



## Still Standing

### Week 9 & Week 10: Wearing the Armor of God

- **Week 1:** Standing Defined – Installing a parameter (Paul in Acts 19-20). LIVING FOR THE WILL OF GOD. Measuring its success by Results = Miracles, Attacks, Salvations, Baptisms, DISCIPLESHIP happening because we are standing not because we organized an event to create some hoopla.

- **Week 2:** The Nature of Standing: WHO STANDS  
As **God** Stands (who bequeathed it to Jesus)

The **Enemy's** Stand (that is allowed because of our gift of free will)

**Our** Right to Stand (the gift from our Heavenly Father when we were conceived = Freewill)

[Dominion will be covered later]

The Nature of Standing in: RULERSHIP (What gives us the right to)

- God rules because He was, He is, He is to come.
- Enemy rules because we were created with free will.
- We rule in two ways: 1. From the gift of Free Will created in us during our creation AND

[2. we were given DOMINION in Gen 1:28...not included in week 2. Waiting for discussion on Authority as modeled in Parable **Luke 19:11-27** (Parable of the ten minas (reap what you did not sow, ten minas))]

The Nature of Standing in: CHARACTER (Defining WHO we are)

The Nature of Standing in: MANIFESTATIONS (The behavior of, the results, the growth, the signs of)

**Week 3:** The Fruit of Where One Stands

**Week 4:** The Power in Confession

**Week 5:** Preparation in the Spirit

**Week 6:** Preparation in Prayer

**Week 7:** The Power of Dominion

**Week 8:** The Example of Nehemiah

**11/10 Armor of God: Ruth E.**

**11/17 Armor of God: Mary Carlson, Tom and Pattie Callahan**

**Fruit of the Spirit, Worship, Prayer, Forgiveness**

Metric/Rubric = **Fruit of the Spirit** Col 1:9-12

Armor of God as Prayer

**Devotions? = Understanding the Word**

11/24 – FAMILY SERVICE

12/01 – A PERSONAL ADVENT

12/08 – THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS

12/15 – ALL CHURCH CHRISTMAS WORSHIP

(KIDS, YOUTH&ADULT WORSHIP TEAMS WILL BE LEADING A NIGHT OF CHRISTMAS WORSHIP)

12/22 – OFF

12/29 – OFF

01/05 – **Ephesians: Living in His Amazing Grace**

This we know: **2 Tim. 3:16-17**

*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

*Praying Always* (Eph. 6:18): Prayer opens the channels between us and God. In the midst of battle, we as believers must keep in constant communication with our Leader for directions and encouragement. Our prayers for one another are important and effectual

This we know: **2 Corinthians 10:3-5**

*3 For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ*

## #1.) WHAT IS THE ARMOR OF GOD

## #2.) HOW DO WE PUT IT ON

FOCUS ON DEVOTIONS, PRAYER, WORSHIP, FORGIVENESS and how they fuel us to keep going.

**Obedience/LOYALTY is the fuel for Standing.**

PROCURE TESTIMONIES OF:

- God's **Truth**
- God's **Righteousness** (decency, virtue, integrity)
- Gospel of **Peace** (Peace of God. Know it before you can share it or let it direct you. Readiness.)
- **Faith** in God (God IS real)
- **Salvation** through Christ
- Word of God – **Scripture**
- **Prayer**
- **Praying in the Spirit**

When was one of the first times you knew the items on this list were a real thing?

What was it like to discover the source of all truth?

Can you recall the first time you actually FELT God's peace?

When did you discover that God was actually REAL?

How has scripture shaped you and your life and your decisions?

Are there particular verses that motivate/encourage you?

How you involve prayer in your life? Stories of answered/unanswered prayer.

How do you use your prayer language?

***And having prepared everything...take your stand .***

**Ephesians 6:10-18**

<sup>10</sup> Finally, 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**, <sup>18</sup> **praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.** To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, <sup>19</sup> and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

What is the Armor of God?

- ❖ Belt of Truth
- ❖ Breastplate of Righteousness
- ❖ Shoes of Readiness from the Gospel of Peace
- ❖ Shield of Faith
- ❖ Helmet of Salvation
- ❖ Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God
- ❖ Praying at all times in the Spirit
- ❖ Keep alert

**Peroration**(pear. ra. shun): **“In a peroration, the author or speaker recapitulates the main themes of the letter or speech to motivate the audience to action”**

- **“Imitate the Divine Warrior”**

**Isaiah 59:17** *He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped Himself in zeal as a cloak.*

- **Call for the Body to live Unified**

“It is much more in keeping with the gist of Ephesians to see this summons to battle directed to the church *as a whole*, to the *body of Christ* acting as a unified divine force.”

Neufeld, T. R. Y. (2001). *Ephesians* (p. 316). Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press.

- **God’s Truth**

- **Belt of Truth**

<sup>14</sup> *Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth,*

To Girdle yourself with TRUTH

❖ **Belt of Truth**

Seek truth, study it, read it...

**John 8:32** *“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* 36 *“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”*

Repercussions = Not holding unto old thoughts, old ways even if they are comfortable or supported by our family and friends. Or society. YOU ARE IN CHARGE OF DIRECTING YOUR FEELINGS TO ALIGN WITH TRUTH.

**2 Corinthians 10:3-5**

*3 For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ*

How does one take a thought captive? (Precursor: You own your thoughts. They are a part of your Kingdom. 1. Ask if it is true? 2. Yes: Respond. No: Do not allow yourself to dwell on untruth. Can't get it out of your head? Distract = Do something. Move. Replace with truth = Dwell on truth: Read scripture, listen to sermons & teachings, Christian music, Discuss with Christian friends.)

How do you know if it is not truth? BIBLE. Which will be echoed in messages, teachings (bible studies), Godly friends/counsel. [Godly friends = life of the Fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22 Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self Control.]

- **God’s Righteousness** (decency, virtue, integrity)

*and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,*

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

❖ **Breastplate of Righteousness**

Can we earn Righteousness?

**1 John 1:9** *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”* {Repent from personal sins}

**Titus 2:11-14**

<sup>11</sup> *For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. <sup>12</sup> It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, <sup>13</sup> while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, <sup>14</sup> who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

(Word of God brings righteousness, as we will discover later.)

His righteousness is imparted to us.

If we could be righteous on our own, earn it, why would Jesus have had to die on the cross for us?

- **Gospel of Peace** (Peace of God) Know it before you can share it or let it direct you.

<sup>15</sup> and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the *gospel of peace*.

❖ Shoes of Readiness from the Gospel of Peace

3) *Your feet fitted with the readiness (Preparation) that comes from the **Gospel of Peace*** (Eph. 6:15):

Readiness Motivated by the Gospel of Peace

1. **prepared for something:** prepared for something that is going to happen
2. **finished and available for use:** finished or completed and so able to be used immediately
3. **on the point of doing something:** on the point of doing something or liable to do something
4. **willing to do something:** eager, willing, or prepared to do something
5. **quickly produced:** quickly and easily given, provided, or available
6. **prepared in advance:** prepared or blended in advance, and able to be used with very little additional preparation
7. **intelligent:** intelligent, alert, and quick witted.

(Evangelism **Matthew 28:19-20** “Therefore, go and make disciples of ALL nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”).

(Reconciliation READ NIV Eph 2:12-18 Christ preached peace to both Jews and Gentiles. Life w/Christ is available to ALL.)

- **Faith in God** (Living as God IS real)

<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

**Faith:** “Accepting God’s command while stepping out in to a direction that only God can complete.” Henry Blackaby

**Psalm 91:4** He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.

**Romans 14:23b** For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

**Hebrews 11:1-3** Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. <sup>2</sup> For by it the people of old received their commendation. <sup>3</sup> By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

**Does Faith stop the flaming arrows? NO. It extinguishes them.**

Extinguish:

1. **put out a fire or light:** to put out something that is burning or giving off light
2. **end something:** to take away or bring to an end something such as a hope, feeling, custom, or practice
3. **destroy somebody or something:** to kill or destroy somebody or something completely

## Week 9 &amp; Week 10 : Wearing the Armor of God

4. **outshine:** to outshine or eclipse something or somebody by having greater brilliance
5. **LAW pay debt:** to pay off a debt – Jesus' sacrifice for us?
6. **LAW make something invalid:** to make something no longer valid or applicable
7. **PSYCHOLOGY decrease response:** to cause a decrease in a conditioned response through lack of reinforcement

[Early 16th century. Formed from Latin *extinguere*, literally "to quench completely," from *stinguere* "to quench, prick" (source of English *DISTINGUISH* and *INSTINCT*).]

**Faith snuffs out the enemy's kingdom effect on you.**

Temptation and Attacks. (ie. untruths to instill doubt, fear, and ungodly guilt) Faith acts as an invisible shield that deflects such false accusations

**Hebrews 11:6** *"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him."*

**WE DO WHAT WE BELIEVE, ALL THE REST IS JUST TALK.**

- **Salvation through Christ** (Am I still trying to earn it?)

*"For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God."* **1 Peter 1:23**  
***17 and take the helmet of salvation***

Salvation: The deliverance from spiritual death and enslavement to sin.

Bringing about the restoration of relationship between God and man.

Salvation THROUGH Christ.

Begins with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**Matthew 27-28, Mark 15-16, Luke 23-24, John 19-20**

**Hebrews 4:15**

*"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was w/o sin. So let us approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."*

**Romans 6:22-23**

*<sup>22</sup> But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.<sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**Romans 8:14-17 (Obedience or Loyalty)**

*<sup>14</sup> For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. <sup>15</sup> The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. <sup>14</sup> And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. <sup>17</sup> Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. Footnotes: a.Romans 8:15 The Greek word for *adoption to sonship* is a term referring to the full legal standing of an adopted male heir in Roman culture.*

**1 John 5:11-13** *And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. <sup>12</sup> Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

- **Word of God – Scripture**

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

**Hebrews 4:12-13**

*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. <sup>13</sup> And no creature is hidden from His sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.*

The **Word of God**, the only offensive weapon in this armor, was used by the Lord Jesus against Satan (Luke 4:1–13). The living Word is powerful, effective, and instructive

**2 Timothy 3:16, 17** “*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching; rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*”).

Word of God brings truth.

So how do we incorporate it into our everyday lives?

Read \* Study \* Share \* Discuss \* Learn \* Meditate \* Pray

#### • Prayer

<sup>18</sup> *praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints*

i.e. of Nehemiah.

Prayer opens the channels between us and God. In the midst of battle, we as believers must keep in constant communication with our Leader for directions and encouragement.

**James 5:16b** “*The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*”

Take Action – Do Something

#### • Praying in the Spirit

<sup>18</sup> *praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints*

#### **Romans 8:25-27**

<sup>25</sup> *But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.*

<sup>26</sup> *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. <sup>27</sup> And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

Our responsibility **Romans 12:1-2** A New View of Worship

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

**NOtes****Ephesians 6:10–20****Waging Peace: Putting on the Armor of God****PREVIEW**

With 6:10–20 we come to the climactic conclusion of Ephesians. The various strands of emphasis on power and fullness pervading the letter are finally pulled together. What emerges is a striking image of the church at the center of God’s saving action. Since Ephesians would have been read aloud to audiences, this rousing call to battle performs the function of what students of ancient rhetoric call a “**peroration.**” **In a peroration, the author or speaker recapitulates the main themes of the letter or speech to motivate the audience to action** (Lincoln: 432–3; Perkins: 141; Yoder Neufeld, 1997:110). The imitation of God (5:1) relates to forgiveness and kindness, but also to doing battle with the cosmic forces resisting the gathering up of all things in Christ (1:10).

