

I'm going to let you in on a little secret today: **You are in a war.** Whether you like it or not! You didn't sign up for it. You have no choice. No say-so in the matter. You've been drafted – for a spiritual battle.

Today, we're going to take a close look at the armor of God from Ephesians 6. For many of you, this might be a familiar passage – but for all of us, it is certainly one we must never neglect.

We're not going to read the first portion of chapter 6, but if you were to read it in your own time, you'll notice an odd thing that takes place here in verse 10 – right in the middle of Paul speaking to children, to parents, and to servants and masters – he suddenly just shifts gears to a topic that (on the surface) seems to not even relate to anything he's been talking about so far.

Paul has been instructing the Ephesians to walk worthy of the calling God has placed on their lives. And to live out the Christian life in a manner that pleases God. But then out of nowhere, Paul starts speaking on the importance of being able to STAND in the battle – and to take up our weapons of warfare – and the armor of God.

Here's why I believe Paul does this so suddenly – it's because there is a spiritual battle taking place in our lives. In fact, it's a war. **Because in this world... there is DARKNESS. And in that darkness – is an enemy that is lurking.** And that enemy is very clever. Do not deceive yourself into thinking that you are immune to his tactics – and that you can outwit the devil. He knows exactly what he's doing, and he will stop at nothing to take you down – and then take you out.

Therefore – we must fight. Let's start reading in verse 10:

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.

"Wiles," meaning "craftiness, trickery, deceit."

Satan's purpose is to deceive. He's been doing it since the beginning of time. In Genesis 3, Satan challenges the Word of God with Adam and Eve when he asked them, "Did God really say...?" All the way back in the Garden of Eden, the wiles of the devil caused man to reevaluate and reconsider what God said to be true.

Here's how this works: When we reexamine God's Word, we then begin to put our own human touch on it. We interpret it differently. We question its validity and then we value it less and less. The only way to really combat these deceptions is to stay *immersed* in God's Word. ***It's like a counterfeit bill. The way to recognize a counterfeit – is to study the real thing! Because the more you get to know the TRUTH – ahem, God's Word – the more you'll begin to recognize the LIES (the trickery, or deceit – the wiles) of the evil one.***

And I want you to notice the order this challenge comes in: Paul says that we are to: (1) BE STRONG IN THE LORD – and THEN – (2) PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD. This is important, because you can never be successful in battle with God’s armor if you are not first STRONG in the Lord. Did you know that a soldier’s armor (at this time) weighed anywhere from 60-100 pounds?? You can’t just pick up your armor that weighs 100 pounds and expect to be able to fight a battle... Unless you’ve had some strength-training. You can lift weights and become strong. You can exercise daily and become strong. But none of these actions will ever make you strong – IN THE LORD. Here’s the secret to becoming strong in the Lord: **You need to lift --- YOUR BIBLE ☺**

And then he tells us WHY strength in the Lord is important. *“That you may be able to **STAND** – against the wiles of the devil.”*

I’ve been helping coach my youngest son’s tee-ball team over the past year and a half. We’ve played three seasons together with some of the same kids. And of all the things we’ve taught them and of all the things they’ve learned, would you want to take a wild guess at what they struggle with most? It’s not hitting! It’s not catching! It’s not even throwing! Believe it or not – the #1 thing I keep telling them at every practice and every game is this: “Hey! Stop falling down! You need to learn to STAND!”

See – the players KNOW that... but for some reason – in their minds, they find it best to plop their entire body down on top of the ball as it comes their way. For some odd reason, they think THAT’S the best way to stop the ball! What do YOU think? Is that the best way? NO! It might be the best way to ensure a BLACK EYE or a broken rib!

I’m CONSTANTLY telling them to STAND. Why? Because they cannot run good defense against an attack if they’re lying on the ground. They cannot do their best if they’re not on their feet. When they DO get the ball – and they’re on the ground – now guess what they have to do? In order to make a play at first and get the runner out, now they have STAND back up anyway --- in order to throw the ball.

