

## Tools Available to Withstand Injustice and Evil

Lesson for November 27, 2022

**Unit III:** We Are God's Artwork

**Scriptural Background:** Revelation 2:1-7; Acts 19; Ephesians 6:10-24

**Printed Text:** Ephesians 6:10-18

**Key verse:** *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.* (Ephesians 6:13, NIV)

### Word Study

At the beginning of World War II, France believed they had a solution to a potential German invasion. They built what was called the Maginot line. The Maginot line was a defensive line built in the 1930's that stretched for over 200 miles on the NE border of France. The strongest fortifications were along the German border.

It was state-of-the-art, built of thick concrete with living quarters, heavy guns, store houses and underground rail lines. There were 45 main underground forts, 97 smaller underground forts, 352 large guns that could rise out of the ground. They were connected by an underground railroad system and underground corridors. French soldiers enjoyed state-of-the-art living conditions. It was designed to hold off a German attack.

However, the Germans defeated the French by simply going around it through Belgium and through the Ardennes Forest, which the French considered impenetrable. The French were not prepared for the manner in which the Germans overcame this defensive line, simply by avoiding it.

In the end, the Maginot line was useless, and France surrendered. France fell because they underestimated their enemy and relied on the wrong weapons. They didn't anticipate the attack their enemy used. They thought they were protected but weren't.

As Christians we cannot be ill-prepared for the attack of Satan. We must be prepared in EVERY area by putting on the whole armor of God.

### Key Terms

1. **Armor** (verse 11) – defensive covering for the body; covering (as of metal) used in combat.
2. **Authorities** (verse 12) – persons in command; powers; influences; principalities.
3. **Empowered** (verse 10) – having the knowledge, confidence, means, or ability to do things or make decisions for oneself; filled with power; strengthened; made strong; “strong” (KJV).
4. **Stand** (verse 11) – to take up or maintain a specified position or posture; to make to stand; to set up.
5. **Strength** (verse 10) – power to resist force; dominion; power, “might” (KJV).

6. **Truth** (verse 14) – the body of real things, events, and facts; straightforwardness; sincerity; divine truth revealed to man.
7. **Withstand** (verse 13) – resist; to set or stand against; oppose; stand your ground.

## **Lesson Background**

On one of Paul's visits to Ephesus, he stayed two years and three months. Aquila and Priscilla helped Paul here at Ephesus. (In Revelation 1:11), we see that Ephesus was one of the seven churches mentioned. Ephesus was visited several times by Paul. He was very interested in Ephesus.

It is likely that the gospel was first brought to Ephesus by Priscilla and Aquila, an exceptionally gifted couple (see Acts 18:26), who were left there by Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:18-19). Located at the mouth of the Cayster River, on the east side of the Aegean Sea, the city of Ephesus was perhaps best known for its magnificent temple of Artemis, or Diana, one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world. It was also an important political, educational, and commercial center, ranking with Alexandria in Egypt, and Antioch of Pisidia, in southern Asia Minor.

The fledgling church begun by Priscilla and Aquila was later firmly established by Paul on his third missionary journey (Acts 19), and was pastored by him for some three years. After Paul left, Timothy pastored the congregation for perhaps a year and a half, primarily to counter the false teaching of a few influential men (such as Hymenaeus and Alexander), who were probably elders in the congregation there (1 Timothy 1:3, 20). Because of those men, the church at Ephesus was plagued by "myths and endless genealogies" (1 Timothy 1:4), and by such ascetic and unscriptural ideas as the forbidding of marriage and abstaining from certain foods (1 Timothy 4:3). Although those false teachers did not rightly understand Scripture, they propounded their ungodly interpretations with confidence (1 Timothy 1:7), which produced in the church harmful "speculation rather than ... the administration of God which is by faith" (1 Timothy 1:4). Thirty years or so later, Christ gave to the Apostle John a letter for this church indicating its people had left their first love for Him. (Revelation 2:1-7).

