

Soldier Up!

Saints & Spiritual Warfare

Ephesians 6:10-17

Back in 2007 the Air Force realized it needed to get its non-combat personnel who were headed to Iraq and Afghanistan quickly up to combat readiness.

They developed a five-day crash course: Two days in the classroom - learning about body armor, chemical warfare protection suits, high-risk isolation scenarios and the like - and three days of field exercises.

"When we hand them an M4 or M16, they won't say, 'Which end do I point downrange?'" said Col. Scott Bethel.

The moment you become a Christian, you are thrust into a war zone. You most definitely need a crash course on spiritual warfare.

Any crash course in spiritual warfare would begin with the classic New Testament passage, Ephesians 6:10-17.

There are two separate tracks to follow in those verses:

1. Verse twelve describes our enemies, "the devil," "the wicked one," who commands "principalities... powers... the rulers of the darkness of this age... [the] spiritual hosts of wickedness."
2. The remaining verses describe our own equipping to fight our enemies.

We are in a time of war; fierce, spiritual war. Our greatest need is to understand our equipping, **right now**, because we are coming under attack. We can study our enemy in more detail later.

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

The very first thing I get from Ephesians six, in general, is that I must soldier up **every day** because I am in a constant conflict. I don't just put on armor when I'm in a trial, or when I am involved in some Christian service. I'm to be suited-up all the time.

I'm to be armored at home... at work... in school... on vacation... You get the idea.

“Finally” should be translated *from this point forward*. What point? Ideally, from the point at which you first become a Christian. You are born-again resulting in radical changes in your marriage and family, and at work. It's as if Jesus were in your home, at your job. You take a stand; the devil and his demons take note of it and the battle is on.

“From this point forward” can also be any point at which you decide to really commit yourself to the Lord and walk in the power of a Spirit-filled life.

“Be strong” is in a verb tense that means be continually strengthened. You are continually strengthened “in the Lord” as you put on the armor He has provided. The armor is the “power of His might.”

1. “Power” refers to the power that was revealed by the Lord when He was on the earth. By His death, resurrection, and ascension, He was victorious over the devil. In Colossians

you read that at the Cross Jesus "disarmed principalities and powers."

2. "Might" refers to the power that resides in the Lord in Heaven. In His Second Coming He will return to vanquish the devil.

In-between the Lord's victory in the past, and the vanquishing to come, you occupy enemy territory. You need to,

Ephesians 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

"Stand" is the important word in these verses - repeated four times.

1. "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes" (v11).
2. "Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground" (v13).
3. "and after you have done everything, to stand" (v. 13).
4. "Stand firm, then, with the belt of truth" (v14).

We use the phrase, "take a stand." It means we take a position in opposition to others; it means we resist their influence.

As Christians, by the very nature of being translated from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God, we take a stand against the devil. We've chosen sides - crossed over the line in the sand.

Eph 6:12 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.

Paul is not changing metaphors; he's not talking about an athletic event in a gymnasium. He's describing a fully armed soldier wrestling against his enemies. When a fully armed soldier is wrestling, he's involved in close-quarter, eyeball-to-eyeball, hand-to-hand combat. In this case you're the soldier and the enemy is supernatural. It's *mano-y-diabalos*.

As I said, we're going to skip over the devil and his minions and get right to your armor.

Paul was all too familiar with Roman soldiers. *He was probably being guarded by one while he was dictating the letter to the Ephesians.* He looked over and said, "I'm going to put you in the Bible."

Putting on the whole armor of God involves both what you *believe* and how you *behave*:

- The armor is given to me by God. Each piece involves something spiritual you *believe* He has given to you as a Christian.
- You must put on the armor. You must *behave* in a manner consistent with what you believe in order to hold your spiritual ground in.

Ephesians 6:13 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.

"In the evil day" is a description of the world ever since the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Every day is "evil." We're forced to take a stand.

Ephesians 6:14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth...

The soldier was “girded” with a leather belt underneath that held all the other equipment together. Your belt is “truth.” God’s Word is truth.

Think of Adam and Eve. Had they simply believed God’s Word was truth, they would have withstood the serpent’s lies.

I said the armor involves what you believe and how you behave. With regards to truth, most Christians believe the truth, as revealed by God in His Word. But we have a tendency to behave erratically. Case in point: Christians would agree sex outside of marriage is sin, but you’d never know it by their behavior.

Ephesians 6:14 ...having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

The “breastplate” covered both front and back protecting all the vital organs.

Your breastplate is “righteousness.” When you receive Jesus as your Savior, He takes your sin and gives you His righteousness. God declares you righteous because of what Jesus has done and you are saved for eternity.

How is God’s righteousness part of your armor? **It protects you to know that nothing can ever separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.** No matter how severe your supernatural struggle, Jesus will never, no never, leave you or forsake you.

Ephesians 6:15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

The Roman soldier wore sandals which had small nails in the soles. He was thus able to dig-in and hold his ground during an assault without losing his balance.

Your sandals are “the preparation of the gospel of peace.” You have peace *with* God and, as a result, can experience the peace *of* God. The peace of God guards your heart in the midst of the fiercest of struggles.

You are “prepared” to stand in any conflict because you have the “good news” that you are at peace with God.

Ephesians 6:16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

“Above all” doesn’t mean it is more important. The phrase should be translated, *in addition to these*.

The shield described here is the large, oblong shield that was able to defend the entire body from flaming arrows tipped with tar or pitch. When those arrows hit they would splash fire all over. The shield deflected these and allowed the soldier to hold his ground or advance.

Your shield is “faith.” God’s Word is *truth*; you have been declared *righteous*; you are at *peace* with God and can have the *peace* of God. You maintain this spiritual posture by faith.

Ephesians 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation...

We have some help interpreting this in another portion of Scripture. In First Thessalonians 5:8, Paul says to put on “for a helmet, the hope of salvation.”

The hope he is talking about is the sure hope of the coming of Jesus for you to **complete** your salvation. Your helmet is the blessed hope of the return of Jesus to complete the work He has begun in you.

Ephesians 6:17 ...and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

We've already said that "truth" is the Word of God. How is it that "the sword of the Spirit" is **also** the "word of God?" The word for "word" here is *rhema*.

Rhema is a precise, particular word from God's Word that is perfect for your particular warfare. It is "the sword of the Spirit" in the sense that the Holy Spirit brings a word from God's Word to you. Your sword is the *rhema* you need to stand your ground and to withstand.

This is the armor you're told to put on in order to take your stand for The Lord.

Here is something super-encouraging. **The Lord Himself trusted in, and trusts in, armor.**

Listen for the items of spiritual armor we've mentioned in these passages from the Old Testament prophet, Isaiah, describing Jesus in both His first and second comings:

Isa 11:4 But with **righteousness** He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.

Isa 11:5 Righteousness shall be the **belt** of His loins, And faithfulness the **belt** of His waist.

Isa 59:17 For He put on righteousness as a **breastplate**, And a **helmet** of salvation on His head; He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, And was clad with zeal as a cloak.

Isa 52:7 How beautiful upon the mountains Are the **feet** of him who brings good news, Who proclaims peace, Who brings glad tidings of good things, Who proclaims salvation, Who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

In Exodus 15:3 He said of Himself, "The Lord is a warrior; The Lord is His name." He fought the devil and his followers two thousand years ago; He will return to deal a death blow.

The armor **you** are to take up is Jesus-battle tested and true.