See guys – in spiritual attacks (and baseball for that matter)... your best position is always to **STAND.**

Here’s why I believe Paul just shifts gears so quickly and abruptly – taking us into the subject of warfare: Up until this point, Paul has been speaking about the Christian learning how to WALK. What does a Christian WALK look like? It looks like a RELATIONSHIP with the Lord. Hey – if you want to learn how to walk, go back and read chapters 1-5. But now we come to this word here, “Finally.” Finally, my brethren – having done all this already...! But then Paul says – after you’ve learned how to walk – “FINALLY, my brethren...” – STAND.

While it’s odd for Paul to emphasize learning to WALK before learning to STAND, but here’s what I think: I believe Paul is not speaking in the sense of learning how to just **STAND UP.** I

believe he's referring to the Christian who desires to **STAND FIRM**. *Because the Believer who stands FIRM – is a Believer who will not be knocked over in the fight.*

Think about it: If I were to have you stand before me casually – *and then I pushed you backwards, you would topple over like a 3-year-old trying to roller skate on ice for the first time!* But if you came up here and placed your feet in the proper stance – if you actually stood with a firm planting and foundation of your feet – you would be able to face whatever force or opposition that would come your way.

And I think that's the point here. The devil is tricky. He's crafty. He's cunning. He's very deceitful. Don't EVER think you're invincible to his schemes and attacks. Because the moment you do? THAT's when you become most vulnerable. In fact... Let me enlighten you...

In verse 12 – Paul says this:

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.

You think your biggest struggles are your finances?? Your spouse?? Your kids?? Your parents? We often think our biggest problems are due to other people or outward circumstances in our lives. We would be wise to recognize our greatest area of weakness – the spiritual attack.

Now – Paul was not (nor is he now) calling Christians everywhere to rise up and start a war. No, he is letting us KNOW – that we are ALREADY IN a war. But it's not a **physical** war. *This has nothing to do with the US Army. Uncle Sam doesn't want you for THIS war!* The battles you face every day within your faith – are all part of **SPIRITUAL** warfare. Satan is warring for your soul! And he will do WHATEVER it takes to get you to LOSE!

Let me give you an idea of what that looks like: Spiritual Attacks come in all different forms, shapes, and sizes. It could be an attack on your friendships that cause you to doubt your place among your friend groups. Some of you showed up this morning carrying some heavy baggage that has just left you crippled spiritually. I don't stand here this morning claiming to know all that you have been through – or are going through this very moment! But I do know from my own personal experience... For ME – I have had to learn to recognize these attacks from Satan – and then – strengthen myself IN THE LORD – to learn how to STAND through that attack – by putting on the Armor of God. The answer is not to RUN from it. There is no RETREATING in warfare. There is no SURRENDERING. Retreat = defeat. Not so in the Lord! We are not to retreat, but rather – *James 4:7 tells us to, "RESIST the devil – and he will flee from you."* **To resist means to stand against.** This verse should give you great confidence! The battle is scary – and you're facing Satan! But GOD'S WORD promises that if you STAND and RESIST the devil – the greatest enemy ever known to mankind --- he will FLEE. YOU won't flee! But SATAN will flee from you. Therefore – RESIST the devil. STAND. FIGHT.

Verse 13:

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.

This is a DAILY call – to put on God’s armor. Not just “once and for all!” Here’s the thing – listen carefully: We should FEEL the WEIGHT – of this armor – when we put it on. Much like you feel the weight of a heavy burden – the weight of God’s armor should become so real to us, that we never take it for granted. May we always treat God’s armor with sincerity – and feel the weight of what we’re embracing.

