

## Ephesians 6: 10-17: The Armor of God

**Main point:** Life may be hard, but we have God's protection.



**Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.**

### **Background (optional):**

The man who wrote this passage, St. Paul (also called the Apostle Paul), wrote quite a bit of the New Testament. And Paul was a super interesting guy! What do we know about Paul's life?

- Paul was originally one of the Jewish religious rulers, a Pharisee, who violently opposed Christianity; in fact, Paul was known for tracking down and killing new Christians.
- One day, on the road to Damascus, Paul was personally met by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, who told him to stop persecuting Christians and instead to preach the gospel. (The whole story is told in Acts chapter 9.) Even in our culture today, people talk about a "road to Damascus" event that in some way totally changes one's direction or purpose.
- After this dramatic conversion, Paul made it his mission to spread the news of Jesus to the Gentiles (non-Jews). The Roman government put Paul in prison for this, and Paul wrote numerous letters to the new Christian believers from prison – including this book, written to the church in Asia Minor (focused in Ephesus), probably A.D. 60-62.

### **Focus of study:**

<sup>10</sup>Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. <sup>11</sup>Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup>For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

<sup>13</sup>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 firm. <sup>14</sup>Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, <sup>15</sup>and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup>In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; <sup>17</sup>and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

### **Questions:**

1. V. 10-11: This is a beautiful description of how believers can live in faith in this difficult world. Where does Paul say that our strength comes from?

- *The Lord and his might* – not our own strength.
- How do you think God's strength compares with our own human strength?

2. So often in life, it feels like we struggle against other people and evildoers, but who does Paul say the *real* enemies are?

- "Not flesh and blood," but spiritual evil. According to Paul, other people aren't our real enemy; there is actually a spiritual world that, as the old hymn says, "threatens to undo us." (Cf. "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" by Martin Luther.)
- How can that truth help us feel about *people* who are acting in evil ways?

- Rather than hate evildoers, we can have compassion for them, pray for them to change, even as we work against the evil and injustice that binds and controls them.
3. Fortunately, we are not without defenses against evil. What is Paul's advice for living in the reality of evil in this world? Does Paul say, "Pull yourself up by your bootstraps and just suck it up?"
- V. 13: We depend on God's strength, God's armor.
  - What does armor do for a soldier? First of all, where *is* a soldier, typically, when he or she needs armor?
    - In the midst of battle! Armor protects you, head to toe.
  - How does Paul describe the armor of God? How complete is it? Just a few key pieces?
    - "The whole armor." Every piece is important and needed.
4. Let's look at each piece and what they might mean. (*Could be fun to sketch these out on a white board or large piece of paper. Start with a basic figure, then draw in the pieces of armor, labeling them as you go, adding words that come up during discussion.*)
- "The belt of truth." What does a belt do?
    - Holds up your pants ☺ You're "girded," able to move freely. I wonder how holding onto truth makes you feel ready to move about freely in this world?
  - "The breastplate of righteousness." Where is a breastplate of armor placed on the body?
    - Over the heart and vital organs. Righteousness, or rightness with God, protects your heart and your very essence; you have nothing to hide, you are free to live, breathe, and be right with God.
  - "The shoes of readiness given by the gospel of peace." What do shoes do?
    - Shoes protect your feet and enable you to travel.
    - What do *these* shoes do?
      - These shoes are "readiness" to do ... what? Ready to knock people down, run over them, step on everyone to get your way?
      - No: readiness to walk in the gospel of *peace*, taking peace wherever we go.
  - "The shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one."
    - As part of a suit of armor, where exactly is a shield?
      - In your hand! It can move around as needed, to address threats from any direction.
    - Again, who are our real enemies? How would a shield *of faith* help us?
      - The powers of darkness and spiritual evil are the enemies. Faith centers our minds and hearts on the power of God to meet and defeat this evil.
  - "The helmet of salvation." Where does a helmet go? What does it protect?
    - Your head and brain! What is the most important thing for us to know about God?
      - God LOVES us and SAVES us. God's salvation is eternal; nothing on this earth can hurt us eternally.
  - "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." What does a sword do?
    - Defense ... and attack. Like a shield, it can be wielded as needed to protect, but also goes forth with power. God's word is powerful truth, not wimpy truth, and lies cannot stand forever against truth.

*(Refer back to the drawing, or list the pieces again and where they go.)*

5. So how does this body of God's armor feel, now that it's all on? We've got all these things protecting us:

- Truth
- Righteousness
- Peace

- Faith
- Salvation
- God's word

6. What does Paul say we do once we've got this defense?

- v. 13: STAND FIRM.

It's a tough world, but we're not alone, weak, or defenseless. God is right by our side, providing everything we need.

- Ask for any prayer requests for today.
- Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
- End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace

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