The call to take up arms in a cosmic struggle comes somewhat as a surprise after the focus on the microcosm of the household in 5:21–6:9. *Cosmic* in no way excludes the arena of human relationships, however. Indeed, Ephesians aptly places the Household Code immediately *after* the call to nonconformity (5:3–21) and *before* the summons to take up God’s armor. Thus the author challenges readers to understand that what they see as “only” everyday social relationships are actually an arena of struggle with the powers.

Ephesians 6:10–13 gives a summons to be empowered with God’s own power. Believers are to put on God’s own armor. The armor in verses 14–17 probably reminded first-century readers of soldiers they saw daily. More important, however, the author draws on the tradition of *God* putting on armor, as found specifically in **Isaiah 59:17** (TBC). So the call to put on God’s armor is a summons for readers to imitate the divine warrior. Not surprisingly, the enemy, in proportion to such an armor, is the devil and his forces. Verses 14–17 describe the warrior in God’s armor as clad in truth, justice, faith, and salvation, ready to announce peace, and wielding the word of God.

Verses 18–20 bring the metaphor of battle to a close with a focus on prayer as struggle and as a stance of solidarity among saints “at war.” Paul is presented one final time as a messenger bound, an *ambassador in chains*, illustrating how deeply ironic is the power and freedom of the gospel and its messengers.

**Structure of 6:10–20**

Henceforth, be empowered in the Lord!

Put on God’s armor

so that you might be able to resist the devil and the powers of evil!

Take up God’s armor

so that at the end of that evil day you will be standing!

Stand!

- girded with truth
- having put on justice
- ready to announce the good news of peace
- having taken up the shield of faith (fulness)

## Grasp!

- the helmet of salvation/liberation!
- and the sword of God's word,
- praying at all times  
for all the saints  
and also for me,  
for boldness to make known the gospel,  
for which I am an ambassador in chains.

The distinctive way Ephesians handles this material is noticeable in comparing Ephesians with Colossians. Notice that Colossians moves from the Household Code in 3:18–4:1 immediately to a call to prayer in 4:2–4. As in the case of the Household Code, Ephesians modifies Colossians by wedging the call to battle between the Household Code and the call to prayer. The call to vigilance and prayer is thereby welded both grammatically and conceptually to the call to arms.

A note of caution: most commentators like to envision the *individual* Christian in the armor (e.g., Best, 1998:586; Thurston: 145). Support for an individualistic interpretation grows if the passage is read in light of Cynic-Stoic views of life as battle (e.g., Malherbe, 143–74; Lincoln: 437–8, with survey). However, this limits what kind of struggle is imagined and misses the biblical allusions to God as the divine warrior. **It is much more in keeping with the gist of Ephesians to see this summons to battle directed to the church as a whole, to the *body of Christ* acting as a unified divine force** (so also Barth, 1974:791; Schnackenburg: 285; cf. Yoder Neufeld, 1997:111).

**OUTLINE**

## Summons to Divine Warfare, 6:10–13

## The Divine Armor, 6:14–17

6:14a	Truth
6:14b	Righteousness/Justice
6:15	Peace
6:16	Faith (fulness)
6:17a	Salvation/Liberation
6:17b	Spirit/Word of God

## Prayer as Struggle and Solidarity, 6:18–20

6:18	Vigilant and Alert Prayer in the Spirit
6:19–20	Praying for Paul

## EXPLANATORY NOTES

### Summons to Divine Warfare 6:10–13

*Henceforth* readers are to take up God's power (6:10). *Finally* (NIV, NRSV) does not show quite as clearly as does *henceforth* (both possible translations of *tou loipou*) that this is the climax of the exhortation of chapters 4–6 and thus the reason for the previous buildup around power and identification with Christ (e.g., 1:19–23; 3:20). *Henceforth* may reflect as well the context of a baptismal challenge (6:11, notes about "putting on"; cf. 4:22, 24–25, notes).

The imperative *Be empowered!* is striking, for the Bible rarely uses the imperative in relation to *divine* empowerment, no doubt because it is God alone who empowers (cf. Rom. 4:20; Phil. 4:13; 1 Tim. 1:12). But we have repeatedly observed in Ephesians how much the church is invested with status and initiative. So, while it may strike us as presumptuous, we should read this as "Seize power! Fill yourselves with God's power!"

This reminds us of the ancient battle calls found in the OT, where God is called to rise up and make war against his enemies on behalf of his people (Exod. 15:3; Num. 10:35; Ps. 35:1–3, 22–28; Isa. 42:13; Judg. 5:12, where the people are to rise to do battle).

Three words for power are strung together in verse 10. *Be empowered with the strength of the Lord's might!* On the surface, this is typical of an author who often likes to use as many words as possible (Schnackenburg: 271). We might also hear a faint echo of Paul's exhortation in 1 Corinthians 16:13: "Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong!" (NRSV). Or we might identify *Lord* with Christ and recall Ephesians 3:16–17, where the indwelling Christ strengthens believers.

Here, however, the use of a chain of power terms indicates something more. Stringing together power terms is a way to characterize the greatness of *God's* power. Already in 1:19 we find a chain of synonyms illustrating how overwhelming is the power of God that raised Christ from the dead and made him victorious over all powers. Colossians 1:11, which lurks in the background, also heaps up synonyms to depict God's power.

Both Colossians and Ephesians imitate Isaiah 40: "He who sits above the circle of the earth ... is great in *strength*, *mighty* in *power*" (40:22, 26, italics added). Closer in time to Ephesians, such language also appears in Qumran's famous War Scroll as a way to ascribe ultimate victory and power to God, even though much of the scroll is taken up with orders for God's troops, the "sons of light" (1QM 11.4–5). The wording of the summons in Ephesians 6:10 becomes thus a measure of the breathtakingly lofty status the writer of Ephesians accords the saints (Yoder Neufeld, 1997:116).

Ephesians goes one step further. The church is called on to *put on God's whole armor* (*panoplia*, lit., "whole or complete armor"). This is sometimes interpreted to mean that God provides the necessary protection for the struggles of life. This armor is not what God is wearing but what God provides the believer. However, by drawing explicitly from Isaiah 59 for several items of armor, the author makes sure readers see that it is God's own armor that the community is to don (TBC).

The stress is on the communal body of believers inhabiting the armor of the divine warrior, rather than on the individual believer donning the metaphorical armor of the Roman soldier, as too often claimed (R. Martin, 1991:75; Thurston: 147–8). It is *God's* battle the church is called to wage (so also Schnackenburg: 272). To *put on* recalls the putting on of *the new human*, who is none other than the Messiah (4:24; cf. 2:15–16; cf. Rom. 13:12, 14). To *put on* is therefore also an allusion to baptism (cf. 4:22–24, notes).

Everything about the origin of this motif in the tradition of the divine warrior tells us that this is not a defensive struggle (contra Berkhof: 52; Best, 1993:60; 1998:588; Klassen, 1984:128). Nor is it

only a mop-up after the victory has been won (contra Thurston: 145; Lincoln: 442–3). Yes, the resurrection of Christ implies the defeat of the powers (1:19–23, notes). Yes, final victory is assured. But such assurance always and necessarily *precedes* divine warfare in the Bible; it in no way underplays the gravity of the struggle that is about to ensue (e.g., Josh. 6:2; Judg. 7:9; 1 Sam. 24:4; von Rad: 42–4).

In Ephesians, the celebration of power and fullness is not meant to downplay the present and future struggle for the salvation of the world, but as in ancient warfare, to give courage for that struggle. The battle is real, even if the outcome is assured. The enemy is real, even if not *blood and flesh*. The armor and the weapons are real, even if they are “only” the persistent and prayerful exercise of truth, peace, justice, and the word of God.

Paul anticipates “nonfleshly” warfare in 2 Corinthians 10:3–6, where his “weapons of war” are pointed at the disobedient Corinthians. More closely related, the specific choice of imagery shows that the church’s struggle is an essential component of the battle described in 1 Corinthians 15:24–25. Paul there describes Christ’s reign or kingdom as successful warfare against the powers of evil. The summons to battle in Ephesians means that Christ’s body—those who have been raised to life and seated with him in the heavenlies (2:6; cf. 1:20–23)—is also participating in Christ’s reign (so also Barth, 1974:804). This is the eschatological battle; this is the *evil day* (6:13), however many *evil days* (5:16) that *day* might entail. The church lives in the eschatological moment, *buying out the time* (5:16, notes), which, as it turns out, implies taking the struggle to heal the cosmos to its very edges (so also Schnackenburg: 275–6).

To be sure, the church does not displace God. After all, for the church to be the body of God’s Messiah (1:23), for it to possess the fullness of God (1:23; 3:19), for believers to be raised and seated in the heavenlies with the Messiah (2:5–6)—all this is the result of God’s grace (2:8–10). Human pride and accomplishment are excluded (2:9). But that should not obscure the encouraging and sobering nature of this summons to put on God’s armor. It is encouraging because the “size” of the armor banishes all thought of fear in the face of the enemy. It is sobering because it implies an arena of battle that pits the church against God’s enemies.

The call to *stand* in the phrase *so that you may be able to stand against the strategies of the devil* increases the force of the summons. Such *standing against* is not a passive or even just a defensive stance. In Exodus 14:13, “standing” is admittedly the proper stance of the people in face of God’s warring on their behalf. In the present passage, however, God’s people are themselves summoned to inhabit the role of that divine warrior. “Standing” has thus taken on a decidedly different coloring. The power and armor of God enable believers to *stand against*, to resist and finally undo the *strategies* (lit., *crafty methods*) of the devil. A resilient, courageous, and ultimately victorious *standing* is one of the most important motifs in this passage (cf. 6:13–14; Arnold, 1989:120; Yoder Neufeld, 1997:129–31).

Verse 11 identifies the enemy as *the devil* (*diabolos*; lit., “slanderer, one who throws into confusion” [*Powers*]). While this is the same *evil one* we meet in 2:2 (cf. 6:16), the term *devil* appears also in 4:27 but is rare in the letters bearing Paul’s name (1 Tim. 3:6–7). Verse 12 stipulates that the struggle is *not with blood and flesh*. Why does that need to be said? Perhaps some believers were experiencing firsthand the hostility of authorities or rival religious groups, even if this letter gives no specific evidence of that. They might have been tempted to see such hostile persons as the actual enemy.

Further, we have noted earlier the frequent points of contact between Ephesians and the thought and language of the community at Qumran, by the Dead Sea. Thus the scroll called *War of*

*the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness* makes it explicit that the final battle against the forces of evil will be most immediately against its “blood and flesh” representatives (e.g., 1QM 12.11–12; 15.13; 19.4; cf. CD 1.2). Perhaps some readers of Ephesians would have entertained such thoughts. The explicit rejection of warfare against *human* enemies in this letter is consistent with the strong peace emphasis in 2:14–16, echoed here in 6:15.

