

Introduction:

Listen to about anyone explain Paul's letter to the Ephesians and they will talk about its two sections. Chapters 1-3 are all about what God through Jesus Christ has done, blessing us (chapter 1), saving and unifying both Jews and Gentiles by His grace (chapter 2), filling us with Himself, His Son, and His Spirit (chapter 3). Chapter 4-6 then provides the "so what." That is, the first half of the book lays a foundation of God's work on our behalf and the last half tells Christians what we are supposed to do with it. Simply put, chapters 1-3 give the theological "why" of Christian conduct and chapters 4-6 give the practical "what." In those last three chapters, Paul directs us to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (4:1), "no longer walk as the Gentiles do" (4:17), "put off the old self...put on the new self" (4:22, 24), "be imitators of God...and walk in love" (5:1-2), "look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise" (5:15). He even gives some specific examples of how this teaching should impact daily life giving a household code for husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and slaves (5:22-6:9).

All of this should really be simple. It should almost be like plug and play. Here is the situation, plug in the instruction, follow directions, keep growing. The problem is there is a huge wrench in the works. There is someone actively working against us. There is an enemy actively opposing us, tempting us, attacking us. And his schemes are cunning, crafty, and powerful. He knows how to wage his war. And we are his targets. Therefore, Paul's final exhortation in Ephesians is, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might" (6:10). He then explains the armor of God. The point is that in the battle we are facing, we can't win alone. We need to have God's strength for the battle. So, if we want to be victorious, we've got to learn how to be strong in the Lord's might. We have to be armed for victory. Let's examine this passage to see how we can be armed for the victory.

Discussion:

I. The enemy

- A. This armory matters when we recognize who the enemy is. The enemy is the devil himself. According to **I Peter 5:8**, he is a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. He was the enemy from the beginning who brought the fall of mankind into sin through Adam and Eve. He has demonstrated that he doesn't care who you are, he'll attack. He even attacked Jesus (**Matthew 4:1-11**).
- B. Paul goes on to speak of our enemy in more descriptive terms: rulers, authorities, cosmic powers of this present darkness, spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. This is intense. We are fighting enemies we cannot defeat. We need strength, we need help, we need equipment that will give us victory.

II. It is God's armor

- A. Consider **Isaiah 59:17**. In that passage, the Scripture is describing the Lord and the armor He wears to accomplish the salvation and deliverance of His people. Notice the similarity of the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation. Understand what this means for **Ephesians 6:11**. Paul is not encouraging us to put on armor that God gives us; he is asking us to put on the armor that is God's.
- B. God's armor has led Him to victory, it will do the same for us. In fact, back up to **Ephesians 1:19-21**. This armor is about being strengthened in the strength of God's might. Notice it was the strength of God's might working in Jesus that raised Him up and set Him above every rule, authority, power, and dominion. The strength of God's might has already defeated the enemies we face. His armor led Him to that victory; it will do the same for us if we will simply put it on.

III. The purpose of the armor

- A. The purpose of the armor is so we will stand against the devil's schemes (6:11), so that we will stand in the evil day (6:13). Back in **Ephesians 5:15-16**, Paul explained that we need to walk in wisdom because the days are evil. I believe this hearkens back to **Ecclesiastes 9:11-12**. We have no idea what will happen each day. We need to be prepared at all times because even time and chance can work against us. We need to be so armed that we can stand even when evil befalls us suddenly and unexpectedly.
- B. But notice the goal is to stand. This is opposed to falling or retreating. God wants to arm us so we can stand up under the attack of the enemy instead of being knocked down. Further, I've heard it said that Roman

armor had a front-facing shield, a breastplate, and a helmet, but it had no armor on the back. The most vulnerable part of the Roman soldier was his back. He didn't want to turn his back on his enemy as he would in retreat. In the same way, while standing up to a temptation often means getting away from the temptation (consider Joseph and Potiphar's wife—**Genesis 39:12**), the point is that we don't retreat from the battlefield, we don't cave in, we stand up and fight. We stand firm against the attacks of the enemy.

IV. The armor

A. The belt of truth

1. Girding up one's loins had to do with gathering the loose tunic the Romans wore so it would not get in the way of the legs while trying to move around on the battlefield. They would be gathered together and held in place either by wrapping them up and tucking them in at the waist or by a belt itself.
2. According to **Ephesians 1:13-14**, we were sealed by the Holy Spirit when we heard and believed the truth. In **Ephesians 4:17-21**, it is the truth that will cut through ignorance and hard-heartedness, helping us put off the old self and put on the new. Of course, many of us remember **John 8:32**, the truth will set us free. According to **John 8:44**, our enemy, the devil is a liar. His schemes are wrapped up in lies. It simply makes sense that the proper defense is truth.