The first 3 chapters are theological, emphasizing New Testament doctrine, whereas the last 3 chapters are practical and focus on Christian behavior. Perhaps, above all, this is a letter of encouragement and admonition, written to remind believers of their immeasurable blessings in Jesus Christ; and not only to be thankful for those blessings, but also to live in a manner worthy of them. Despite, and partly even because of, a Christians' great blessings in Jesus Christ, he is sure to be tempted by Satan to self-satisfaction and complacency. It was for that reason that, in the last chapter, Paul reminds believers of the full and sufficient spiritual armor supplied to them through God's Word and by His Spirit (6:10-17), and of their need for vigilant and persistent prayer (6:18).

The final chapter begins with what might called an exhortation to "walk in familial harmony." Children are told to obey their parents, while fathers are instructed not to provoke their children to wrath but bring them up in the Lord's nurture and admonition. As many households in the first century A. D. contained servants, commands are also given on the duties of servants and their masters (1-9).

## Lesson In Depth

### I. Know Your Enemy (Ephesians 6:10-12)

**Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might:**

**Finally:** This comes at the end of the letter – a letter in which Paul has carefully established our place in Jesus, and then the basics of the Christian walk. This is his last section dealing with that walk. For Paul to write **finally** here means that he speaks in light of all he has previously said.

- In light of all that God has done for you.
- In light of the glorious standing you have as a child of God.
- In light of His great plan of the ages that God has made you part of.
- In light of the plan for Christian maturity and growth He gives to you.
- In light of the conduct God calls every believer to live.
- In light of the filling of the Spirit and our walk in the Spirit.
- In light of all this, *there is a battle to fight in the Christian life.*

**Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might:** Literally, Paul wrote *strengthen yourselves in the Lord*. He probably took the idea from 1 Samuel 30:6, where it is said that David *strengthened himself in the LORD his God*.

The detailed teaching of spiritual warfare in this passage presents two essential components. First, you must **be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might**. Then, you must **put on the whole armor of God**. The two are essential, and much teaching on Christian combat neglects the first. If you take a weak man who can barely stand and put the best armor on him he will still be an ineffective soldier. He will be easily beaten. So, equipping for Christian combat must *begin* with the principle, **be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might**.

Before a soldier is given a gun or shown how to fire a missile, he goes through *basic training*. One great purpose for basic training is to build up the recruit's physical strength. It is as if the army says, "Soldier, we are going to give you the best weapons and armor possible. But first we have to make sure that you are strong and that you can use what we give you."

**And in the power of His might:** This shows how to get this strength. This does not happen just by saying the words. It is not an incantation or a spell. You can't just walk around saying, "**be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might**" over and over and it will happen. Those kinds of mental games can accomplish something, but it certainly wasn't what Paul meant here.

**Might** is inherent power or force. A muscular man's big muscles display his might, even if he doesn't use them. It is the *reserve* of strength.

**Power** is the exercise of might. When the muscular man uses his might to bend an iron bar, he uses his power. It means that the reserve of strength is actually in operation.

God has vast reservoirs of **might** that can be realized as **power** in our Christian life. But His **might** does not work in me as I sit passively. His might works in me as I rely on it, and step out to do the work. I can rely on it and do no work. I can do work without relying on it. But both of these fall short. I must rely on His might *and then* do the work.

It is not "I do everything, and God does nothing." It is not "I do nothing, and God does everything." It is not "I do all I can and God helps with what I can't." Each of those approaches falls short. The key is for me to by faith rely on His **might** – and rely on it more and more – and then do the work.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones listed many ways in which he believes Christians *wasted* their strength. It was as if they had received some of the available **might** of God, but it simply leaked away like water in a bucket that is full of holes.

These are some of the things Lloyd-Jones thought sapped the strength of the Christian:

- Committing to too many spiritual works or things.
- Too much conversation.
- Arguments, debates, wrangling.
- Laziness.
- Too much time in the wrong company.
- Love of money and career.
- A desire for respectability and image.
- An unequal yoking with an unbeliever.
- A wrong attitude toward or doubting the Word of God.