The need to explicitly reject warfare against *blood and flesh* was no doubt prompted also by the author’s use of the tradition of the armor of God as found in Isaiah 59, Wisdom of Solomon 5, and 1 Thessalonians 5 (TBC). The history of this motif shows that most often in the Bible, “blood and flesh” is what becomes the object of divine warfare. In Isaiah and Wisdom of Solomon, it is fleshly human society gone bad that God wars against as judge and executioner (TBC). Even 1 Thessalonians 5, where the image of the divine warrior has undergone radical transformation (5:8), identifies human beings sitting in darkness (5:4) as the object of the divine warrior’s intervention (5:2–3).

In Ephesians, we can observe a rather significant transformation of the tradition at this point. *Blood and flesh* are not the enemy. *Blood and flesh* are under the control of the enemy (2:2, notes). The church must struggle against that enemy, not against the victims of that enemy.

Markus Barth misses this point by suggesting that the author’s choice of the rare term *palē* (*struggle*) over *polemos* (war) or *machē* (fight) reflects pacifist tendencies (1974:764). Most often in ancient literature, *palē* does refer to athletic “wrestling,” but it can also refer to conflict and warfare generally (Greeven: 721). More important, however deeply concerned about peace, the author of Ephesians has absolutely no interest in playing down the gravity of the warfare here described. Indeed, the call to *divine* empowerment and the summons to put on the *divine* armor suggests quite the opposite. To state it ironically, pacifism is *real* warfare against enmity (cf. 2:11–22, esp. 2:6, notes).

The list of the powers in 6:12 is impressive: *rulers (archai)*, *authorities (exousiai)*, *cosmic potentates (kosmokratores) of this darkness*, *spiritual aspects (pneumatika; lit., spiritualities) of evil in the heavenlies*. *Rulers* and *authorities* are familiar from 1:21; the others are found only here. Some of the terms are drawn from the political realm (*rulers, authorities*); others may have had astrological connotation (*cosmic potentates*; Arnold, 1989:65–8; Best, 1998:593–4). Whatever the origins of these terms, they are intended to be shorthand for the myriad of powers, great and small, personal and impersonal, individual and systemic, that resist the saving activity of God among humanity (Lincoln: 445; Yoder Neufeld, 1997:122–4 [*Powers*]).

The translation of the concluding item on the list, *pneumatika*, illustrates this comprehensiveness. *Pneumatika* is a neuter plural of the adjective “spiritual,” literally translated as “spiritualities” or “spiritual things” or “matters.” NIV and NRSV have *spiritual forces*. But in 1 Corinthians 2:13, NRSV translates that same term as “spiritual things” and NIV as “spiritual truths.” So “the spiritual dimensions or aspects of evil” might be a better translation than “spiritual forces.” This widens the sense of what the church is called upon to struggle against.

To further specify that these *spiritualities* are *in the heavenlies* is not a reference to things or places above and beyond the plane of human experience. Such language indicates status more than place. After all, believers are already *in the heavenlies* (cf. 2:6). *In the heavenlies* means that these evil potencies have the status of overlords over human affairs (cf. 2:2). But the power and armor of God, worn by those who *in and with Christ* are also *in the heavenlies*, make the church more than a match for them.

By means of the stress on comprehensiveness in the list of evil powers, the author indicates that the church is to take up the struggle with *all* the powers resisting God’s saving designs for the

cosmos. Any restrictive definition of the powers undervalues the victory of Christ and thereby defeats the central argument in Ephesians. We recall 1:21, where Christ has been given victory over *all principalities, powers, dominions, authorities, and every name*. The allusive list of powers in 6:12 is therefore suggestive of the full range of evil into which the *authority of the air* lures the *sons of disobedience* (2:1–3; notes on “culture of darkness,” 5:11–14; “Light and Darkness,” TBC for 5:3–21 [Powers]).

As a bridge to the description of the armor itself, the author reiterates in 6:13 the call to *take up the whole armor of God*. In 6:11 the saints were asked to *put on* the armor, suggesting protective gear; now in 6:13 the language suggests taking up weapons. This is to be done so that the saints may be able (lit.) *to resist on the evil day*. NRSV’s *withstand* (NIV, *stand your ground*) has a defensive connotation that does not fit the imagery the author has chosen here. *Resist* in the sense of “to oppose” captures the sense of “standing against” much better.

The reference to *the evil day* in 6:13 is puzzling. We might take *evil day* to refer to the time of the final eschatological battle, when God and his holy ones overcome the devil and his evil forces. However, Ephesians generally gives little attention to traditional apocalyptic eschatology [Apocalypticism]. Perhaps, then, *the evil day* refers to any of the days of battle, with all the struggle, pain, and sacrifice they bring with them, without intending any particular eschatological scenario (note the plural *evil days* in 5:16).

As often, a solution might lie in combining the two notions. Since we recognize the important ties between 1 Corinthians 15:24–27 and Ephesians 6:10–20 (cf. 1:19–23, notes), we can be sure that the author wants “those who belong to Christ” (1 Cor. 15:23) to see the present struggle as part of a final decisive messianic battle to the finish. This is true however long that battle might last, no matter how many *days* (5:16) such a *day* might contain (cf. Arnold, 1989:113–5; Barth, 1974:804; Best, 1998:597; Schnackenburg: 275–6). “Final” and “decisive” does not imply “the end of history” (contra Lincoln: 446), but the day(s) before all things are fully and completely gathered up in the peace that is Christ. Then history, *the coming ages* (2:7), can finally ensue, with *God* being *all in all* (4:6; cf. 1 Cor. 15:28).

Verse 13 presents the translator with one more puzzle. NIV and NRSV translate *katēgazomai* as *having done everything*. True, the term usually carries the sense of “doing” or “producing” in the Pauline literature (e.g., Rom. 2:9; 4:15; 7:15; 15:18; 1 Cor. 5:3; 2 Cor. 4:17; 5:5; Phil. 2:12). But *what* are believers to have *done*? The most immediate answer might be putting on the armor. After all, the command to *stand* is repeated in Ephesians 6:14. Believers are to stand, having put on (past tense!) the *belt*, the *breastplate*, and the *shoes*. But the term *katēgazomai* can also mean “to defeat” or “to destroy,” which would appear to fit the present context of struggle and battle just as well or better (BAGD: 421; Bertram, 1965:634–5; Yoder Neufeld, 1997:128–9).

Hence, the sentence reads, *And having conquered completely, to be standing*. In ancient warfare, the soldiers standing at the end of battle are showing themselves to be victorious. *Standing* is a sign of strength in battle, a stance of victory found all over the biblical and related literature (e.g., Ps. 18:33–34; Wisd. of Sol. 18:16, 21–23; 1QM 14.4–8).

## The Divine Armor 6:14–17

The armor in which the church is to take its stand is elaborated in verses 14–17. As stated above, the tradition from which the author draws this image is chiefly Isaiah 59:17–19 and its dependent

texts rather than the familiar armor of the Roman soldier (cf. texts and items of armor, in “Isaiah 59 and Its Offspring,” TBC).

We begin with some general observations. First, the armor is both metaphorical and real. The armor works as a metaphor only because in reality *truth, justice, peace, faith (fulness), the word of God, and prayer* are the effective means by which the powers are overcome. Those who interpret this passage in a more restrictedly “exorcistic” way must keep this in mind. The powers are vanquished through the exercise of truth, justice, peace, and liberation, just as they are through the exercise of the word and prayer. The emphasis in this metaphor falls on those virtues and actions, and not on the elements of armor that are the vehicle of the metaphor (*belt, shoes, etc.*). The specific items of armor and weaponry are to some extent interchangeable (TBC, on diverse ways this image is appropriated).

Second, by reaching behind 1 Thessalonians 5 to Isaiah 59, the author of Ephesians makes clear that the armor is *God’s*. This has important implications for how one reads the metaphor of the armed warrior as a whole. The pedigree of the motif shows that the metaphor is intrinsically more offensive than it is defensive (contra Berkhof: 47–50).

Third, although vengeance and wrath are part of God’s warring in Isaiah and Wisdom of Solomon and set the context for the image in 1 Thessalonians 5, however ironically (Elias: 206–9; Yoder Neufeld, 1997:84–93), they are not stressed in Ephesians (even if present; 5:5–7, notes). The battle against the powers is nevertheless real, and their defeat is certain. Vengeance and wrath are not explicitly present likely because of their association with divine warfare *against blood and flesh*. And that is *not* the nature of this struggle.

The whole armor of God depicted in the following verses is meant to show that the faithful community is called to *stand* (cf. 6:11, 13). They are also to *do* God’s work, to *act* as the Messiah’s body through the exercise of the same virtues and actions that have marked God’s saving intervention in the past. These virtues and actions are *truth, justice, peace, faithfulness/solidarity, salvation/liberation, the word, and prayer*.

### 6:14a Truth

*Truth (alētheia)* is at the head of the list of armor, identified with the girding of the loins. The pride of place given to *truth* should not surprise us since the author has already greatly stressed *truth* throughout the letter (1:13; 4:15, 21, 24–25; 5:9). Significantly, *truth* marks both the nature of God’s presence in the world in Jesus (4:21, 24) and the way those who have *put on Christ* are to behave toward each other (4:15, 25). Its presence here is particularly reminiscent of the Greek (LXX) version of Isaiah 11:5, where God’s anointed one will gird himself with truth.

That *truth* is here included in the *armor* shows that for the author the exercise of *truth* is more than a matter of being honest, as much as integrity and “trustworthiness” (Houlden: 339) are essential components of readiness for a struggle with the powers. *Truth* is an active dimension of the church’s life. It is a way in which God intervenes in a world whose culture is best characterized as *the lie* (4:25–27, notes). It means upholding standards of gracious integrity *within* the community of *the new human* (4:15, 25). It means speaking the “truth-full” good news to those still under the sway of evil (e.g., 2:2, 17; there is no good reason to exclude this dimension from its meaning, as do Lincoln: 448; Schnackenburg: 277, n. 29).

Exercising *truth* also means speaking to the powers the *truth* that is in Jesus (4:21), *the multivariied wisdom of God* (3:10; Berkhof: 50–1). The exercise of *truth* in word and deed will often be highly conflictual. *Truth* is experienced often as an attack and is therefore often vigorously and

sometimes violently resisted. The *truth* is armor against the deceitful strategies of powers resisting the truth (6:11; cf. 4:14). It is also a weapon with which to undo *the lie*.

### 6:14b Righteousness/Justice

The next piece of armor is the *breastplate of righteousness/justice*. *Righteousness* and *justice* both translate the one Greek word *dikaio sunē*. For purposes of hearing the full range of meaning, I have placed both terms together in this discussion. Along with *truth*, *righteousness/justice* has already been identified as the *fruit of light* in 5:9, and as the means through which *the new human* is created (with *the holiness of truth*, 4:24). To relate *righteousness* to “justification” is of little help in this case (contra Barth, 1974:795–7). It may even be a hindrance because it stresses that righteousness is what God imputes to the believer on the basis of faith, and not by works (2:8–10, notes).

A quite different understanding is at work here: the point is *doing* the *right* thing. Notice in Isaiah 59:17 that God puts on *righteousness/justice* as, the *breastplate*. God does so because there is no one who practices *justice*, no one to intervene on behalf of those who are being killed and tortured in the public square (59:7, 14). The armor signals the nature of God’s intervention as judge and liberator. *Righteousness* is what God *does* as warrior—it is *justice* at work. We should not think of the *breastplate of righteousness/justice* in Ephesians as the safe cocoon of impunity (as many understand “justification”). Instead, it is the active participation in the divine battle against the powers on behalf of their victims.

