



**Ephesians 6:10-24**  
**The Armor of God**

This morning we come to the end of Ephesians and discover a perfect blend of everything we've seen thus far. We're told how to live in light of who God is. We're told how to face the problems of life with awareness that there is more than just this life. And so we read:

**Eph 6:10** Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

This is Paul's summary statement for the entire letter: *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.* You have to get this. There are few things in life more important than this sentence. *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.* This is the Christian life in condensed form. We're told to do something, to be something, but it's not something we are naturally, it's something we receive: *be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.*

We have said it so many times as we moved through Ephesians: you are saved from sin, rescued from the mistakes you've made with your life, plucked up from the mess you and others have made, adopted by a loving Father - but you are also saved for something. Now that you have been rescued, there's a new life to live. Now that you're cleaned up, and healed up, there's a second chance on life. Now that you have a family and a place to belong there are things to do. You've been saved from something, but you've also been saved for something. You've been born again, and healthy babies begin to grow and become stronger.

But you don't do it on your own.

We're told to get strength and might *from God*. Strength. And might. Not just sunshine and rainbows. Why is that? Why are we told to *be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might?* Why is that the final point Paul wants to make in this letter?

Because he knows what many of us know: we may be the children of God, but we live on a battleground, not a playground. There is a spiritual reality to the physical world we live in. We live in a world where things are falling apart; this is not a safe place. It is not the paradise God planned.

When sin entered the world it began to decay and not long after death, disease, and disaster appeared. So there is a passive kind of danger on this planet, you are at risk just because you're here. But there is an active danger as well. Just as there is a God who loves you and wants to rescue you, there is an enemy who wants to use you or oppose you. There are unforeseen forces at work in this world. They are very real. And they want to harm you. And so we're told:

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

In the very first pages of Scripture we meet the leader of an intentional rebellion against God. He appears as the serpent that tempts Eve, asking her: “Did God really say you can’t eat from this tree? Look how good the fruit looks. You know He’s just keeping things from you, don’t you? Doesn’t like to share. Doesn’t want you to have the good stuff.” It was a powerful tactic, and it still works today. We’re still tempted to ask: why can’t I do this or that? What’s so wrong with it? Why can’t I have things my way?

And that right there is one of the best ways I know to define what the Bible calls sin: it’s choosing to do what I want to do when I know that God has said something different. Satan was the first to choose rebellion over submission. He was an angel who decided he knew better than God and decided to go his own way. The book of Revelation tells us that he took a 1/3 of the angels with him. They are now the principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this age, the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places that we are called to wrestle against.

And I want you to know that. I want you to know that the Bible says you really are being opposed. There really is someone or something trying to pull you down. There really is something trying to resist you.

And you need to know it’s not just you. These same forces are going after your kids, your spouse, your mom, your wife, your boss. These same forces are trying to assert their control over everyone you see and know.

So go back and read the passage, because this is all very practical, it’s not theoretical or poetical. We’re told: 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood. This is not written as if it *could* happen, it’s written as if it IS happening. We do wrestle, here and now, present tense. The devil is actively at work in and around your life.

I know that’s extraordinary. I know that can sound far-fetched. I know that might even sound absurd to you. But it’s what the Bible says.

And if you stop for a moment and think about it, you know it’s true. You’ve felt it. You’ve wondered before: is everyone out to get me? Who did I upset? Why can’t I just get a break? This is good, it should work, why isn’t it happening? You’ve felt the opposition before; perhaps you’ve even encountered evil when its veil was down and seen or sensed it for what it really is.

I know you have an iPhone or Android. I know we fly UAVs and are working on driverless cars. I know we launch satellites and sequence genomes, we’re all very modern, scientific, and technical. But I’m telling you – there is also an unseen spiritual dimension to our present lives that needs to be acknowledged and resisted by spiritual means.

The leader of it all is called Satan. That's Hebrew for "the accuser." In Greek, the language of the New Testament, he's called diabolos, or "the slanderer." The name becomes devil in our English language. He's described as the tempter, a murderer and liar. He's compared to a lion and a serpent; he's called an angel of light and the god of this age.

You need to know that he is real and so are the forces that work for and with him. He's not alone. But you also need to know there is no sense of balance here. He is a created being, he is less than God. He is not the yin to God's yang. There is no cosmic see-saw as these titanic forces battle for control of the universe. This is not a comic book or action movie plot line. The forces of darkness are real, and really powerful, but God is ultimate. He has no peers or equals. This is not a fair fight.

And you also need to know that God has issued you survival gear. He has provided what you need to make it safely through this scarred and smoking battlefield that is heavily mined and full of skirmishes. You need to know, that as a Christian you are not stuck, you are not pinned down. Yes, you face opposition, but there is a way to advance.

**13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.**

Yes, there is a spiritual opposition in this life. There is something working against us - scheming, plotting, wiling, strategizing against us. But, we're not only given the intel briefing that it's there and real, we're also given what we need to resist it. We're told, "Here's the armor you'll need to **be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might**, now put it on and stand."

Because that's what we're expected to do: withstand evil. Brother or sister in Christ, you are not called to cower in the face of evil, you are called to stand! Boldly, confidently, defiantly stand in the face of all that wants to oppose you as you pursue God and carry out His plans. You are not told to assume a defensive posture and wait for evacuation. You are to be bold and brave.