The Christian who continually seeks to grow in his knowledge of and obedience to the Word and to serve the Lord more faithfully will not find ministry becoming easier. As the Lord gives mastery over certain temptations and weaknesses, Satan will attack elsewhere. Faithful witnessing, preaching, teaching, visiting and every other service for the Lord not only will bring victories but will also bring their own special difficulties and opposition.

A Christian who no longer has to struggle against the world, the flesh, and the devil is a Christian who has fallen either into sin or into complacency. A Christian who has no conflict is a Christian who has retreated from the front lines of service.

**Put on the whole armor of God:** The emphasis is on **the whole armor of God**. God gives the believer a full set of equipment, and He sends us out into battle with everything we need at our disposal.

This ancient Greek word for **armor** is used in only one other place in the New Testament. In Luke 11:21-22, Jesus speaks of the *strong man* who is *fully armed* but is stripped of *all his armor* when a *stronger* one comes and defeats him. We know that Jesus disarmed all principalities and powers (Colossians 2:15).

This armor is **of God** both in the sense that it is from Him, and in the sense that it *is His actual armor*. In the Old Testament, it is the LORD who wears the armor (Isaiah 59:17). He now shares that armor with us. Equipped with God's armor, no wonder we are *more than conquerors* (Romans 8:37).

**That you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil:** We express the strength we have in God by standing **against the wiles of the devil**. Wiles or schemes is a Greek word that carries the idea of cleverness, crafty methods, cunning, and deception. Satan's schemes are transmitted through the evil world system over which he rules, and are carried out by his demon hosts. "Wiles" is all inclusive, encompassing every sin, immoral practice, false theology, false religion, and worldly enticement. Satan's schemes against us come to nothing when we stand against them in the power of God.

**For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers:** Paul did not call the believer to *enter into* spiritual warfare. He simply announced it as a fact: **we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but** (we do wrestle) **against principalities** and so forth. Paul here reminds his readers that the Christian's struggle is not only against Satan himself but also against a host of his demon subordinates, a vast array of adversaries who, like the devil, are not flesh and blood. Our greatest enemy is not the world we see, corrupt and wicked as it is, but the world we cannot see.

**Wrestle:** Wrestle or struggle which is a term used of hand-to-hand combat. Struggling or wrestling features trickery and deception, like Satan and his hosts when they attack. Coping with deceptive temptation requires truth and righteousness. You *are in* a spiritual battle. If you are ignorant or ignore that fact, you probably aren't winning the battle.

**For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood:** The fact that our real battle is not against **flesh and blood** is forgotten by many Christians, who put all their efforts in that direction. Paul's idea here is much the same as in 2 Corinthians 10:3-4: *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.*

**Principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places:** Paul used a variety of terms to refer to our spiritual enemies. We should regard them as being on many different levels and of many different ranks, yet they all have one goal: to knock the Christian down from their place of standing.

Ephesians 6:11 tells us that all of our warfare is combating *the wiles of the devil*. At the end of the day, it is completely irrelevant if the particular opponent we face is a principality, a power, or a ruler of the darkness of this age. Collectively, they are all members of **spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places**. They are all part of a spiritual army that is organized and established into ranks and is under the headship of Satan who comes against us.

We learn more about these **principalities** and **powers** from other passages in the New Testament.

- Romans 8:38 tells us that **principalities** cannot keep us from God's love. Therefore, there is a *limit* to their power.
- Ephesians 1:20-21 tells us that Jesus is enthroned in heaven, far above all **principalities** and **powers**. Colossians 1:16 tells us that Jesus created **principalities** and **powers**. Colossians 2:10 tells us that Jesus is head over all principalities and power. Therefore, Jesus is not the *opposite* of Satan or principalities.
- Ephesians 3:10-11 tells us that the church makes known the wisdom of God to **principalities** and **powers**. 1 Corinthians 15:24 tells us that **principalities** and **powers** have an end; one day their purpose will be fulfilled and God will no longer let them work. Therefore, God has a *purpose* in allowing their work.
- Colossians 2:15 tells us that Jesus disarmed **principalities** and **powers** at the cross. Therefore, *our victory is rooted in what Jesus did*, not in what we do. It isn't that there is no doing on our part – but our doing is the *appropriation* and *application* of what Jesus did.