As in the case of God in Isaiah 59, *justice* is what the saints put on; *justice* is what saints practice (cf. Isa. 11:5). In Isaiah 59, God could find no one to intervene. In Ephesians 6, the church wears justice on its breast, so that now there *is* someone to intervene.

### 6:15 Peace

Ephesians introduces a novel element to the divine armor in verse 15. Believers are to have *feet shod in readiness (hetoimasia) to announce the good news of peace*. Interpreting the passage in essentially defensive terms, Best opts for translating *hetoimasia* as *firmness*, having firm footwear so as to (with)stand the onslaughts of the enemies (Best, 1998:599–600). As valuable as is firm footwear, *readiness* communicates the holy impatience to get the good news of peace out. *Peace* is, after all, a central concern of Ephesians, as we see in 2:11–22, most beautifully expressed in the hymn of 2:14–16.

The presence of *peace* in this passage on armor has been called a “lofty paradox” (Harnack, 1963:13; cf. Schnackenburg: 278). There is a paradox if the gospel of peace is a part of the “arsenal” of the divine warrior. It is a paradox of sorts also if the gospel of peace makes one ready to do battle (Lincoln: 449). The author already hints at the paradox in 2:16, where the one who himself is peace *murders* enmity through his own death.

Compelling as such observations are, another interpretation may be more persuasive. There is no paradox in the readiness of a warrior to announce peace once hostile powers have been defeated (Yoder Neufeld, 1997:137–9). In the background is the image of the messenger of peace in Isaiah 52:7, who comes announcing peace, the cessation of conflict (cf. Isa. 57:19, used in Eph. 2:17; cf. Rom. 10:15; contra Best, 1998:600). Indeed, to speak here of *readiness to announce peace* means that peace is not yet fully present, however much Christ has already made peace between Jews and Gentiles (2:11–22). The *gathering up of all things in Christ* (1:10) remains an ongoing conflictual process in which the church is to play an essential role. Such a struggle is in actual experience the

practice of suffering love in imitation of the ultimate announcer of peace, Christ; yet it is also an assault on the powers.

### 6:16 Faith (Fulness)

Another novel item of armor is the *shield of faith (pistis)* with which to *quench the flaming darts of the evil one*. This image of the shield of faith is almost universally interpreted as defensive. The shield is needed to fend off the fiery darts of the attacking evil one. But to identify the shield as defensive does not tell us whether the one wearing the shield is on the defensive or the offensive in a battle. Ancient depictions of siege warfare in both word and picture show that shields were carried by the forces putting a city under siege, fending off the fiery arrows of the defenders (Yoder Neufeld, 1997:139–40; Perkins: 146–7, acknowledging this, does not draw the conclusion).

A shield is, of course, by its very nature defensive. *Trust* or *confidence* in God's power is a critical part of the armor in this passage. Throughout the Psalms, God is called a "shield" (e.g., Pss. 3:3; 5:12; 7:10; 18:2, 30, 35; 35:1–3; 59:11; 76:3; 115:9–11; 119:114; 144:2). The last phrase of Psalm 91:4 is highly reminiscent of the Ephesians text:

He will cover you with his pinions,  
and under his wings you will find refuge;  
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.

Psalm 28:7 also anticipates Ephesians' stress on divine power in relation to the armor:

The LORD is my strength and my shield;  
in him my heart trusts;  
so I am helped, and my heart exults,  
and with my song I give thanks to him.

But a defensive interpretation of this image does not capture the thought of Ephesians. In 6:16, the readers are not depicted as dependent on the protection of the divine warrior, as true as that dependency is in the lives of those who have *faith*. The bracing nature of the present summons emerges because such dependency is taken for granted. In this instance, the believers themselves are the warrior!

As the discussion of the Pauline phrase "saved by faith" in 2:8 showed, *pistis* can mean "trust," in this case in God's power to save (Lincoln: 449). With the article it is often translated as "the faith," referring to the content of "Christian faith" (as Best, 1998:601, interprets it here). But *pistis* can also mean *faithfulness* (cf. notes on 1:1 and 3:12; Bultmann and Weiser; Yoder Neufeld, 1997:139, n. 140). It is through Christ's *faithfulness* toward us that we have been granted boldness and confidence. So putting on the *shield of pistis* is another way of participating in messianic *faithfulness*.

God's faithful action in Christ provides the undergirding for the community engaged in mortal combat with the powers. To the same abundant extent, the exercise of this armor means that the saints can be counted on to *keep faith with blood and flesh*, to intervene on their behalf. *Faithfulness* means "solidarity," here with God and with humanity.

The image of the shield of *faithfulness* is thus every bit as offensive as it is defensive. The church is called to put the powers under siege. The shield is part of the arsenal of intervention, as Psalm 35:1–3 illustrates forcefully, where God is asked to take up shield and buckler, spear and javelin, and to intervene on behalf of the afflicted.

### 6:17a Salvation/Liberation

Ephesians now returns to a specific element of God's armor in Isaiah 59:17, *the helmet of salvation* or, to use an entirely fitting synonym, *liberation*. Its presence in the list is highlighted by the fact that whereas the putting on of previous items of armor was grammatically related to the command to stand in 6:14, a new imperative is sounded here: *Take up the helmet!* In Isaiah 59, God is the one who puts on *the helmet of salvation*. This background means that one will want to be careful not to interpret the phrase of Ephesians 6:17 as the protection God offers the saints by assuring them of their own salvation (against many commentators who read it as "receive the helmet," as in Best, 1998:602; Lincoln: 450).

True, the salvation of the believers is already assured (2:8). That is, after all, the gist of the whole first half of the letter. In the context of putting on the armor, however, the image of *grasping the helmet of salvation* is meant to place on the church the task of bringing liberation to those in bondage by imitating the God of Isaiah 59. Close attention to the vocabulary will support such an interpretation: Ephesians 6:17 uses the term for *salvation* found in the Greek of Isaiah 59:17 (LXX), *sōtērion*, rather than the more frequent *sōtēria* (Eph. 1:13; Paul in 1 Thess. 5:8). This indicates a deliberate connection to Isaiah 59 (Yoder Neufeld, 1997:87–9, 141–2, on Eph. 6:17; Isa. 59; 1 Thess. 5).

### 6:17b Spirit/Word of God

The saints are to take the *helmet of liberation* and *the sword of the Spirit*, the *word of God*. It is sometimes noted that the word for sword is *machaira*, which in Greco-Roman times referred to a dagger or small sword rather than the large sword called *xiphos* or *rhomphaia*. Sometimes interpreters draw the conclusion that the author wants to play down the militancy or aggressiveness of the text (e.g., Berkhof: 52; similarly Klassen, 1984:128; J. H. Yoder, 1994:203). However, the Greek Bible (LXX) early Christians used most frequently employs *machaira* to translate the Hebrew *ḥereb*, the term for "sword" used in such important divine warfare texts as Deuteronomy 32:41–42, Jeremiah 25:30–38 (32:30–38, LXX), and except for 66:16, always in Isaiah (e.g., 27:1; 34:5–6; 65:12).

Furthermore, the author of Ephesians is consciously using a *scriptural* metaphor, employing *scriptural* language, and is heavily dependent on Isaiah. Hence, the choice of *machaira* draws comparison with God as the divine warrior, not with the Roman soldier.

The rest of the image supports this interpretation. This sword is the *sword of the pneuma*, both *Spirit* and *wind* (2:1–2, notes). In both Isaiah 59:19 and Wisdom of Solomon 5:23, "wind" is part of the arsenal of the divine warrior. The overtones of power and force are not derived only from there, however. In Pauline churches, "Spirit" signified the powerful presence of God, the divine force of the eschatological future already "blowing" among believers (e.g., Rom. 8; Gal. 5; 1 Cor. 12; 2 Cor. 3). In Ephesians 6, *the sword of the Spirit (pneuma)* is set against *the spiritual aspects (pneumatika) of evil in the heavenlies*.

This sword is *the word of God*. In Ephesians the term *word of God* has not yet come into use as a synonym for Scripture. Instead, it refers to the whole variety of divine revelation and intervention. Though *word* here translates *rhēma*, that term is more or less synonymous with *logos* in 6:19 (Yoder Neufeld, 1997:144). The range of allusions is great (see, e.g., the *word* as means of *washing*, 5:26). Of interest to us here are particularly texts that show the *word* within contexts of divine warfare.

Notable in these divine warfare texts is the *logos* in Wisdom of Solomon 18, both as the name given to the avenging angel carrying the sword of judgment (18:14–16), and as the weapon by which the defender of the people wards off the angel of death (18:22). Compare also Isaiah 11:4, LXX, where the divinely chosen king smites the world with "the word of his mouth" ("word," *logos* in

Greek; in place of the Hebrew *shebet*, “rod”). Immediately following is the parallel phrase “breath (*pneuma*) of his lips” (Isa. 11:4, LXX). Strikingly similar to our text is Hebrews 4:12, where the “word (*logos*) of God” is like a “two-edged sword (*machaira*).” Revelation 1:16 and 2:12 illustrate the interchangeability of terms: the “two-edged sword” coming from the “mouth” of the exalted Christ is the *rhomphaia* (cf. 2:16; 19:15). Note also the close proximity of “the word of truth” and “the weapons of justice” in 2 Corinthians 6:7 (TRYN).

Again, we see that the author has chosen a symbol (*sword*) laden with overtones of divine intervention and power, even if he is not dependent on any one particular text.

The content of *the word* is left undefined. Some commentators are sure it can mean only “the gospel” (e.g., Arnold, 1989:111; Fee, 1987:729; Schnackenburg: 280). That identification is no doubt in large measure valid, all the more so if “gospel” is understood as rich and comprehensive “good news,” as multivariied in its scope and expression as is the wisdom of God (3:10). Others think it might refer to a slogan or formula intended to fend off the evil powers (Best, 1998:604; this is interpreted “exorcistically” by many of the so-called third wave [*Powers*]).

In this case it is important that the church understand the call to make *the word of God* effective. It is less important that specific content be given to the term *the word of God*. For the church to “wield” the *word of God* (as a *sword*) means that it must find ways of making sure that *word* does not “return ... empty” (Isa. 55:11). In his treatment of this text, Arthur Cochrane (128) appropriately points to Martin Luther’s famous hymn “A Mighty Fortress.”

And though this world, with devils filled,  
Should threaten to undo us;  
We will not fear, for God hath willed  
His truth to triumph through us:  
The prince of darkness grim,  
We tremble not for him;  
His rage we can endure;  
For lo! his doom is sure;  
One little *word* shall fell him. (trans. F. H. Hedge, italics added)

## Prayer as Struggle and Solidarity 6:18–20

Translators typically treat this section as a discrete passage. Nevertheless, these three verses are grammatically dependent on the imperative in verse 17 calling on saints to *take up* the helmet and the sword (so also Fee, 1987:730) or, as some suggest, on the main imperative to *stand* in verse 14 (e.g., Arnold: 112; Barth, 1974:777; Lincoln: 451). In Greek, participles can function as imperatives, but it is best here to see these verses as grammatically connected to the rest of the armor. Prayer plays a central role in the struggle of the communal divine warrior. Prayer is battle. Prayer is also, however, a way to keep alert. It is a form of vigilance, of keeping the senses honed to danger and to opportunities for victory.