B. The breastplate of righteousness

1. As God Himself donned the breastplate of righteousness (**Isaiah 59:17**), we too must put it on. Righteousness protects the heart as a breastplate. We know we must guard our heart because from it flow the springs of life (**Proverbs 4:23**), and from it flow the evil thoughts and sinful actions some pursue (**Matthew 15:18-19**). According to **Ephesians 4:24**, the new self is one created by God in His likeness in righteousness and holiness.
2. **Romans 6:9-23** helps us here. Righteousness benefits us and protects our heart because when we allow ourselves to be slaves of righteousness, it sets us free regarding sin. Righteousness leads to sanctification. We need to hunger and thirst for righteousness, because then we will be satisfied (**Matthew 5:6**). Of course, we need to understand that our righteousness will be accomplished as we increase our faith in Jesus (**Romans 9:30-31; Philippians 3:9-11**).

C. Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace

1. When I was a child, my dad would get so frustrated if I took off my shoes during the day. I know that sounds odd today, now that everyone under the sun wants you to keep your shoes off their carpet. But it would make him so upset because to him, the epitome of being prepared and ready to do what needed to be done or go where you needed to go was having your shoes on. It would drive him nuts to say, "Hey Edwin, take out the trash," and hear, "Hold on, let me find my shoes." I would get the, "Son, you need to be ready to work" lecture, "And you can't be ready to work if you don't have your shoes on." I know the feeling today because it is like my kids have lived on to get revenge for my dad. I don't know how many times I'll tell the kids, "Get ready for _____, we have to leave in five minutes." Five minutes go by and I say, "Get in the car." Then they start looking for their shoes. Lucky for them, I have a ready-made lecture memorized by heart from years of hearing it myself.
2. But that is exactly the picture Paul is presenting. A soldier didn't want to be caught in a surprise attack without his shoes on. It will be almost impossible to stand up under attack if every footstep was a danger because your feet aren't protected. I'm told that the shoes of Roman soldiers often had little cleats on them that gave traction and strength of maneuverability and made it harder to step backwards. Paul says we need to get prepared for the battle through the gospel of peace. It is similar to **1 Peter 3:15** encouraging us all to be prepared to give a defense of our hope.
3. Certainly this ties into Paul's claim in **Romans 10:15** that the feet of those who proclaim the gospel are beautiful. This is the gospel of peace because it ties to what Paul taught earlier about the preaching of Christ in **Ephesians 2:14-22**. Jesus preached peace to the Jews and the Gentiles. He preached a gospel that broke down the dividing wall of hostility between the Jews and the Gentiles and made the two into one body. **Ephesians 3:6-7** drives this home as well. This is especially poignant to Paul's Gentile audience because it was this gospel of peace that gave them peace with God even though formerly they had been alienated and without hope. Knowing the gospel is for us as well makes us prepared for battle. It lets us know that the lies of Satan trying to convince us we can't be saved and might as well give up are simply not true.

D. Shield of faith

1. The Roman shield during the first century was a wonderful design that really gave the Roman soldier an advantage in battle. It was a curved rectangle that covered most of the body. The soldier could duck down

behind his shield to be protected from the arrows of his enemy. That is the aspect of this shield that Paul highlights. We need to carry our faith like a shield.

2. Faith protects us as a Roman shield from the fiery darts of the devil. Faith grants us access to God through Jesus Christ (**Ephesians 3:11-12**; see also **Romans 5:2**). Faith allows Christ to dwell in our hearts (**Ephesians 3:17**). **I Peter 1:5** explains that God actually guards us by our faith, protecting us for an eternal salvation. Our conviction that God's way works is what will help us ignore the way Satan tries to direct us. As we increase our faith in God's way, we'll ignore Satan's way.
3. One interesting aspect of the Roman shield was the use an entire formation of soldiers would make of them. When the enemy was shooting a volley of arrows at a Roman formation, the front line would scoot together, placing their shields next to each other, those on the sides of the formation would do the same. Those in the interior would lift their shields to form a kind of roof. This would keep them very protected as a group from the arrows of the enemy. I think that is very interesting considering **Ephesians 4:12-14**. Paul explains that the entire congregation needed to be developing a unity of the faith and knowledge of Jesus that would protect them from the deceitful schemes of every wind of doctrine. This aspect of the armor demonstrates that none of us can win this battle alone. We need the "connecting" of our faith with those other soldiers around us.