**Spiritual wickedness:** This possibly refers to the most depraved abomination, including such things as extreme perversions, occultism, and Satan worship. Paul's purpose is not to explain the details of the demonic hierarchy but to give us some idea of its sophistication and power. We are pitted against an incredibly evil and potent enemy. But our need is not to specifically recognize every feature of our adversary but to turn to God who is our powerful and trustworthy source of protection and victory.

In this life, we are in daily conflict with the devil and his army. Life is a battle ground. Dealing with demons in one's Christian life is not a matter of finding the technique to send them away, but of being committed to the spiritual means of grace that purifies the soul, so that there is no unclean place that demons could occupy or by which they might gain advantage. James gives the only formula for deliverance from the demons or the devil himself: "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). Preparation is necessary to fight any battle. Jesus fought the devil with the Word of God. Our strength is in the Lord and in His Word (Bible). We are to put on God's armor and report to Him, perfectly confident in the knowledge that "greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). The very "gates of Hades shall not overpower" Christ's church (Matthew 16:18).

## II. Use the Proper Tools (Ephesians 6:13-18)

**Wherefore take up the whole armor of God:** Paul introduced the idea of **the whole armor of God** back in Ephesians 6:11. In the following passage he details the specific items related to the armor of God. In this verse, he simply states what the main purpose of spiritual warfare and the armor of God is.

**Wherefore:** means because of this,” That is, because we face such a formidable foe, we must avail ourselves of God’s provision lest the enemy destroy our Christian witness and ministry.

**Take up the whole armor of God:** Paul again emphasized the necessity of the Christian’s appropriating God’s full spiritual armor by obedience in taking it up, or putting it on (verse 11). **That you may be able:** Without the strength of God and the protection of spiritual armor, it is impossible to stand against the attacks of spiritual enemies.

**That you may be able to withstand in the evil day:** The evil day” refers to the periodic demonic onslaughts and satanic assaults. “Having done all” includes both dressing oneself in God’s armor and resisting Satan. Having done all these be ready, for the Devil will attack again and again. Since the fall of man, every day has been evil, a condition that will persist until the Lord returns and establishes His own righteous kingdom on earth. This evil day is probably many different days. The battle sometimes stops for a day or two, but it starts up again when you least expect it. Our job is to be ready and then stand.

**And having done all, to stand:** This describes the purpose for the strength of God and the armor of God; what we are to use them for. Standing firm against the enemy without wavering or falling is the goal. God has given His people a call, a mission, a course to fulfill. Satan will do his best to stop it. When he attacks and intimidates, we are to **stand**. The soldier’s job is to stand and remain standing regardless of what the enemy sends your way. Our strength in this battle must come from within. Christ in us gives us the strength to stand firm in the battle. It is plain that this is Paul’s emphasis in Ephesians 6:11 and 6:13. We do the Lord’s work and stand against every hint of spiritual opposition.

God gives the Christian a glorious standing to maintain by faith and spiritual warfare:

- We stand in **grace** (Romans 5:2).
- We stand in the **gospel** (1 Corinthians 15:1).
- We stand in **courage** and **strength** (1 Corinthians 16:13).
- We stand in **faith** (2 Corinthians 1:24).
- We stand in Christian **liberty** (Galatians 5:1).
- We stand in Christian **unity** (Philippians 1:27).
- We stand in the **Lord** (Philippians 4:1).
- We should stand **perfect** and **complete** in the will of God (Colossians 4:12).

All in all, there is a lot indicated by that one word, **stand**.

- It means that we are going to be attacked.
- It means that we must not be frightened.
- It means that we must not droop or slouch; nor be uncertain or half-hearted in the fight (no self-pity is allowed).
- It means that we are at our position and alert.
- It means that we do not give even a thought to retreat.

We can only **stand** when we are equipped with the armor God has given us in Jesus Christ. Each aspect of this symbolic armor answers to a specific dynamic within the Christian life that enables us to stand against spiritual attack.

Paul wrote this while in the custody of Roman soldiers. It was easy for him to look at the equipment of his guards and see how God has equipped the believer.

