

## **Fighting in the Right Strength**

Culture of Grace: Practices & Habits of GracePoint Church / Ephesians 6:10-20/ May 10, 2026

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### **Introduction:**

Each year, we revisit habits and practices in our “Culture of Grace” series that we want to build the culture of this church around. Our passage this morning will uniquely speak to both practices we should pursue and how to pursue every culture building habit and practice. To fully understand Ephesians 6:10-20, we need to place it in context of the whole letter. Ephesians can be divided into two main sections. Chapters 1-3 hold doctrinal truths related to our new life in Christ, and chapters 4-6 hold exhortations for living in light of those truths. Our passage gives a final exhortation that brings the doctrine and manner of living together. First, Paul shows us,

### **We Must Stand Firm in the Lord’s Strength**

If you joined us for easter, see if you notice the truth Paul draws on from chapters 1-2. Look at verses 10, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.” Pause there. Paul uses three Greek words to speak of God’s power that have rung like church bells since his letter’s opening. Each word is used in Ephesians 1:19 when he prays for us to know God’s power working toward us, and the word for “strong” is used in Ephesians 3:20 to remind us of God’s power at work within us before the exhortations of chapters 4-6. So, Paul opens by praying for us to know God’s power working toward us in chapter 1, reminds us of God’s power at work within us in chapter 3, and concludes with this exhortation to live in God’s power. Family, do you think God asks you to do anything by your strength? Continue in verses 11-13, “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 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. 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.” We are told to “put on” God’s armor in verse 11 and to “take up” His armor in verse 13, both so that we may stand firm against the devil’s schemes, while the nature of our true enemies is clarified in between. In Ephesians 2, Paul says that we once followed the influence of Satan, along with the rest of the world, until God made us alive with Christ, raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places. Here, Paul reveals our struggle is a spiritual struggle. And note the description of our adversaries. Using words of strength, Paul calls them rules, authorities, cosmic powers, and spiritual forces of evil. We have to understand who we wrestle against. Francis Foulkes comments, “Our vastly increased knowledge of the physical universe has not necessarily increased, and may in fact have dulled our sense of the spiritual” (Francis Foulkes, Ephesians, V 10, p. 177). Church, we have to wake up and see the adversaries working to keep us from walking in how God calls us to live are not who we think they are. It’s not your kid’s stubbornness or neighbor’s rudeness. It’s not your boss’s arrogance or co-worker’s ignorance. It’s not that church members’ insensitivity or your friends’ and spouses’ inconsistency. Your adversaries to living for God are real and powerful spiritual forces of darkness. Therefore, we must stand in the Lord’s strength through the armor of God. Two things to note before continuing. First, though each piece of armor is connected to Roman armor, Paul primarily draws from Christ’s armor. Darrel Bock comments, “The background for the armour image appears to be Isaiah 59:16–17, where the Lord is described in armour much like that in this Ephesians text... There also is a picture of justice as a belt in Isaiah 11:5. The mouth as a sword alludes to Isaiah 11:4” (Darrel L. Bock, Ephesians, p. 197). Listen to 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.” Family, this is not just armor God gives to us. It is the very armor Christ clothed Himself with to defeat the spiritual forces of evil. Second, pay attention to the word stand. Paul is not saying this is needed to attack. He is saying you stand firm in Christ’s already won victory. With these things in mind, we are ready to understand the armor, discovering,

## **Each Piece Entails the Lord's Provision and Our Responsibility**

Each piece of armor corresponds to a spiritual reality: truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, the Spirit, and the Word of God. Look at verses 14-17, "Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Pause there. The main question we need to ask is, what do these spiritual realities mean? Is Paul referring to objective gospel truth and Christ's imputed righteousness in the first two pieces of armor? Or to a life lived in truth and righteousness? I believe noticing Paul's intentional language in verses 11-16 is the key to answering this. Look at verses 11 and 14. Paul says, "put on the whole armor of God," and uses the term "put on" to only describe putting on the breastplate. Now, look at verses 13 and 16. Paul says "take up the whole armor of God," and uses the term "take up" to only describe taking up the shield. What is he doing by telling us to put on and take up the whole armor and then to put on certain pieces and take up other pieces. I believe he's revealing each piece involves things we have been provided with and are responsible to walk in. And he's shown this throughout this letter. Start with the belt of truth. Ephesians 1:13 says, "In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit." Ephesians 4:21 says, "the truth is in Jesus." There is an objective truth we have believed in, the truth of who Jesus is and what He has done. In this sense, we have put on the truth of Jesus. At the same time, Paul's reason for saying "the truth is in Jesus," is to exhort us walk in the "true holiness," or "holiness of the truth" we were created in, which he then talks about as speaking truthfully to others. Further, Ephesians 5:9 says, "the fruit of light is found in all that is...true." The fruit of walking in the light is being people of truth. So, in this sense, we take up the truth by living in truth. See how it's both provision and responsibility? We might say putting on the truth of Christ allows us to take up the truth in life. Consider how this helps us stand firm against the devil's schemes. Scripture calls Satan the deceiver of the world and father of lies. His schemes involve lying and twisting the truth, primarily the truth of Jesus. When we gird ourselves with the knowledge of the truth, deeply knowing who Jesus is and what He has done, we will live in truth and stand firm against the devil. That's how each piece of armor works. Take the breastplate of righteousness. "Righteousness" is mentioned two other times in Ephesians. In Ephesians 4:24, the new self we put on is "created after the likeness of God in true righteousness." And in Ephesians 5:9, "the fruit of light is found in all that is... right," which is the same word for righteousness. In these passages, the primary focus is not the righteousness we have from Christ, but righteousness we walk in. So, in this sense, the breastplate is righteous living. However, we can't disconnect righteous living from our imputed righteousness. Ephesians 4:24 says the new self has been created in the likeness of God's true righteousness. And Ephesians 1:4 tells us, God "chose us in Christ...that we should be holy and blameless before him" which I believe refers to positional righteousness. Isaiah 45:8 brings both aspects of righteousness together, where God says, "Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down righteousness; let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit; let the earth cause them both to sprout." As Bock says, "What God rains down on us allows us to reflect who he has made us to be" (Darrel L. Bock, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, p. 197). We have put on Christ's righteousness which allows us to take up righteous living, guarding our hearts from the devil's schemes that seek to drag us into unrighteous living and flood us with guilt and shame when we fall. Consider the shoes. Some suggest this is spreading the gospel, but I'm not persuaded that's the primary meaning because it serves to stand against the devil's schemes to keep us from living in our new self. Further, Paul speaks in chapter 2 of the peace Christ secured with God and others by the cross and striving for unity through that bond of peace in chapter 4. So, I believe this is the peace with God we have put on, that leads us to take up a life of pursuing peace with others. Family, our adversaries want to steal our peace in Christ and divide us because that leaves us vulnerable.

