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**Ephesians 6:10-20**

*10 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.*

A simple definition of spiritual warfare: **engaging the enemy with the power of Christ, using divinely given weapons under the leading of the Holy Spirit.**

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## Some important introductory principles

- We need to wage warfare with the power of Christ, not carnal or worldly strategies or weapons.
- The war we're fighting isn't against *people*; it's against *spiritual* enemies.
- Paul says we are *wrestling*. That means that spiritual combat is hard work!

### 1. Be strong in the Lord.

#### 1.1. The first thing it means is not to fight the enemy in your own strength.

We are no match for the enemy on our own.

#### 1.2. An important additional meaning to "being strong."

Christian warfare is not about being brave or making yourself strong: it's about receiving strength from God – letting the *dunamis* (power) of God come into us. How?

- *First, connect with God in His Word.* Remember that that Bible-reading is not an intellectual exercise, but a spiritual exercise.
- *Second, you need a life of worship that helps you to encounter God's presence.* Worship is the way into God's empowering Presence!
- *Third, make times to pray and seek God alone in your prayer closet.* We need to have times with God when we're doing more than just asking Him for things.
- *And then we need to specifically ask Him for power.* In Ephesians 5, Paul tells us to be constantly getting filled with the Spirit.

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## 2. Put on the whole armor of God.

### 2.1. The linen beneath.

To understand Ephesians 6, we need the context of the preceding chapters!

The armor might not be our most important clothing. “And to her it was granted to be arrayed in *fine linen*, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints” (Revelation 19:8). There are at least five areas in Ephesians where we need to check our robes to see how bright and clean they are:

- The Church.
- The home.
- The workplace.
- Sexual sin.
- Unforgiveness: “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (4:31-32). Don’t be ignorant of Satan’s devices (2 Cor. 2:11)! Unforgiveness can disqualify me and make me ineffective in my praying and in my warfare.

### 2.2. A heart submitted to God.

But underneath that clean linen must be a heart that’s submitted to God. “‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:6b-7).

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- Humility is essential. Our warfare will never be successful if our own hearts are as filled with pride as the Devil's heart.
- The word *submit* was a military term. It could mean to obey and be subject to someone. Successfully resisting the Devil requires us to have an attitude of willing obedience to the Lord and His Word.

### 2.3. The heavenly places.

In the Hebrew mind, a *heaven* is simply an expanse of space above you. The Bible mentions three heavens, each one being a realm where spiritual activity takes place.

- The first heaven is the *atmospheric heaven*.
- Paul seems to refer to the dwelling place of God as the *third heaven*.
- The *second heaven* is a realm "in between" the earth and the third heaven. (Recall the angelic warfare in the Book of Daniel.)
- Warfare against principalities and powers is done *mainly* through intercession.
- Prayer for our region is vitally important. Paul told the Thessalonians that he had been hindered in his mission by Satan (1 Thess. 2:18).
- The church was told to wrestle so Paul could make known the mystery of the Gospel, but we need wisdom in dealing with principalities and powers.

### 2.4 Putting on God's armor.

Notice that every one of these pieces of armor is something that God must give us. They are gracious gifts from Him, given to us because we've been united with Christ.

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*The belt of truth.* This went over a soldier's tunic, and it made you secure, as well as holding your sword. In the Christian's combat, the Word of God is holding us together. It may also refer to truth and integrity in general.

*The breastplate of righteousness.* We need to be renewed in our minds as to the truth concerning our righteousness. "...He [that is, God] made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:17). Perhaps it also applies to our personal righteousness: "How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" (Romans 6:2).

*Holy combat boots!* Roman soldiers wore half-boots that were studded on the bottom to give them a sure footing. John Stott says, "...if we have received the good news, and are enjoying the peace with God and with one another which it brings, we have the firmest possible foothold from which to fight evil."

*The shield of faith.* This was a long shield meant to cover the whole body. What fiery darts from the enemy have you experienced? We must hold up the shield of faith against them. Resist the enemy with the Word of God, in faith.

*The helmet of salvation.* Paul speaks elsewhere about the helmet being *the hope of salvation* (see 1 Thess. 5:8). Hope in Christ for our salvation protects us against the enemy's attack. The final outcome is guaranteed as long as we cling to Christ!

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*The sword of the Spirit.* This is the only offensive weapon Paul lists here. It was a short sword used for up-close fighting. This sword isn't the Word of God in the sense of doctrines and truths, but it's what we call the *rhema* Word of God: the Word being spoken in faith. Think of how Jesus used the Word in His wilderness temptation.

*Use every piece of armor!* Every piece is a reminder of the victory of Christ and what He's done for you; every piece is powerful and will enable you to prevail.

### **3. Stand your ground and fight!**

Paul says (1) to withstand him, (2) do everything you can, (3) stand, and then once again he says to (4) stand. Successful warfare means *avoiding a passive spirit*.

Recognize that the fight is real, and that there will be an "evil day." After tempting Jesus, the Devil left the Lord to wait for a more opportune time (see Luke 4:13).

### **4. God's armor is prayer armor!**

Don't miss this... after getting dressed for combat, we are told to pray! Paul says:

- Pray always.
- Pray with all prayer, or all *kinds* of prayer.
- Pray always *for all the saints*.
- Pray always for the advance and the success of the Gospel.

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The armor of God enables us to stand against the attacks of the enemy, but it also equips us for the work of intercession; it equips us for prayer that is full of faith.

Your prayers are going to be resisted! Satan will move against you when you pray, so submit to God, resist the Devil, and watch him flee from you.

We can be victorious in our combat! Let's avoid spiritual passivity, engaging the enemy with the power of Christ, and following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

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