E. Helmet of salvation

1. Again, God wears the helm of salvation according to **Isaiah 59:17**. We too must wear this part of His armor if we wish to be armed for victory. The helmet could save from a blow leveled at the head. The salvation we have from God protects our head. **Psalms 140:7** gives an interesting parallel to this as it describes God Himself as the strength of salvation who is our helmet protecting us in the battle.
2. However, at the same time, the helmet could also identify a soldier's place in the army. Centurions and officers would wear identifying headdress. In the same way, salvation on our heads defines us to our attacker. The plume we wear on our head marks us as one of the saved. This is somewhat like the mark God places on the foreheads of His servants in **Revelation 7:3; 9:4; 14:1; 22:4** in contrast with those who have the mark of the beast on their foreheads in **Revelation 20:4**.

F. Sword of the Spirit

1. This is the one part of the armor that Paul gives a straight out definition for. The sword of the Spirit, the offensive weapon is the Word of God. It is the very Word by which God cleanses His bride, the church, according to **Ephesians 5:26**.
2. How can we take the offensive when the enemy attacks? With the Word. As **Psalms 119:9** explains, we keep our way pure by the Word. Then we witness Jesus's defense against Satan in **Matthew 4:1-11**, how He uses the Word to thrust and parry Satan's attacks. Finally, there is the exception that proves the rule at the very beginning of time. Satan attacked Eve by denying God's Word (**Genesis 3:1-7**). She did not rely on God's actual Word, but allowed Satan's lies to sneak in under her guard allowing sin to enter the world. She and Adam both should have used the very simple Word of God to repel the serpent of old.

G. Praying in the Spirit

1. This is not necessarily part of the armor per se. Maybe we should view it more as the battle cry of the soldier entering the battlefield. But whether we want to see it as armor or not, we do need to recognize it is part of what we must do to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. If we aren't praying, we have gaps in our armor.
2. Further, Paul goes on to ask the Ephesians to not only pray for themselves but to pray for him and his work on the battlefield. Let's remember to pray for one another in this battle.

V. Putting on the armor

- A. It's one thing to talk about what the armor is. But how do we actually put it on. What must we actively do in order to wear this armor? Is this just something that is on us because we are Christians? Or do we need to pursue something to wear this armor? I believe the latter.
- B. There is something that connects each part of the armor—the Word of God. Yes, the Sword of the Spirit is specifically called the Word of God, but consider each of the other aspects of the armor.
 1. Belt of truth: **John 17:17**—"Your word is truth."
 2. Breastplate of righteousness: **II Timothy 3:16-17**—"All Scripture is...profitable...for training in righteousness."
 3. Shoes of readiness of the gospel of peace: **Ephesians 1:13**—"...when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation..."
 4. Shield of faith: **Romans 10:17**—"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."

5. Helmet of salvation: **II Timothy 3:15**—“...the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation...”
 6. The battle cry of prayer: **John 15:7**—“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”
- C. There is only one way to put on the armor of God: get into the Word of God. Every bit of the armor is tied back to God’s Word. God’s Word is our lifeline, not our homework. We must not think that somehow we earn our way to God by studying His Word enough. However, we must not think we will win the victory without the Word of God.
- D. Interestingly, please note that this passage about God’s armor (**Ephesians 6:10-20**) wraps up Paul’s practical section of this letter. It actually parallels with **Ephesians 3:14-21**, the passage that wraps up Paul’s theological portion of this letter. Both passages are talking about how to be strengthened by God. The theological section explains that we are strengthened by the Spirit’s work in our inner being. The practical section says we are strengthened by putting on God’s armor, all of which is accomplished by being in God’s Word. We should be unafraid to claim that the strength we have comes from the Spirit. At the same time, we should not take that to mean that we sit on our hands hoping for the Spirit to accomplish something supernatural. Instead, what we need to do is get into God’s Word. The Spirit may work in any way He wishes. But we can only submit ourselves to the Spirit by listening to His revealed Word and letting it fill us and clothe us.

Conclusion:

We are at war. We have an enemy actively acting to keep us from our victory. We may desire to walk worthy of the Lord and abandon our old worldly walk, putting off the old man and putting on the new, but our enemy is cunning, baffling, and powerful. He is targeting us and working hard to turn us from God. The only way to win is to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. We must put on His armor. And we can only do that one way—through His Word. That leaves us with a simple question, what are you doing with God’s Word? Are you letting it arm you? That is the only way to be armed for victory.