The importance Ephesians gives to prayer as part of the church’s struggle with the powers is shown by comparison with Colossians 4:2–4, likely the source for these verses. Colossians makes no connection between wakefulness, prayer, and battle. It does not picture Christian life as battle. The powers have been defeated and have already been paraded in a victory procession (Col. 2:15; cf. E. Martin: 116). In Ephesians, prayer is “militarized” and drawn into the struggle with the powers. In doing so, Ephesians echoes the close connection of vigilance and alertness to divine warfare in Paul

(e.g., Rom. 13:11–14; 1 Thess. 5:6, 8; cf. Arnold, 1989:112, exploring prayer as a means of struggling with the powers; Wink, 1992:308–14).

### 6:18 Vigilant and Alert Prayer in the Spirit

The critical importance given to prayer is indicated by the fact that it is to take place, literally, *in every time* (*kairos*, “loaded time”; 1:10, notes). Praying at every important moment becomes equivalent to *exploiting every opportune moment* (*kairos*; 5:16, notes). Hence the need for alertness. Again, we should not interpret this in a defensive sense. This is the corporate divine warrior on the lookout for opportunities to transform darkness into light.

The relationship of prayer to battle is further indicated by the fact that it is *in [the] Spirit* [“In”]. One might understand this as a reference to praying in tongues as prayer empowered *by the Spirit* (cf. Rom. 8:26–27; 1 Cor. 14:14–15; Fee, 1987:730–1). If such is intended, then this form of worship must be understood as combat with the powers, much as worship inspired by the filling of the Spirit is an act of courageous nonconformity and transformation (Eph. 5:18–21). In verse 17 *Spirit* is associated with *sword* and *word*. In this case we might think of praying *with the Spirit*, “wielding” the Spirit in prayer, unleashing the power of God. Neither interpretation should be excluded. It is clear that prayer is effective power-filled engagement in the struggle for the cosmos (on prayer as combat: Ellul, 1973:139–78, esp. 150–3; McClain: 69–73, 104–15; Wink, 1992:297–317).

But prayer is also the exercise of solidarity with fellow strugglers. *Pleading for all the saints* is a way in which members of the divine warrior participate in meeting each other’s needs. In the Bible the divine warrior is the one who *responds* to the prayers of the needy (cf. Ps. 35:1–3). Hence, the implication is present that those who do the praying are themselves necessarily drawn into the response to that prayer (cf. Ellul, 1973:160–78).

### 6:19–20 Praying for Paul

After prayer has been offered *for all the saints*, it is also to be offered for Paul, that he *be given openness of mouth to boldly speak the word, the mystery of the good news*. In keeping with the way Ephesians places Paul behind the saints, at the end of the line, (3:8, notes), the request that Paul be prayerfully remembered *follows* the command to pray for all the saints. The saints find themselves in the armor and role of the divine warrior, but Paul is a prisoner, a divine emissary in chains (cf. 3:1; 4:1; for the image of *ambassador*, 6:20, see 2 Cor. 5:20; Philem. 9, NRSV note).

There is great irony in the image of an emissary in chains. A bound ambassador is a contradiction in terms—except from a Pauline perspective. Imprisonment brought great suffering to Paul (note esp. Philippians), but it only deepened his qualifications to be an ambassador of the one who went to the cross. In Paul’s day, the cross stood for shameful torture and execution, and yet it became the central expression of God’s power and wisdom (1 Cor. 1:18–25). Hence, Paul’s own imprisonment could hardly thwart his commission to let the secret out of the bag, to get out the good news of God’s reconciliation in Christ (cf. Eph. 3).

The message to the readers is clear: their own vulnerability likewise does not disqualify them from inhabiting the armor of God and the task it implies. In doing so, they imitate their great apostle Paul, who amid great suffering and calamities nevertheless wielded the “weapons of righteousness” with endurance and love for his churches (2 Cor. 6:1–13).

In 6:20 we thus see one more instance of the profound irony that informed Paul’s apostolic ministry, here expressed in the image of the bound messenger, the *ambassador in chains*. The heroic status of Paul, as observed in chapter 3, is exploited for all its motivational force, in a way highly reminiscent of Paul himself, who time and again was prepared to place himself in a subservient

position in relation to his churches. Notice, for example, how often he asks for prayer in his letters (e.g., Rom. 15:30–32; Phil. 1:19; 1 Thess. 5:25). Here in Ephesians, while Paul is in chains, the saints are in the armor of the divine warrior. Their prayers are a plea for God to embolden the chained ambassador, to free his mouth even as his body is in chains. The prayers are also a way of coming to Paul's aid. One might even say that the act of writing in his name is a way of answering that prayer.

The image of the armed struggle against the powers thus ends on a strong note of mutuality: Paul serves as a model who puts the welfare of *all the saints* before his own. Deference to the needs of others and respect for *all the saints* are two of the strange weapons wielded in imitation of God and his Messiah. Strange warfare, indeed! However, it is lethal from the vantage point of *the powers*, who find nothing as threatening as a prayerful community exercising truth, justice, peace, and a courageous speaking of the word of God, thus announcing the good news that enmity is dead!

## THE TEXT IN BIBLICAL CONTEXT

### The Divine Warrior

Ephesians 6:10–20 is one of many texts in the Bible that deal with divine warfare (e.g., Exod. 14–15; Deut. 32–33; Pss. 18; 68; Isa. 59; 63; Hab. 3; among Mennonite writers, cf. Ted Hiebert; Waldemar Janzen; Millard Lind; Ben Ollenburger; Devon Wiens; Yoder Neufeld). The image of God as warrior is one of the primal metaphors in the Bible, in the OT and the NT.

One of the oldest songs recorded in biblical literature, the song of Miriam and Moses in Exodus 15, celebrates the LORD as a mighty warrior who has driven horse and chariot into the sea (15:1, 21). This image of God underwent some radical changes over the centuries. The most dramatic was the prophetic insight that the people of Israel could not count on God's warring on their behalf against their enemies unless they lived true to their covenant with God. Instead, God could be expected to go to war against them (e.g., Isa. 29:3–10; Jer. 21:3–9; 29:16–19). The warrior became judge and executioner of Israel's enemies (e.g., Isa. 13) and also of Israel.

God could use natural disasters to fight his enemies (e.g., Exod. 15; Deut. 32; 2 Sam. 22:9–16//Ps. 18:8–15; Ps. 77:16–18). God could surround himself with allies such as the tribes of Israel, the hated Assyrians or Babylonians, and the armies of heaven or, as they are frequently called, the "heavenly hosts." Typical of apocalyptic literature generally, the Revelation of John illustrates dramatically how this imagery lent itself to picturing God as judge and liberator on a cosmic scale.

At the root of this tradition lies the conviction that ultimately God alone is the warrior. Victory is God's and God's alone. One important way this finds expression is in the command for the people to stand and watch the LORD act on their behalf, as at the Red Sea in Exodus 14:13–14. Even when the people come "to the help of the LORD" ("YHWH," Judg. 5:23), as is more commonly the case, the battle and the victory are always God's.

### Isaiah 59 and Its Offspring

The specific tradition of the divine warrior that the author takes up begins with Isaiah 59 and continues through the Wisdom of Solomon 5 and 1 Thessalonians 5. It shows the prophetic transformation of the motif, but also the more radical changes Paul has introduced.

Isaiah 59 pictures God as infuriated at the violence and oppression that marks Israelite existence. There is no one to see that justice is done, so God puts on the divine armor and brings judgment on the violators of the covenant and liberation for the faithful. The armor is thus a symbol of judgment as much or more than it is of liberation. Wisdom of Solomon 5 takes up the Isaianic motif and interprets it from within the same frame of thinking. God puts on the armor to vindicate the just by bringing down their oppressors.

Wisdom of Solomon may have been written as late as the time of Paul’s ministry. This only increases our wonder at Paul’s radical reinterpretation of Isaiah 59 in his first letter to the Thessalonians. Into a world marked by darkness, drunkenness, sleep, and a fatefully mistaken sense of security, the “day of the Lord” comes like “a thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:2). The images are threatening and are intended to be so. But a surprise awaits. Who is in the divine armor? Weak and suffering believers! And what are they wielding in their struggle? Faith, love, and the hope of salvation!

To be sure, Paul does not for a moment abandon the conviction that God will judge the cosmos and all its inhabitants, as 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 2:14 clearly show. Yet, at the heart of Paul’s gospel is also the conviction that the God before whose holiness and justice we all “fall short” (Rom. 3:23), the same God, surprises the world with grace. Indeed, the desire to surprise with grace is the fullest expression of God’s justice (cf. Rom. 5).

First Thessalonians 5:1–11 is an instance of that good news. Like a thief in the night, the divine warrior surprises those sitting in darkness, but the warrior is in the form of a community that practices faith, hope, and love (5:8). The *day of the Lord* becomes once again a *day of salvation*. Amos’ terrible irony of day becoming night (5:18, 20) has been reversed: night has turned into day (Elias: 197–9; Yoder Neufeld, 1997:73–93).

Ephesians builds on that transformation. Notice, for example, the act of turning darkness into light through exposing the darkness for what it is (Eph. 5:11). At the same time, Ephesians 6:10–20 does not simply imitate 1 Thessalonians 5, even if both texts express the conviction that the community of believers has been drawn into the activity of the divine warrior. In Ephesians, the adversary has changed. In effect, the church as Christ’s body is now implicated in Christ’s reign, marked by warfare with the powers (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24–28).

We can more fully appreciate the distinctive way Ephesians treats the tradition of God’s armor by placing the contents of the armor in these related texts side by side.

**The Armor of God**

<i>Isa. 59:17</i>	<i>Wisd. of Sol. 5:17–1</i>	<i>Thess. 5:8</i>	<i>Eph. 6:14–17</i>
	<b>20a</b>		
	panoply or whole armor		panoply or whole armor
			girdle of truth
breastplate of righteousness/justice	of breastplate of righteousness/justice	of breastplate of faith and love	breastplate of righteousness/justice
			shoes of the runner of peace

shield of faith or  
faithfulness

helmet of salvation    helmet of impartial justice    helmet of the hope of salvation

sword of stern wrath

sword of the Spirit,  
the word of God

clothed with the  
garments of  
vengeance and wrath

(next, in 59:19, natural phenomena: wind, river)  
(next, in 5:20b–23, creation as ally in warfare: lightning, hail, sea, rivers, wind)

In comparing the elements of armor, we observe a great deal of both continuity and creativity in how the biblical writers adapt the motif. *Helmet* and *breastplate* are the most consistent elements. Wisdom of Solomon compares *righteousness/justice* to a breastplate, and a close parallel, *impartial justice*, to a helmet. In 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul overlays the helmet and breastplate with his favorite triad of virtues: *faith, love, and hope*. It may be that he sees faith and love as another way of expressing God's righteousness/justice (cf. Rom. 5:8, 18). Ephesians returns to the Isaianic original with *the breastplate of righteousness/justice* and *the helmet of salvation*. At the same time, we are struck by the creativity with which the author expands the image.

We must keep this long tradition in view so we can appreciate the shock early readers and hearers of this letter would have experienced at the summons for them to put on *God's* armor. Ephesians calls them to enter the battle against the spiritual powers of darkness in the heavenlies. It is true that this is *God's* battle and *God's* victory; it is also true that the *saints* are drawn into the struggle of God for the sake of the cosmos.