And here’s how we equip ourselves with God’s armor. Look with me now at verse 14:

14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth,

Paul wrote the letter of Ephesians as he was chained to a Roman guard. He spent much time looking at the physical armor of one of the most prominent soldiers in all the world! And the more he stared at it, the more he realized the interesting truth: There is a REASON for each piece of this armor. Each piece served its own major and unique purpose. The belt of Truth is the FIRST piece of our armor we are meant to put on. That’s because we need truth! Now more than ever! And what is it that a belt does?? It binds up everything that is loose. Your BELT – holds your pants up, right? You have loose pants and no belt? *Well, guess what? People are going to see things about you that nobody should have to see! When your pants are down at your ankles – you’ll never be able to STAND!*

Paul tells us here to make sure we put on the BELT OF TRUTH. Notice – this isn’t just ANY belt. It’s a belt of **TRUTH**. The belt Paul would refer to here was not the type of belt you and I wear today. This was a thick, heavy belt consisting of both leather and metal material. It had a piece that hung down from the waist of it, which housed the sword... in this case – the Sword of the Spirit – rightfully so, linking TRUTH --- to the Word of God. Why would that be necessary?

In Proverbs 6 (16-18), we learn of six things that the Lord hates – but seven are an abomination to Him. Proverbs 6:19 reveals it’s “A false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.”

Isn’t that the job description of Satan if he ever had one?? **John 8:44** tells us that Satan is the **‘father of lies.’** Well, if that’s true, then what does Satan say about US? He puts lies and deceptive thoughts into our minds. He tries to make us doubt our salvation. He leads us to believe we’re no good – or that we’re better than everyone else. Satan is constantly throwing lies our way – in an effort to confuse us and cripple us.

But what does **JESUS** say about Himself? Jesus reminds us that He is the WAY. The **TRUTH**. And the LIFE. (John 14:6). Jesus wants us to know the truth. It’s truth that will set us free! And it’s truth that will equip us – and enable us – and bind everything up to be prepared for battle.

We're to bring every loose thought into captivity, as Peter told us. Remember – you're in a war! You must decide whose intel you are going to rely on in the battle.

After having put on your belt of truth, then:

having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

The idea of being righteous is really the idea of "being right before the Lord." This means living a life pleasing to God. According to HIS ways. And HIS standards. Yet, so many of us consider ourselves righteous, not because of what Christ has done – but because what WE have done. That is not being righteous – it's being self-righteous. Yet, the Bible says, "There is none righteous, no, not one." (Romans 3:10). Self-righteousness only leads to legalism and condemnation. ***We would do well to recall God's Word where Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For He made Him who knew no sin to BE sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God."*** To put on RIGHTEOUSNESS – would be to allow Christ to take OFF our sin. See – God knew righteousness by our OWN efforts wouldn't suffice. So, instead, He decided to give us His own.

Verse 15:

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

You may ask yourself: What does the Gospel do for me in warfare? Well, it provides the proper footing that you need to be able to STAND. ***The word, "preparation," means, "a prepared foundation."*** ***And the word, "gospel," means, "Good News."*** You can suffer a wound to your arm – and still stand. But suffer a wound to your feet? Suffer a major wound in the foundation of your belief in Jesus Christ? You're going to go down faster than you can ever imagine.

It's a good idea to put shoes on, isn't it? Not even just in warfare, but in everyday life, right!? What do shoes do? They protect your feet! Well, it seems good to ME that IF you want to be able to STAND, it might be important to have good shoes protecting those feet, which cause you to be able to stand. Am I right? But not just with ANY shoes! We're to put on our ***GOSPEL SHOES!***

There's a song called, "Boogie Shoes" by KC and the Sunshine Band. When that song comes on, there's no way your feet won't start moving! That's because Boogie Shoes are meant to get your feet MOVIN'!

I heard someone say once – of Romans 10:15, when Paul says, "How BEAUTIFUL are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace," that one translation records it as, "How HAPPY are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace..."

Here's the good news! If you have ugly feet? Preach the Gospel! Share Jesus with others. Apparently, sharing Jesus with others is as good as a free pedicure! When you equip yourself to share the Gospel, your feet will want to get moving. But if you want to traverse the terrain

of this world – you’ve got to have the proper shoes. I hate to break it to you... Boogie Shoes won’t do you any good! You need **Gospel Shoes**.