The whole armor of God consists of six pieces. The first three pieces of armor, girdle, breastplate, and shoes/boots (verses 14-15) were worn continually on the battlefield. The last three, shield, helmet, and sword (verses 16-17), were kept ready for use when actual fighting began.

The order in which the pieces of armor are described is the order in which the soldier would normally put them on.

1. **Truth** (verse 14a), is symbolically represented as a belt which both protects our abdomen and gathers up our garments so that we can fight effectively. It is a knowledge of the truth of God's Word (4:21). The ancient soldiers' "loins" ("waist") were "girt about" with a leather belt which held most of the other pieces of his armor in place. Similarly, the other pieces of the Christian's armor depend on, and are held in place by, his spiritual "belt" or his knowledge of the "truth" of Scripture.

2. **The breastplate of righteousness** (verse 14b), may be read "the breastplate which is righteousness" provides essential protection for the most vital organs. This is not our own earned righteousness, not a feeling of righteousness, but a righteousness received by faith in Jesus. It gives us a general sense of confidence, an awareness of our standing and position. We can no sooner battle against spiritual enemies in our *own* righteousness than a soldier can effectively fight without his breastplate.

3. **Preparation of the gospel of peace** (verse 15), is represented as the protective shoes (or sandals) worn by Roman soldiers. No one can fight effectively or effectively go about his business without this equipment. This means "eagerness that comes from the gospel of peace." That is, as the Roman soldier wore special shoes called caligae on his feet, enabling him to advance against his enemy, so the Christian must have on his feet (possess), a sense of "eagerness" or "willingness" to advance against the devil and take the fight to him. Such "eagerness" to contend with Satan "comes from the gospel of peace." In this passage the gospel of peace refers to the good news that believers are at peace with God. The unsaved person is helpless, ungodly, sinful and an enemy of God (Romans 5:6-10). The saved person, on the other



hand, is reconciled to God through faith in His Son (verses 10-11). It is that confidence of divine support which allows the believer to stand firm, knowing that since he is at peace with God, God is his strength (see Romans 8:31, 37-39).

Our feet are secure in the good news of the gospel. In Leviticus, we find that the big toe of the right foot was covered in the blood, so that our walk was pure before God. This just means here, that our walk is steadfast, grounded, and secure in the good news of Jesus.

**Above all:** This really has the idea of “in addition to the previous,” and it applies to each of the three pieces of armor that follow. It introduces the last three pieces of armor. The first were for long range preparation and protection and were never taken off on the battlefield. The shield, helmet, and sword, on the other hand, were kept in readiness for use when actual fighting began, hence the verbs (in verses 16-17), taking and take.

4. **The shield of faith** (verse 16): The Greek word usually refers to the large shield (2.5 x 4.5 feet), that protected the entire body. Faith is represented as a shield, protecting us from the fiery darts of the wicked one, those persistent efforts of demonic foes to weaken us through fear and unbelief.

The shield Paul describes is not the small round one, but the large, oblong shield that could protect the whole body. In ancient warfare, these **fiery darts** were launched in great numbers at the beginning of an attack. The idea was not only to injure the enemy, but to shoot at him at all sides with a massive number of arrows, and thus to confuse and panic the enemy. “Even when such a missile was caught by the shield and did not penetrate to the body, it caused panic, because it was thrown when well alight and its motion through the air made it blaze most fiercely, so that the soldier was tempted to get rid of his burning shield and expose himself to the enemy’s spear-thrusts. But the shield of faith not only catches the incendiary devices but extinguishes them.” (Bruce)

Thoughts, feelings, imaginations, fears, and lies – all of these can be hurled at us by Satan as fiery darts. Faith turns them back.

5. **The helmet of salvation** (verse 17a): In the ancient world this usually was a leather cap studded with metal for extra strength. Often some kind of plume or decoration was added, perhaps to identify the soldier to his regiment. Salvation is pictured as this kind of helmet, protecting an essential part of the body. A soldier would be foolish to go into battle without his helmet. The helmet protected the head, always a major target in battle. Paul is speaking to those who are already saved and is therefore not speaking here about attaining salvation. Rather, Satan seeks to destroy a believer’s assurance of salvation with his weapons of doubt and discouragement.