### Are the Powers All Bad?

The depiction of the powers in 6:12 is sharply negative. The overarching image of warfare leads of course to seeing them as such. But in the NT, the powers are not uniformly evil [*Powers*]. Colossians 1:16 credits Christ with having created them! At present, however, they are clearly viewed in Ephesians as hostile (cf. 2:2), even if 2:7 and 3:10 might allow for the future reconciliation of the powers in some sense, perhaps as part of the *ingathering of all things* (1:10). For the most part, the depiction is decidedly negative.

The writer of Ephesians was specifically concerned to impress on readers the gravity of the struggle toward pacification of the cosmos. That objective alone governs the depiction of the powers. Within the frame of the argument in Ephesians, the anticipated fate of the powers is defeat

(cf. 1:20–22). Ephesians is silent on whether that means their elimination or whether there is to be restoration beyond defeat.

## Baptism and Putting on the Armor of God

In Pauline letters, “taking off” and “putting on” are favorite ways to represent the transformation of believers in baptism (e.g., Rom. 13:12, 14; Gal. 3:27; Col. 3:8–12). It is widely thought that this language reflects the actual ritual of baptism, where those to be baptized took off their old clothes, were baptized, and then received new clothes reflecting the new life in Christ (Meeks: 150–7). We have already noted that according to 4:22–24 believers were taught to *take off ... the old human*, and *put on the new human* (cf. Col. 3:5–11; E. Martin: 147–65).

The identity of the *new human* has already been established in 2:15 as Christ himself, albeit in the form of reconciled humanity. In baptism, believers are incorporated into that body and person of Christ (Gal. 3:27). They “put on” the Lord Jesus Christ, as Romans 13:14 states it.

Romans 13:12–14, however, also draws a close connection between putting on Christ in baptism and putting on armor: “Take off the works of darkness and put on the weapons of light, since the night is far gone and the day is at hand” (v. 12, TRYN). This is highly reminiscent of 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11, but also of baptism as preparedness for battle in Romans 6:1–14. There the baptized are exhorted not to present their members to sin as “weapons of injustice,” but rather to present their members to God as “weapons of justice” (6:13, TRYN; NIV and NRSV translate rather weakly “instruments of wickedness” and “instruments of righteousness”).

Ephesians 6:10–20 draws heavily on this connection (so also, e.g., Gniska: 310). Putting on *the new human*, the *body* of Christ, is identification with the task of Christ. That means putting on the armor of God and entering the fray of messianic battle with the powers, exercising truth, justice, peace, faithfulness, liberation, and the word of God with prayerful vigilance and discipline. Baptism is a ritual of enlistment as much as it is identification with the death and resurrection of Christ—or better, because of this identification.

## THE TEXT IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

### The Language of Violence

These verses are clearly meant to challenge and encourage the church to courageous engagement with the powers that resist God’s peace. They have provided great encouragement and motivation for peacemakers (as illustrated repeatedly by e-mail dispatches from Christian Peacemaker Teams [CPT]). Sadly, they have also provided encouragement for a crusade mentality that has left countless victims in its wake. The certainty of being right and of doing the work of God, when fused with a view of the other as enemy, has led to arrogance and blindness, often to great violence (Volf: 57–98, with insightful discussion of “exclusion”).

Questions are increasingly raised, especially among Christians dedicated to peacemaking, about the acceptability of militaristic language, even when it is highly metaphorical and even when it is derived from the Bible (e.g., Russell, 1984:122). Some who have been close to war feel deep revulsion at the vocabulary of violence, especially when employed as a positive metaphor.

In addition to the issue of glorifying violence, does such language paint reality too much as parties/dimensions “over against” each other and thereby crowd out other paradigms of change?

Does it create and nourish a mentality that sees violent struggle, however spiritually redefined, as the only way to salvation?

While acknowledging the importance of these questions, we need to recall that the author of Ephesians uses other even more powerful ways to reflect on God's great program of making peace with the cosmos and its inhabitants (e.g., gathering, 1:10; re-creating, 2:10, 15; dying *for* 2:15–16; 5:2). This particular text forces the church to deal with whether there is something in the very way *the powers* relate to human life (cf. 2:2; 6:11) that requires vigilance, empowerment, and struggle, expressed here in the language of battle and warfare.

The interpretation of Ephesians offered in this commentary sees militarism, indeed enmity itself (cf. 2:16), as one of the powers that must be resisted and overcome. Warfare language then becomes both fitting and highly ironic. The persistence of organized, culturally nurtured enmity, oppression, and alienation is so strong in our world that it becomes necessary to conceive of the struggle against these as battle with *the powers*. This battle requires all of the divine empowerment and armor that God places at the church's disposal. Our critical and *essential* task is to maintain the irony in such warfare, however, and to remain deeply conscious that this is always a battle *for blood and flesh* and *never against blood and flesh*. The history of the church tells us that this is just as difficult as it is urgent.

We might add that the words in Ephesians 6:10–20 sound one way when spoken with resilient hope and even spiritual bravado by a tiny and outnumbered minority, perhaps oppressed and seemingly powerless. The same words sound quite different when wielded by a church wedded to institutions and systems of power and control. In such a context, the irony cannot help but disappear and give way to literal warfare—religious, psychological, and/or physical. Then the mystery of the gospel is not revealed (6:19; cf. 3:10) but is fatally obscured. The gospel of peace is stifled, not proclaimed (6:15). The heart of the gospel is betrayed, the Spirit is grieved (4:30).

For this text and its imagery to be good news for us and our world, it matters absolutely who we are as readers and what our allegiances are. We must ask, for example, whether this metaphor of God's armor, however truthful, is appropriate for a "Christian" imagination that has been deeply militarized and is thus incapable of seeing its irony. The writer of Ephesians would no doubt bless any attempt to find more-fitting metaphors than those of warfare, but only if they could nurture the alertness, resilience, confidence, and identification with God as well as this metaphor did in its day (cf. Bergant: 102).

## Are the Powers "Real"?

Does the language of *the powers* mesh with how Christians view reality today? Remarkably it does, if for very different reasons. Many, not only beyond the shores of the highly secularized and "demystified" West, have a lively sense of evil or demonic forces wreaking havoc in the lives of people. For them "spiritual warfare" is an experiential reality for which this text supplies profound encouragement [*Powers*]. Such Christians know prayer as battle (e.g., Warner, 1991:133–43).

Sadly, Christians with this perspective of spiritual warfare are often remarkably indifferent or even hostile to dealing with issues of systemic, structural, social, political, and cultural evil such as economic disparities and exploitation, nationalism, militarism, racism, and sexism. In many cases, they may even ally themselves with those very powers of oppression. This passage challenges such believers to see spiritual warfare as an often painstakingly ordinary, everyday struggle for peace, justice, truth, and liberation in human relationships, small and great.

Others view human life as affected much more devastatingly by social, political, and economic forces. Ephesians 6 offers support for their concerns as well. Since the view of salvation in Ephesians is as comprehensive as the cosmos and *all things* within it (1:10), then the view of the powers should encompass the full dimensions of opposition to that salvation [*Powers*].

As stated above, the view of demonic forces affecting persons is vulnerable to underestimating broad-ranging opposition to God's efforts at peacemaking. Likewise, however, a view of the demonic restricted to influences on institutions in society is just as vulnerable to underestimating how individual persons may be bound (e.g., Luke 13:16). Our text challenges Christians to recognize the "spiritual" factors at the root of militarism, racism, and sexism. It tells us that believers require divine empowerment in the costly struggle for justice and peace. *The powers* will never be fully understood let alone overcome by human beings left to their own devices. That is why the struggle against them must be accompanied and sustained by the vigilant exercise of prayer for power, courage, and insight (Ellul; McClain; Wink [*Powers*]).

In the end, whatever the metaphors, whatever the imagery, and whatever the contexts of struggle, it is *God's* power at work in the community of saints that enables them to participate in the *gathering up of all things in Christ* (1:10).

## Resistance or Nonresistance?

The tradition of the divine warrior influencing this text presents an important challenge to churches with a commitment to nonresistance and nonviolence. As mentioned earlier, a strand in the Bible stresses quite strongly that *God* is the one who sees to it that justice is assured and evil defeated (e.g., Rom. 12:19). In line with this, the only appropriate stance of human beings is one of patient and quiet dependency on God—*nonresistance* (cf. the paradigmatic role of Exod. 14:13–14 in Lind's work; Matt. 5:39, "Do not resist an evildoer," has led to the term *nonresistance*).

This is an important strand, and peace churches have mined this lode well. Such a "quiet" stance can itself, of course, be a form of resistance to the powers (Berkhof: 50–2; J. H. Yoder, 1994:147–53). Yet it must be acknowledged that along with fostering great courage in the face of overwhelming hostility, nonresistance has also often led to disengagement from the world.

As we have seen, the understanding of the church in Ephesians, even if taken by itself, leaves little room for disengagement. The church is one flesh with the Christ through whom God is reconciling the world to himself (2:14–17; 5:29–32; 2 Cor. 5:19). In other words, believers are not so much *dependents* as *participants* in the messianic task. If the powers are to be vanquished, it is not enough for the church simply *to be* a church keeping to itself. The church's true existence consists of the active and bold actualization of gospel truth, justice, peace, and liberation in human relationships (cf. 3:10; 5:11; 6:20; Berkhof: 51–2; J. H. Yoder, 1994:147–9; yet Berkhof and Yoder downplay the offensive nature of the church's struggle much more than does Ephesians). Here at the end of the letter, Ephesians draws the church into the role of the one who intervenes—the divine warrior.

This passage and, indeed, the letter as a whole provide the basis for a courageous engagement with all the powers—spiritual, personal, impersonal, political, social, cultural, and economic—that resist the reconciliation of *all people* and *all things* to God. Indeed, it makes such engagement the litmus test of being *in Christ*. It is absolutely important that those who are so engaged do so as members of the Christ whose own engagement took the form of dying *for* his enemies and of creating a new humanity out of those enemies (2:11–22). Such radical self-giving *kills* the enmity

(2:15); that peaceableness represents a frontal assault on the powers. The double implication in the image of the divine armor of protection and summons to struggle is captured well in the 1708 *Prayer Book for Earnest Christians*, read widely in Amish and Mennonite circles:

Clothe us now, O Father! with the armor of your divine strength, so we may withstand the deceitful advances of the evil enemy, who fights against truth. Give us the shield of true faith, to maintain victory over all that may hinder us from experiencing your righteousness. Place on our heads the helmet of your salvation, that we need not fear any human being, who withers like the grass. Instead, may we fear you, O Lord, since you search out human hearts and test our inner being.

So now place into our hearts the sword of your Holy Spirit, which is your holy Word and Spirit. Thus may we stand firmly for your holy name and fight for the truth up to the time of our blessed end. (Gross: 55–6)

## Baptism as Enlistment

The relationship of putting on the armor and baptism is of great relevance to the understanding and practice of baptism in the believers church. In that tradition, baptism ideally follows a mature decision to follow Christ and to take on the responsibilities of membership in the church. At the same time, in many such churches, baptism has become a rite of *conformity* to the expectations of the immediate culture—family and congregation.

Insofar as the summons to *put on the armor of God* is parallel to the call to *put on the new human* (4:24), none other than the “Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 13:12, 14), our text is a forceful reminder that baptism is a rite of enlistment into the messianic community. It is at the same time a ritual of empowerment for the messianic task.

