their shields in a roof of protection from the hail of fire-tipped arrows that their enemies would rain down upon them. Certainly that aspect reminds us again that we don't need to do this alone. That's why we are clearly called to the fellowship of community.

When the enemy shoots at us, we must stand behind our faith...our trust in God's care and our standing with Him. Faith involves the understanding that standing beside Christ in all priority, you are in the right. We need to stand strong in that fact. We must have confidence in God and His Words. Sometimes it's scary and perhaps humanly seems crazy. But it is at those moments that we truly see the miraculous of God...

6:17

As a motorcycle rider, I know how important your helmet is. In Christ, it is the very guarantee of our salvation standing that protects our heads, and there is nothing worse than a head injury! If we are in constant question whether we are still saved, we will doubt everything and run for our lives in battle. If we are sure...based on the facts and our spiritual fruit, we will have boldness in battle and the confidence in conflict.

The 'Sword of the Spirit', I would hope, would go without saying. This is the one and only truly offensive weapon offered...the **Word of God**. It is not an issue of argument or other methods of worldly effort. It is the Bible, *period*. It is always the Bible. If we sacrifice this weapon for culture, science, theories, traditions, or commands of men, defeat is ultimately assured. We cannot present a 'seeker-friendly' picture of the gospel of our God. Tell the truth. Paint the picture as presented in God's Word. For the power of the simple gospel is astonishing. And remember, if we ever set down the Bible, we are effectively unarmed.

6:18

The NLT says "*Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.*" Never underestimate just how powerful prayer is. What is prayer? Both talk *and* listening...literally "communication with God." This is where we get our commanders' orders...directions from the top.

He is the one who knows all things and can do all things. We must be willing to obey his orders...whether we understand or agree. We are soldiers. It is ours to simply obey. Can you imagine a soldier standing in the field of battle while arguing with his captain about the battle plans and methods? Nothing causes more accidents and defeat on the field of battle than when communication gets broke off. We have to know what we are to do...and the general has the answers. We must be attentive... watchful ...discerning. Once again, that requires an honesty with yourself. There is no greater or more destructive lie than one we tell ourselves.

6:19-20

Paul finishes now with a humble request. He asks the gang in Ephesus to keep him in prayer. Not just for general health and care...but rather that he would know what to say, when to say it, and the boldness to let 'er rip. Paul had one in objective in life...to stand strong on the field of battle!

Paul didn't count this world as home. For him, he was just visiting, albeit in an 'official capacity.' He considered himself an ambassador. A representative of one country to another. He considered this his calling, even though he was 'in chains,' ...an apparent prisoner of the powers that be. It didn't matter to Paul. There wasn't a "please pray that I get out of here," but rather a "please pray that I can share the gospel with these guys."

6:21-24

Paul wraps it all up with kudos to this brother Tychicus... who elsewhere in scripture gives us a clear picture that this was a true brother who hung in there with Paul through thick and thin. These kind of friends are few and far between. I certainly have come to know that as fact.

Now maybe all of this today simply overwhelms you ...the idea of trying to figure out how to put on all this armor a piece at a time. The reality is a lot simpler: Just "put on Jesus."

He is the Truth (John 14:6).

He is our Breastplate of Righteousness (Romans 13:14).

He guides our feet in peace (Luke 1:79).

He is our Shield of Faith (Hebrews 12:2).

He is the Captain of our Salvation (Hebrews 2:10).

He is the Word Made Flesh (John 1:14).

Let me tell you a great spiritual truth. "God will never call you to do something that you yourself can do." He will only call you to do what you can't do without Him. And Paul is saying, '*I've learned that. I can do nothing in and of myself, but I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*' Therein lies the secret of contentment. It may take you years to work that truth deep down into your bones so that it is your default setting, but that is the secret of contentment. The battle is of course getting it so far into the heart that it dominates all of your circumstances, however big, however real, however heart-breaking they are. The secret of contentment is a deep, personal, doctrinal, experiential embrace of God's providence.

Contentment expresses itself in constant gratitude to God. God-glorifying gratefulness flows from the heart of the one who is content. Show me a content person in gospel contentment, and I'll show you a person who's grateful to God. Put them in the worst circumstance of life, they'll still praise God. Why? Because He has supplied all their needs and they know it. And they know that nobody else in the world can take away what He has supplied. The world can take everything else away, but they cannot take what He has supplied. And so they're grateful.

Are you?