Putting on the gospel of peace as shoes involves knowing your peace with God as you head out each day ready to be at peace with others. Ready to confess sin when you offend, forgive when offended, and pursue reconciliation. That will dispel the division, and dissension Satan loves to sow. Now, note how Paul shifts a little to open with “in all circumstances” while continuing to link each armor with the word “and” in verses 16-17. I think he may be suggesting these pieces function together and I’ll show how in a moment. For now, consider how each piece can be both provision and responsibility. Faith, salvation and the Spirit are all gifts of God’s grace in Ephesians 1-2. At the same time, Paul speaks of faith as an exercise of belief and employs the Greek word “rhēma” over “logos” for God’s Word, carrying a connotation of a proclaimed or spoken word. At first, the helmet sounds only like provision but in 1 Thessalonians 5:8, Paul calls it, “the hope of salvation.” Hope is something we exercise, primarily for our future salvation in the day of judgement, but also in God to save us in current battles. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, “God is faithful,” in every temptation, to “provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” So, the shield of faith, helmet of salvation, and sword of the Spirit are gifts we put on and weapons we take up to walk through life with. Notice verse 18 before we consider how they function together, “praying at all times in the Spirit.” Pause there. Prayer is not attached to any specific armor, and Paul structures the language to reveal “praying in the Spirit” is the manner in which you put on and take up every piece of armor. Then, he will use the word “all” or an equivalent four times to emphasize its importance. Family, we cannot expect to stand firm against our powerful adversaries without prayer, because connects us with God’s strength. “Praying in the Spirit” doesn’t refer to a special way of praying but knowing you live in the Spirit, and your prayers are influenced and empowered by Him. Notice how Paul continues in verses 18-20, “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, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.” Paul uses words for general prayers and specific petitions. Then, tells us to keep alert in persevering prayer, specifically making supplication for all the saints before showing even he needs prayer. We need to pray at all times, for all things, and all believers to be able to put on and take up God’s armor, standing in God’s strength against the devil’s schemes. Moms, you need prayer to love your kids and spouse well. Dad’s and kids, your wives and mothers need your prayers to stand against the devil’s schemes. Dads, kids, grandparents, widows and single people, you need prayer to stand firm. And mothers, they need your prayers to be strong in God’s strength. So, we don’t need to guess at the application of this passage. Put on and take up the whole armor of God by constant prayer and supplication.

### **Conclusion:**

Now, I want to end with how the shield, helmet and sword particularly work together. I believe the details surrounding the shield is key. Paul says take these things up “in all circumstances.” In New Testament times, soldiers were almost constantly dressed in the armor but grabbed the shield, helmet, and sword when heading into battle. Consider how the shield, helmet, and sword function in precise moments of attack. The first mode of attack was arrows. And shields were covered in leather and soaked in water to extinguish any flaming arrow quickly. In moments of attack, we hold up our shield of faith to extinguish the first attack, which means we trust in all God promises to be for us in Christ. Our perfect hope of salvation helps ensure we won’t suffer a lethal blow to the head, and we use the sword of God’s Word spoken to fend off the remaining onslaught. While the worship team is coming up, let me share how my mentor taught me to use these. He taught me to fight every battle with specific promises from God’s Word. He would write them on note cards to keep them in his pocket, but I use memory or the app on my phone. This week, I faced and fell in temptation to sin in anger. Something happened that caused me to get frustrated and speak harshly about others. After repenting, the battle remained of not letting that anger and failure disrupt my peace with Christ and others.

So, I took up the shield of faith by grabbing a promise from God's Word, Philippians 4:8-9, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you." I believed the God of peace will be with me if I think on and practice these things. Then, I took up the helmet of salvation and reminded myself God would provide a way of escape. Finally, I grabbed the sword and began to speak God's promised Word to myself, asking God to make this promise real in my heart and help me through the situation I faced. I repeated this until God's peace returned and I was standing firm against the enemy's attacks. You can see I'm not perfect at this, but I have found it to be a fruitful way to put on and take up God's armor. If you want to try this, grab some of the words of hope shared last week lining the right hallway to use for your battles in the coming weeks. People at the connect center can even help bind them together if you want to keep them in your pocket or purse. Family, prayerfully put on and take up God's armor and I know you won't be disappointed. Let's pray as we prepare to respond.