Think about it this way... What territory are we traveling through? It’s not our own. It’s not even God’s territory. Satan is the ruler of this world according to John 12:31. Therefore, as sojourners and foreigners – our feet need protecting. Your feet are going to get worn out. You’re going to step on spiritual landmines. You’re going to develop calluses from the hard and uneven path. The point is this: You need to not be ignorant to the fact that (as you walk through this life – as a Christian especially) there will be traps. And they’re not set there by accident. Satan is setting you up! ESPECIALLY if you’re going out and sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You need shoes equipped to handle the terrain. ***And without good tread, you’re going to slip. And when you slip – you will fall. Which means you will no longer be standing.*** It’s like wearing cleats in soccer, baseball, or golf. You don’t wear tennis shoes to walk on the soft sand at the beach, and you don’t wear sandals to hike up Stone Mountain! You wear shoes that are equipped for the terrain.

Your shoes are also meant to take you places. ***1 Peter 3:15 tells us to “always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you...”***. The Gospel – or the Good News --- is that Jesus Christ offered eternal salvation for anyone who would call upon His name. But that news should never be kept as a secret! We need to always be ready to share the Good News of Christ with anyone we encounter. And to do it in 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.

Our FAITH – is represented as a SHIELD. In the book of Revelation (12:10), we’re told that Satan is the accuser of brethren, who accused them day and night before God. Satan is the biggest accuser you will ever face! And his accusations are full of lies. But thankfully, our FAITH can shield us and extinguish those accusations.

Here’s an amazing thing. ***Romans 5:3-4 says that (as Christians), we “... GLORY in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.”*** What that means is --- the very things meant to discourage and destroy us – can become tools and weapons for the battles we face.

I want you to picture something with me really quick – pretend right now that there are fiery darts coming at you from all directions. And if you were to hold a shield up (as protection), you would move that shield in all directions – depending on where the arrows were coming from. What that means is – your shield is not a static piece of equipment meant to defend you from one direction only. No – your FAITH (as we’ll call it) – is meant to be INTERActive. It’s meant to be a defense for where it’s needed most – at any given moment. Because that’s how the attacks will come. Satan will attack you from ALL sides – not just the front!

In these days, when Paul spoke of taking up a shield, the shield they thought of in their minds looked like a large, rectangular or oval-ish shield that would protect the entire body. Your shield – your FAITH --- is your BELIEF, right? It’s a deep TRUST that you have in

the one and only God. It's a faith that doesn't waver. It's a faith that doesn't doubt. It's a faith that remains – even in warfare! And it protects you.

Satan is shooting off fiery darts and arrows in your direction – sometimes from EVERY direction. And you need to be able to stop those darts and arrows from penetrating your armor.

I read something years ago that I thought was very neat concerning the shield of faith. In these days, you didn't just pick up a shield and hope for the best. No, the shield was prepared in advance in a very particular way. ***The shield would be wrapped in leather, first of all. It had an added layer of protection that would come in handy.***

They would then SOAK their shields in water so the leather would soak up all that water. Think again about what is coming your way... not just arrows – but arrows that are on FIRE! When those arrows sink into that water-soaked leather, what do you think is going to happen? The fiery darts (as Paul said) would be QUENCHED! Extinguished.

Here's how this applies in your own life this morning, to put things in perspective. ***Have you ever been minding your own business when suddenly – a random thought just pops into your head that maybe wasn't the best thought?*** It probably just happened, didn't it?

There you sit – doing good – all is well. And suddenly, that fight you had with your co-worker comes to mind again. And you think, "That jerk." "WHOAH! Where did that thought come from?!" **BOOM. Arrow.**

Then traffic FINALLY starts moving after you've been waiting at that light for three light changes in a row – and suddenly that big truck just cuts you off and you miss the light – AGAIN! And we all know how you responded to that, don't we? **BOOM. Arrow.**

But with a shield of unwavering faith that's been soaked in the **Living Water – God's Word**, the darts and arrows might keep coming --- but they are quickly quenched.

See guys – the answer is to be READY. Because the attacks are coming – and they're coming from whatever direction will leave you most vulnerable.