1 Thessalonians 5:8 speaks of the helmet of salvation in connection to the hope of salvation. The helmet of salvation protects us against discouragement, against the desire to give up, giving us hope not only in knowing that we are saved, but that we will be saved. It is the assurance that God will triumph.

One of Satan's most effective weapons against us is discouragement. When we are properly equipped with the helmet of salvation, it's hard to stay discouraged.

**6. The sword of the Spirit,** (verse 17b): As the sword was the soldier's only weapon, so God's Word is the only needed weapon, infinitely more powerful than any of Satan's. The Greek term refers to a small weapon (6 to 8 inches long). It was used both defensively to fend off Satan's attacks, and offensively to help destroy the enemy's strategies. It is the truth of Scripture.

The sword of the spirit is, first of all, a defensive weapon, capable of deflecting the blows of an opponent. It is the believer's supreme weapon of defense against the onslaughts of Satan. Unlike the shield however, which gives broad and general protection, the sword can deflect an attack only if it is handled precisely and skillfully. It must deflect the enemy weapon exactly where the thrust is made. Our weapon is the Word of God. Spirit here, is the Holy Spirit.

**which is the word of God:** The Greek term rendered "word" is not logos, referring to the whole Word of God, but rhema, referring to certain portions or selected verses of Scripture.

The Word of God is made clear to our understanding by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus baptizes in the Holy Spirit, it sets us on fire to carry the true Word of God to all who will receive it. The two most powerful things in the world today are the spoken and the written Word of God. Win battles for God with the Word of God. No believer has an excuse for not knowing and understanding God's Word. Every believer has God's own Holy Spirit within Him as his own divine teacher of God's divine Word. Our only task is to submit to His instruction by studying the Word with sincerity and commitment. We cannot plead ignorance or inability, only disinterest and neglect.

**Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit:** All the while that we are fighting in the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, we are to be in prayer. Prayer is the very spiritual air that the soldier of Christ breathes. It is the all-pervasive strategy in which warfare is fought.

"Praying" is linked to "stand" (in verse 14). Without prayer God's armor is inadequate to achieve victory. Prayer is indispensable. "Always means "on every occasion," that is when Satan attacks. "In the Spirit" signifies that with the Spirit's help such prayer for divine aid is to be made.

Every smart soldier knows they must keep the lines of communication open to their Commander. God has orders for us, through his Word and the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Satan hates it when we pray. He knows prayer strengthens us and keeps us alert to his deception. Paul cautions us to pray for others as well. With the armor of God and gift of prayer, we can be ready for whatever the enemy throws at us.

**watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints:** "being vigilant in the very matter" of prayer. They are to pray not just for themselves but also "for all saints." Spiritual combat is both an individual and corporate matter.

**Supplication** here, means petition. So many people do not realize the power of praying in the Spirit. That is when you have run out of words to say, and you let the Spirit of God pray through you for the matter. God knows just exactly what to pray for. Not only are we to petition God for ourselves in prayer, but for all the believers in Christ called saints.

**For all the saints:** We can battle spiritually not only on our own behalf, but also on the behalf of others. The soldier isn't only concerned for his or her own safety. He feels an instinct to protect and to battle on behalf of *others*.

## **Conclusion**

Putting on the full armor of God – is real spiritual warfare. It's something in which we are engaged every day. Real spiritual warfare is about resisting temptation and deception by knowing God and the Word of God and bringing the Word of God to others. Through Jesus, God has provided everything we need to stand against the devil's plans.

God's people must find their strength to stand firm in Christ and in our Heavenly Father. We need:

Courage—to stand firm for and in Christ—against the lost world's direction.

Confidence—knowing that we cannot compromise with the opponent.

Perseverance—knowing that the Lord's armor holds and protects through every battle.

Paul urged the Ephesian church to find their strength in the Lord by effectively arming themselves. The church must acquire God's strength to stand victorious.