Even though he was writing in a context of suffering and oppression (cf. “The Cross of the Saints” [1554], Menno: 599–600), Menno Simons knew that baptism necessarily implicates believers in active struggle against *the powers*:

Against [those who have put on Christ in baptism,] the devil and his accomplices, such as the world and the flesh, being very envious, have declared war and have become their deadly enemies. The regenerate in turn have now become enemies of sin and the devil and have taken the field against all their enemies with the Author and finisher of their faith, under the banner of the crimson cross, armed with the armor of God, surrounded with angels of the Lord, and always watching with great solicitude lest they be overcome by their enemies who never slumber, but go about like roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour, hurt, and harm. (“The Spiritual Resurrection” [1536], Menno: 56–7; italics added; cf. 1 Pet. 5:8, “like a roaring lion”)

Let me say it once more. Do battle! The crown of glory is prepared for you! Shrink not, neither draw back! (“The Cross of the Saints,” Menno: 622; cf. 1 Pet. 5:4, “crown of glory”)

Ephesians 6:10–20 is therefore one more reminder, along with Romans 6 and 13:11–14, of how important it is that baptism be undertaken by those who can appreciate the task and count the cost of being Christian.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Neufeld, T. R. Y. (2001). *Ephesians* (p. 316). Scottdale, PA: Herald Press.

## Spiritual Warfare

Nonphysical or spiritual conflict is a notable feature in New Testament imagery of war, conflict, and violence:

- In Ephesians, God’s servants contend against spiritual forces—not against flesh and blood (Eph 6:12).
- The follower of Jesus can be likened to a soldier who puts on the whole armor of God to wage spiritual warfare (2 Tim 2:3–4; Eph 6:13–17; 1 Tim 1:18; 1 Thess 5:8).
- Paul borrows imagery from Roman military strategy. He depicts spiritual warfare as a Roman siege, and portrays his service to Christ as a Roman triumph—a practice whereby conquered captives were paraded in chains through the city of Rome following a military victory (2 Cor 10:3–4; 2:14; compare Triumphal Entry).
- Jesus is put in the guise of a conquering Roman general who triumphs over the forces of evil after defeating them at the cross (Col 2:14–15).<sup>2</sup>

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## SPIRITUAL WARFARE: *THE ARMOR OF GOD*

When a woman becomes a child of God, she not only inherits God’s blessings but God’s enemies as well. The Lord’s foremost enemy is Satan, whose purpose is to destroy His work (John 8:44), but Jesus came in order to “destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).

Satan is a fallen angel (Is. 14:12–15) and as such is only a created being. He is in no way equal to God, the Creator. While Satan is superior in intellect and strength to mankind, he is inferior to God in every way. Believers have the power of the indwelling resurrected Christ over them and protecting them (1 John 4:4).

In addition, believers have been given the whole armor of God “to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). Each piece of the armor is to be “put on” to help believers overcome the temptations and attacks of the Evil One.

1) *Having Girded Your Waist With Truth* (Eph. 6:14): The waist or abdomen area was generally thought to be the seat of emotions. To gird this area with truth is to commit your emotions to believe the truth. Often a person knowingly allows herself to believe a lie because of fear or self-pity. Believers must hold a commitment to truth regardless of the repercussions (John 8:32, 36).

2) *Having Put On the Breastplate of Righteousness* (Eph. 6:14): The breast is generally thought of as the place of the soul. The heart must be kept pure and righteous because sin gives a foothold to the enemy. Confession and forgiveness on the basis of the blood of Christ cleanse the heart (1 John 1:9).

3) *Having Shod Your Feet With the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace* (Eph. 6:15): Proper shoes enable the feet to go from place to place. The believer is to be about her Father’s business, which is to spread the gospel of peace and reconciliation. An undaunted sense of this mission keeps the believer headed in the right direction (Matt. 28:19, 20).

4) *Taking the Shield of Faith* (Eph. 6:16): The Wicked One is “the accuser of our brethren” (Rev. 12:10) and will send his fiery darts to instill doubt, fear, and guilt. Faith acts as an invisible shield that deflects such false accusations (Heb. 11:6).

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<sup>2</sup> Kaden, D. A. (2016). [War in the New Testament](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

## Week 9 &amp; Week 10 : Wearing the Armor of God

5) *Take the Helmet of Salvation* (Eph. 6:17): A helmet protects the head, that is, the brain and thoughts. Assurance of salvation is a mighty defense against doubt and insecurity and the kinds of works bred by them (1 John 5:11–13).

6) *Take the Sword of the Spirit* (Eph. 6:17): The Word of God, the only offensive weapon in this armor, was used by the Lord Jesus against Satan (Luke 4:1–13). The living Word is powerful, effective, and instructive (Heb. 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

7) *Praying Always* (Eph. 6:18): Prayer opens the channels between us and God. In the midst of battle, we as believers must keep in constant communication with our Leader for directions and encouragement. Our prayers for one another are important and effectual (James 5:16).

See also Neh. 4–7; Mark 5:2, note; Luke 11:14–26; Rom. 3:23, note; 2 Cor. 10:3–5; 1 Pet. 5:8, 9; chart on Strategies in Spiritual Warfare; note on Temptation (Heb. 2)<sup>3</sup>

**John 14:15**

**“If you love me, you will obey what I command.”**

LAST WEEK:

Dissecting a parable:

- Understand what a parable is and why Christ used them.

A parable is a lesson from daily life that teaches a spiritual truth.

Jesus often told parables to provide an understanding of life, especially life in God's kingdom.

Thirty-five percent of all gospel teaching is written in parables = Effective teaching method.

- Ask: Does this truth require belief/thoughts captive only or is there an immediate action (Praxis: belief induced action) that goes with it?

Jesus used parables to teach about God's Kingdom.

42 stories told by Christ to illustrate a truth.

Additional 33 brief sayings and metaphors.

Christ, himself, identified certain stories w/the Kingdom and the gospels identify these as parables.

LAST WEEK: 7 Parables in Matthew 13

KINGDOM PARABLES of Matthew:

Sower: Individual response is required in the Kingdom

Wheat & Tares: Kingdom citizens grow amongst men of the world until God's harvest time.

Mustard Seed: Kingdom begins small, and grows to greatness

Leaven/Yeast: Kingdom affects/effects everything

Hidden Treasure: Kingdom of God is worth everything

Fine Pearls: Kingdom demands ALL

Dragnet: Kingdom contains judgment for all

**Principles for Kingdom Living**

Ask: Does this apply for this age or the age to come?

This age: *What does this require of me today?*

1. *Thought life only...understanding that shapes my beliefs.*
2. *Thought life & Praxis*

Matthew 18:1-4

Humility

“At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Nelson, I. (1995). *The Woman's Study Bible*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

## Week 9 &amp; Week 10 : Wearing the Armor of God

He called a little child and had him stand among them. And He said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Ask: Does this apply for this age or the age to come?

*What does this require of me today?*

1. *Thought life only...understanding that shapes my beliefs.*
2. *Thought life & Praxis*

READ: Matthew 18: 21-35 Unforgiving Servant (Forgiveness)

"Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?'

Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.' Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts...

Ask: Does this apply for this age or the age to come?

*What does this require of me today?*

1. *Thought life only...understanding that shapes my beliefs.*
2. *Thought life & Praxis*

READ: Matthew 20:1-16  
Parable

Generous Landowner

(God is sovereign. The reward is up to Him. Whether you've known Him 15 yrs or 1.)

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire...

Ask: Does this apply for this age or the age to come?

*What does this require of me today?*

1. *Thought life only...understanding that shapes my beliefs.*
2. *Thought life & Praxis*

READ: Matthew 25: 1-13  
Parable

Ten Virgins (Anticipate, Prepare, Watch: LIVE READY)

Ask: Does this apply for this age or the age to come?

*What does this require of me today?*

1. *Thought life only...understanding that shapes my beliefs.*
2. *Thought life & Praxis*

READ: Matthew 25: 31-46

Sheep/Goats

How you treat His children is How you treat Him.

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate...

Ask: Does this apply for this age or the age to come?

## Week 9 &amp; Week 10 : Wearing the Armor of God

*What does this require of me today?*

1. *Thought life only...understanding that shapes my beliefs.*
2. *Thought life & Praxis*

Matthew 11:11-15

"I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. He who has ears, let him hear."

Ask: Does this apply for this age or the age to come?

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29. Taking It by Force (Matt. 11:12). Jesus asserts the "violence" of the kingdom. The unique grammatical construction of the text does not make clear if the kingdom of God is the victim of violence or if, as the kingdom advances in victory, it does so through violent spiritual conflict and warfare—but the context does. Jesus' references to the nonreligious style of John and the confrontive, miraculous ministry of Elijah teach that the kingdom of God makes its penetration by a kind of violent entry opposing the human status quo. It transcends the "softness" (v. 8) of staid religious formalism and exceeds the pretension of child's play (vv. 16-17). It refuses to "dance to the music" of society's expectation that the religious community provide either entertainment ("We played the flute") or dead traditionalism ("We mourned").

Jesus defines the "violence" of His kingdom's expansion by defining the "sword" and "fire" He has brought as different from the battle techniques of political or military warfare (compare Matt. 10:34-39 and Luke 12:49-53 with John 18:36). The upheaval caused by the kingdom of God is not caused by political provocation or armed advance. It is the result of God's order, shaking relationships, households, cities, and nations by the entry of the Holy Spirit's power working in people. (See also Luke 16:16.) Hayford

Matthew 16:18-19

"And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed on heaven."

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Mark 4:21-23

Parable

"He said to them, 'Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don't you put it on its stand? For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.'"

*(Have spiritual timeline & perception in mind when thing are happening. Precious items are kept concealed until the proper time for their use.)*

Vs. 24-25

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“Consider carefully what you hear, He continued, ‘With the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and even more. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.’ (BELIEF) *When you hear and assimilate (praxis) truth, your capacity for understanding is enlarged.*

Ask: Does this apply for this age or the age to come?

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Luke 18:1-5  
Parable

“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: ‘In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ For some time he refused, but finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming.’”

Ask: Does this apply for this age or the age to come?

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<b>WOMEN AND THE PARABLES OF JESUS</b>		
<b>Parable</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Application (praxis note)</b>
The lamp under a basket (Matt. 5:14–16; Mark 4:21, 22; Luke 8:16, 17).	To the disciples.	Life and words should give personal testimony to God’s redemptive and transforming grace.
<b>The marriage</b> (Matt. 9:15; Mark 2:19, 20; Luke 5:34, 35).	To the Pharisees and the disciples of John.	Joy will be found in Christ’s companionship.
<b>The patched garment</b> (Matt. 9:16; Mark 2:21; Luke 5:36).	To the Pharisees and the disciples of John.	Jesus did not come to adapt to the old order of legalism but to make all things new.
The children in the marketplace (Matt. 11:16, 17; Luke 7:31, 32).	To the multitudes concerning John the Baptist.	Those who rejected Jesus and John could not be pleased. Beware of focusing on personal whims.