One last thought on the shield of faith. At the beginning of verse 16, Paul says – "Above all." He's not saying that this is the greatest thing you can do. But here's what he **IS** saying: In the line of duty, there were a large amount of "fiery arrows" that would come towards those who on the front line. So, all the front line had to do was just put their shields up... but that still left the problem of any arrows that would be shot **overhead** to the rest of the men **behind** the front line. ***So, what about them? Well, those who were next in line could then take THEIR shields and put them over top of their bodies. Why? Because thanks to those in front of them, they were protected from the front, but now they had to figure a way to be protected from above.***

Now – what does this mean for US? It tells me that we’re not alone in our spiritual fight. And we’re not **MEANT** to be alone! One of our BEST moves in our spiritual attacks – is to come together with other believers in the line of duty. When life gets hard? Come to church. When you’re having a bad day? Don’t forsake reading your Bible and seeking the Lord. When you’re just not looking forward to the next day? Don’t sleep in on Sunday morning and miss God’s Word and fellowship with other believers. Don’t forsake coming together with others who share your belief in Jesus – and finding refuge in fighting the fight together. Just look around the room right now! There is strength in numbers, am I right? All the shields around this room are better than one.

17 And take the helmet of salvation,

In Paul’s day, a soldier’s helmet didn’t look like helmets of today’s armies. They had some kind of plumage on top that signified what army they belonged to. It was OBVIOUS – which army you belonged to – just by looking at the helmet alone. And it should be obvious to the world around us – exactly Who we belong to – when we take up that helmet of salvation. That signet – of the acceptance of the salvation offered to us through Jesus.

And what is a helmet good for? It protects the mind. It encompasses the logic. It embraces the area of reasoning. Our salvation – is an ESSENTIAL part of our spiritual warfare – because it reminds us of who we belong to – as it protects us from allowing the lies of the enemy into our head. Without this helmet, false doctrines would continually INFILTRATE your mind. It’s happening more and more today. You can’t discern between spiritual truth – and spiritual deception – without the helmet of salvation that God has given you.

And – finally:

and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

The Greek word for “sword” here is “machaira,” which is described as a “SMALL sword, as distinguished from a large sword.” I know this definition sounds funny – but here me out. By very definition, the text tells us that the sword of the Spirit is more like a large KNIFE, rather than a giant sword. It’s used more for personal use, held close to the body, meant more for hand-to-hand combat. And if there is a sword **of the SPIRIT** – that must mean it is given to us – BY the Spirit of God Himself.

And then we’re told the “sword” we have represents the very Word of God. Notice – all the armor up until this point is meant for defense. But suddenly we have now an OFFENSIVE weapon. What kind of God would He be if God expected us to fight without giving us a weapon? And what better weapon to take up – than the Word of God.

Let’s see if you can figure it out this morning... Everyone hold up your SWORD in your hands right now! Let me see them! ***If you did this exercise correctly, you should all be holding up your Bibles.*** I know some of you are using your phone as your Bible – and that’s fine. But I would encourage you to get yourself a paper Bible – one that you can literally “TAKE UP” and hold in your hands.

The word here for “word,” is the Greek word which means, “spoken word.” It’s not just the Word as in – the Bible – but it’s like an exact word given by the Spirit of God for an exact moment. It’s “the right word at the right time.” It’s not playing “Bible Roulette,” letting your Bible fall open to whatever passage it lands on. It’s not taking the 10 most famous Bible verses and posting them on your mirror to look at every day. The Spirit gives a Word – for the **situation** you’re facing when you seek to hear His voice. So, HOW will you know it when you hear it? It will come by READING God’s Word – and then listening and obeying God’s Spirit. When you READ God’s Word, you’ll KNOW God’s Word.

Here is the key to using your Bible as a weapon. You’ve got to accept it for what it is. You can’t just read it *occasionally* and then expect it to do something when you’re cornered in battle. Any weapons expert will tell you – to use your weapon effectively – IN BATTLE – you must be proficient with it – OUT of battle. You’ve got to pick it up DAILY – and put it to use. You must practice with it. You must get to know it. That’s why I recommend a Bible with pages you can turn. With words you can highlight. With sidelines to make notes in!

Your sword is there for you to FIGHT. Because IF you run, those arrows will just get you from behind! What’s the ONE area of your body this armor DOESN’T cover?? It’s your BACK. Why?? Because we aren’t meant to RUN. We need to (therefore) STAND. And fight.

And THANKFULLY – God has given us everything we need – in order to do just that. That’s what makes this so special... It’s literally --- GOD’S ARMOR! ***In Isaiah 59:17, we’re told the Lord “...put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation of His head; He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak.”***

It’s an odd concept to think about, but God has the armor... and He is sharing that armor with us! God is giving you His armor – so that you may be able to STAND against Satan. How amazing is that? Notice – God isn’t just going to BECOME our own personal soldier – preventing hardships in life! No – rather – He is GIVING us His armor – so that WE may put it to use. The battle belongs to God, but we are meant to be IN the fight.

Here’s another way of looking at the armor of God:

- ***In John 14:6, we’re told that Jesus IS truth.***
- ***In Romans 13:14, as we put on Jesus, He becomes our Breastplate of Righteousness.***
- ***In Luke 1:79, Jesus guides our feet in peace.***
- ***In Hebrews 12:2, He is the Author and Finisher of our Faith. He is our Shield.***
- ***In Hebrews 2:10, He is the Captain of our Salvation.***
- ***And in John 1:14, He is the Word – made flesh.***

In other words – ***the armor of God – looks like Jesus. And every day, guess what we get to do? We get to put on Jesus 😊.*** Like a child who imitates their father, we get to put on our Daddy’s clothes – and act like Him each and every day. I can tell you (as a father) – there’s almost no greater honor than to see one of my children imitate me.

My family and I like playing games in the floor together. And since I'm getting older, I always grab a pillow to prop myself up on as I lay in the floor. Well, one day, we got in the floor to play a game and my youngest son stopped the game and said, "Wait!" He went and grabbed a pillow off the couch, put it on the ground, threw himself down on top of it and said, "That's better!" When we asked why he did it, he shrugged, "That's what Daddy does."

You're about to leave the safety of this sanctuary and head back out into your battlefield. How are you going to fight? I pray it would be with the boldness of a saint – who equips themselves with the armor of God – **who puts on JESUS.**

And finally – I believe there might just be a hidden gem here in the text today. Although the armor of God consists of the obvious items you would expect to see on a soldier – Paul doesn't really stop there. I think it's appropriate to wrap up our study today with the very next verse – verse 18 – which says, ***"PRAYING – always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being WATCHFUL to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints -- -. "*** Prayer – is like the "finishing touch" to the armor. It's like spritzing yourself with cologne or perfume to complete your wardrobe before leaving the house. If you wish to succeed in your walk with the Lord in this cruel and perverse world, you've got to take up God's armor. But you need to BATHE yourself now in prayer. Think about it this way – as a soldier, you're not fighting nonstop 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. How do you prepare yourself in between these moments? **You pray.**

I'm reminded of John chapter 18 when Jesus takes His disciples into the Garden. He gives them powerful instruction, to which they seem to have a difficult time keeping up with. The disciples kept falling asleep because they were just so tired... yet Jesus told them to be WATCHFUL – and to be PRAYING – why? Lest they fall into temptation. The enemy is always lurking. He's always watching. ***While you're busy PRAYING, the enemy is busy PREYING.*** Don't believe me? Watch what happens next time you decide to let your guard down. He's waiting for that moment where you decide it's time for a break. Spiritually-speaking, when you think it's time for a little catnap? And you decide it's best to loosen that belt of truth a little so you can be relaxed? Boom. Gotcha. You might think, "Ahh – this breastplate of righteousness sure is heavy! I think I'll just take it off – just for a minute!" Boom.

We need to be watchful. And we need to always be praying. I love to just have a continual prayer going all day. I wake up in the morning and start praying, but I hardly ever say "Amen." It's because I want to be in the mindset that I will be back to finish this conversation shortly. The word, "Amen," is a term used to confirm what we just prayed. It's like saying, "Let it be so in my life, Lord." But perhaps they would be better off ending with a little "BRB." "Be right back, Lord."

Today – may you take up this armor and put it on – the armor that God has GIFTED you with – and then bathe your life in prayer.