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The leaven (Matt. 13:33; Luke 13:20, 21).	To the multitude on the seashore.	Beware of sin that makes its way into life to corrupt and draw away from the good and true.
The pearl of great price (Matt. 13:45, 46).	To the disciples.	The relative value of the gospel exceeded all else.
The wedding garment (Matt. 22:10-14).	To the chief priests and the Pharisees.	Keep your life pure and holy.
The wise and foolish virgins (Matt. 25:1-13).	To the disciples on the Mount of Olives.	Always be prepared and watchful.
The wedding feast (Matt. 22:2-9; Luke 14:16-23).	To the chief priests and the Pharisees.	Do not reject God's invitation to salvation.
The lost coin** (Luke 15:8-10).	To the Pharisees and scribes.	Remember Christ's love for sinners and His determination to draw them to Himself.
The persistent widow (Luke 18:1-8).	To the disciples.	Persevere in prayer.
**Biblical women often wore a <i>frontlet</i> (Heb. <i>semedi</i> ) on their foreheads. this adornment was made of coins (perhaps part of the woman's dowry) and signified betrothal or marriage. The monetary value of the coins was not as important as the sentimental value and symbolism of commitment.		

Extra: Kingdom Sayings

Matthew 18: 1-4; Mark 9:36,37; 10:15; Luke 9:47,48; 18:17/Mark 1:15; Matthew 4:17/Mark 9:1; Matthew 16:28; Luke 9:27

Matthew 21:33-46 Possessing God's stuff w/o treating it as His. Self centered belief.

Hiring servant to care for his land and then sending servants to collect his profit...

Matthew 22: 1-14 Marriage Feast (No favorites. Invitation to Heaven given to all.)/Matthew 25:14-30 The Talents

Luke 19:11-27) You are held accountable to invest, use, care for the talents He gives you/sends you

(Matthew 13:10-17)/Insight(Matthew 13:11)/Prepare us for truth of the Kingdom (Matthew 13:12-13)/Bless those who heard them (Matt 13:16)

## Consider The Kingdom

Week 7: *The Kingdom Triad...*

### WARFARE STRATEGIES

Prayer Emphasis: Communion

#### RECAP:

There are three Spiritual Kingdoms here on earth:

1. OUR'S: Which we were given at creation (Shown by the gift of freewill)
2. THE ENEMY'S: Which God allows for a short time
3. GOD'S: In which He placed Christ as King

2 Chron 16:9

"For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him."

#### Week 7: Warfare Strategies: On the Offense

##### PROACTIVE WARFARE

*(Keeping yourself away from the enemy's influence)*

**I. Understand The Kingdoms' Ability to Influence:**

- Enemy: Deceit, Lies, Manipulation, Guilt, Shame, Blame, Pushy
- God: Truth (which sets you free), Conviction (warm draw), Drawing (wooing)
- You: Choices (the more you consume of each kingdom, the more energy they have in your life)
- Principles Pursued Provides Power  
*This is the promise of the Kingdom of God*
- God will not do what He expects us to do:

Our responsibility Romans 12:1-2

~~“Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to rest and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”~~

- Becoming Masters of Ourselves

A) How to gain self mastery: PRACTICE DISCIPLINE

1. Do something you do not want to do and do it regularly.
2. Deprive yourself of something pleasant.
3. Demand definite quotas/performance of yourself.
4. Do something difficult.
5. Do not put things off.

(Prayer, Fasting, Reading, Serving, Memorize Scripture)

B) Areas to practice self mastery:

Luke 2:52: Mentally, Physically, Spiritually, Socially

**II. Identify areas in you life where you may be vulnerable.**

Enemy’s Process:

1 John 2: 15-16 (nkj)

<sup>15</sup> Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

Luke 4:1-13 (Read NIV)

The Temptation of Christ

Lust of the flesh (stones to bread)

Lust of the eyes (worldly riches)

Pride (prove you are God, ego)

Vs. “When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.”

Leaving until another opportunity arises...

- What is your opportune time? (Worn down, tired, overwhelmed, alone, after busyness)
- What temptation appeals to your hunger? What do you crave?
- What temptation appeals to your visual senses? What looks good to me?
- What makes me feel important? What gives me my identity?

Next week: Our Authority and Our Weapons/Armor  
(Ephesians 6: 10-18)

1 John 4:4 He that is in YOU is GREATER THAN he that is in the world...

### Warfare Strategies: Active

ARMOR

#### ACTIVE WARFARE - WHEN THE ENEMY COMES AFTER YOU (rephrase)

**Dressed For Battle** (Go quickly over I & II or there will not be enough time for III.)

#### I. Understand God's Division of Authority shown in His empowering of the Three Kingdoms.

READ NIV Ephesians 6:10

*"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."*

Understand His Schemes (Satan's Kingdom)

- A. Temptations = Against our Personal Kingdom and we respond by Proactive Warfare. Living our Christian life.
- B. Attacks = Against the Body/Works of Christ (as seen in the life of Nehemiah) and we respond with Defensive Tactics.

#### II. Understand we are using SPIRITUAL Weaponry.

READ NIV 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 *(For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, we have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that set itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.)*

How does one take a thought captive? (Precursor: You own your thoughts. They are a part of your Kingdom. 1. Ask if it is true? 2. Yes: Respond. No: Do not allow yourself to dwell on untruth. Can't get it out of your head? Distract = Do something. Move. Replace with truth = Dwell on truth: Read scripture, listen to sermons & teachings, Christian music, Discuss with Christian friends.)

How do you know if it is not truth? BIBLE. Which will be echoed in messages, teachings (bible studies), Godly friends/counsel. [Godly friends = life of the Fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22 Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self Control.]

#### III. UTILIZING THE ARMOR OF GOD

READ NIV Ephesians 6:10-18

<sup>10</sup> Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. <sup>13</sup> 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.

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<sup>14</sup> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around you waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness (preparation) that comes from the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows (fiery darts) of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. <sup>18</sup> And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and request. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. (Paul continues with a personal prayer request.).

1) **Belt of Truth** buckled around your waist (Eph. 6:14):

What is physically enclosed in the mid-section of your body? Liver and GI track. Area between your rib cage and pelvic bone. Filters everything you ingest. Byproducts.

The waist or abdomen area was generally thought to be the seat of emotions/feelings.

Emotions/Feelings are the byproducts of what you believe.

Buckle (gird, like a girdle) this area with truth is to commit your emotions/feelings to believe the truth.

Seek truth, study it, read it....

(John 8:32 "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." 36 "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.").

Repercussions = Not holding unto old thoughts, old ways even if they are comfortable or supported by our family and friends. Or society. YOU ARE IN CHARGE OF DIRECTING YOUR FEELINGS TO ALIGN WITH TRUTH.

2) **The Breastplate of Righteousness** in place. (Eph. 6:14):

What is physically enclosed in your chest area?

Heart and Lungs. Delivers life (oxygen to your body).

The breast is generally thought of as the place of the soul/heart.

The soul/heart must be kept free from sin: Purposeful, repeated acts of rebellion to God's laws.

Because sin gives a foothold to the enemy.

Confession and forgiveness on the basis of the blood of Christ cleanse the heart

(1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.").

(Word of God brings righteousness, as we will discover later.)

3) **Your feet fitted with the readiness (Preparation) that comes from the Gospel of Peace** (Eph. 6:15):

ASK: Sport hobby? Golf shoes, Running shoes, Walking shoes, Bowling shoes, Motorcycling boots....

Would you wear Golf shoes to ride your Motorcycle?

The right shoes = greater success at the sport.

Roman soldier: The soldier wore sandals with cleats made of sharp nails designed to give firm footing on even the most rugged terrain. Sure footing.

Readiness

1. **prepared for something:** prepared for something that is going to happen
  - *Are you ready to leave?*
2. **finished and available for use:** finished or completed and so able to be used immediately
  - *When will dinner be ready?*
3. **on the point of doing something:** on the point of doing something or liable to do something
  - *This old roof is ready to cave in.*
4. **willing to do something:** eager, willing, or prepared to do something
  - *Don't be so ready to give in!*
5. **quickly produced:** quickly and easily given, provided, or available
  - *a ready response to questions about wrongdoing*

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6. **prepared in advance:** prepared or blended in advance, and able to be used with very little additional preparation (*often used in combination*)
- *available ready-sliced in small packets*
7. **intelligent:** intelligent, alert, and quick witted.

Prepared, Available, Willing, Alert to: **Spread the gospel of peace and reconciliation.**

(Evangelism Matt. 28:19, 20 *"Therefore, go and make disciples of ALL nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."*).

(Reconciliation READ NIV Eph 2:12-18 Christ preached peace to both Jews and Gentiles. Life w/Christ is available to ALL.)

Do whatever you can to spread Christ: Action/deed – From HOW you live your life to INVOLVEMENT in ministry (doing what God asks of you) & Spoken Word – Being verbal about what you believe and sharing Christ's Truth w/others.

4) *Take up the Shield of **Faith** [confidence, belief, trust, reliance] (Eph. 6:16<sup>16</sup> *In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows (fiery darts) of the evil one.* ):*

Does Faith stop the flaming arrows? NO. It extinguishes them.

Extinguish:

1. **put out a fire or light:** to put out something that is burning or giving off light
  - *The lamps along the terrace had not been extinguished.*
2. **end something:** to take away or bring to an end something such as a hope, feeling, custom, or practice
  - *As the days went by, hope for more survivors was extinguished.*
3. **destroy somebody or something:** to kill or destroy somebody or something completely
  - *They came with a large army in order to be certain of extinguishing the enemy by force of numbers.*
4. **outshine:** to outshine or eclipse something or somebody by having greater brilliance
  - *Beauty that extinguishes all others by comparison.*
5. LAW **pay debt:** to pay off a debt
6. LAW **make something invalid:** to make something no longer valid or applicable
7. PSYCHOLOGY **decrease response:** to cause a decrease in a conditioned response through lack of reinforcement

[Early 16th century. Formed from Latin *extinguere*, literally "to quench completely," from *stinguere* "to quench, prick" (source of English *DISTINGUISH* and *INSTINCT*).]

Faith snuffs out the enemy's kingdom effect on you.

Temptation and Attacks. (ie. untruths to instill doubt, fear, and ungodly guilt) Faith acts as an invisible shield that deflects such false accusations

(Heb. 11:6 *"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him."*).

YOU DO WHAT YOU BELIEVE, ALL THE REST IS JUST TALK.

SHOW ME YOUR 24/7 AND I WILL SHOW YOU WHAT YOU REALLY BELIEVE.

5) *Take the Helmet of **Salvation** (Eph. 6:17):*  
Your helmet protects your head. When you are brain dead, your body will eventually shut down. So what do you wear to protect your core organ for sustained life?

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All good people go to heaven?  
 It does not matter what you believe as long as you are sincere?  
 There is no absolutes so it does not matter what I do?  
 Muhammad is the supreme prophet and his teachings give us the path to Allah?

(1 John 5:11–13 “*And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.*”).

Without accepting this truth for yourself, you do not have life.

6) *Take the Sword of the Spirit* (Eph. 6:17):

The **Word of God**, the only offensive weapon in this armor, was used by the Lord Jesus against Satan (Luke 4:1–13). The living Word is powerful, effective, and instructive

(Heb. 4:12 “*For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*”).

2 Tim. 3:16, 17 “*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching; rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*”).

Word of God brings truth.  
 So how do we incorporate it into our everyday lives?

Read

Study

Share

Discuss

Learn

Meditate

Pray

OPEN WITH?

7) **Praying** Always (Eph. 6:18):

ie. of Nehemiah.

Prayer opens the channels between us and God. In the midst of battle, we as believers must keep in constant communication with our Leader for directions and encouragement.

(James 5:16b “*The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*”).

Take Action – Do Something

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