This is one of the reasons we choose the name The City Gates Church – because gates swing both ways, they open and shut. You come in here to find a safe space, you find rest and refuge and comfort, but then we go right back out into the darkness of this world and we rebel against it. We defy it. We become the resistance force operating behind enemy lines.

It's easy to feel anxious, depressed, discouraged, defeated. It's easy to feel like there's no hope and what's the use. It's easy to feel like the world is falling apart and all the headlines are just sad. It's easy to feel that way because it's true. But you're told to **be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might**. You're told to withstand evil and hold your ground. And not just with some Glock strapped to your ankle or in your purse, but with spiritual defenses and spiritual weaponry that forces you to trust more in God than in your training at the range. To put more trust in God's plans than your party's policies. To put more trust in God's sovereignty than all your parenting.

Be bold, be confident, don't back down. But let your confidence, your strength, your courage come from who you are in Christ and what God has given you. So,

14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

You know this was written in the first century after Christ. It was written to a church in the city of Ephesus, which is now a part of modern Turkey, but at the time it was a part of the province of Asia Minor in the Roman Empire. And Paul, who is writing this, is actually under house arrest in the capital city of Rome. So, he's staring every day at a Roman soldier and he takes his imagery from the soldier's basic equipment.

And while it's easy to dissect this imagery and really zoom in on each piece, you have to remember that we're told to take up the *whole* armor of God. That's actually a technical term to refer to the whole kit. It's the Greek word *panoplia*, from which we get our English word panoply and if you look through the definitions of panoply you will see it's also the English word for a full suit of armor. So there's your little fact for the day.

The point is: you need all of these things, not just one or two. So let's take a quick look at each of them.

First, the belt of truth. When you face the darkness in your life, when you face temptation or despair, you need truth. You need to know what is real and what is false, what is valuable and what is temporary, you need to know what is right and what is wrong. And the imagery here is that truth would be the belt that holds everything together.

Now, many of you know Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no one shall come to the Father except by Me." (John 14:6) So, cling to Jesus. Listen to Jesus, and you will have the truth. Pick up your Bible and read the gospel. Let truth come pouring into your life.

It's here for you. God is trying to equip you. He knows you're under attack. He knows you face an enemy. He knows this is real. Do you? And will you take what He's trying to give you? Will you grow in your knowledge of the truth and your ability to handle it and hold it when the situations of life seem to be trying to pull it away from you with every ounce of strength, inviting you to doubt and question?

And will you strap on the breastplate of righteousness?

If you know anything about our modern military body armor you know there's an extra plate that can be inserted over the chest – a trauma plate – to provide additional protection where's it's needed most. Well, Christian you need to cover your chest, cover your heart.

We know Jesus said that out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. And Proverbs 4:23 tells us, "Above all, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." So strap on the righteousness of Christ, and let it be your protection and defense.

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

Christian, you are called to stand on the firm foundation of Christ. When darkness comes, when temptation strikes, when doubts and depression and fear and anxiety begin to swirl, you need to remember where you stand. And you stand on the gospel of peace.

But what is the gospel? It's the good news that God has taken action for you. He has forgiven what you have done. He has adopted you as His own. As we read back in Ephesians 1:6 you are accepted in the Beloved. God really does know you, and He really does want you. You really can make it through this; you really can resist this temptation. You really can survive this storm because God is there. He is real and He cares.

He cares so much that He took action when He didn't have to. And He did something hard, something painful, for you. He sent Jesus, His only Son, to come rescue you. Luke's gospel tells us (Luke 19:10) "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." That's you. God has come for you. Stand firm on that. Wrap yourself tightly with the truth; cinch that belt down hard if you need to. Picture the righteousness of God covering your chest like a breastplate, and realize that you're being given all these pictures of things that are tangible because God wants you to know that they are real.

Just as a soldier would draw comfort and confidence from his equipment, you can do the same. Know what you stand on.

And then, remember we are not called to cower. We have been given a Great Commission. We have been told to take the gospel into the whole world. We're supposed to believe that the people around us need this stuff as much as we do. They're going through many of the same problems, they have many of the same concerns and fears, they have the same sense of guilt and shame, they have sinned the same sins - they need the same gospel. They need to know there is a holy God they've been ignoring or resisting.

I can't tell you how encouraged I have been by some of you recently in your public proclamations of faith. In front of your peers and in very public ways, you have said, that's my pastor, or that's my church, and most importantly – that's my savior.

I went to a retirement ceremony recently where someone took the floor with boldness and proclaimed the love of God to all her peers, her bosses and her subordinates. She dropped the J-bomb on everyone and did it with passion and conviction and love. I watched as someone else started up casual conversation with a deliveryman and then just bluntly asked: do you go to church? And the guy said, "Well, I'm Catholic." And this guy said, "I didn't ask you that. I asked do you go to church?" And the guy said, well, maybe when I can. And the other guy said, you need to come to church. You need to come to my church. Come this Sunday and you can sit by me. I'll meet you at the front door.

Friends, it's that simple. We have the gospel. We have something to stand on when the storms of this life and the enemy of our soul strike. What are we doing to share it?

You have truth, you have righteousness, you have the gospel, you have things others need. But you have even more:

16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

The shield here is not a small circular shield like Captain America. It's large. It's intended to provide protection for your entire body. It's intended to be protection against the things the wicked one is throwing at you. This was a real thing in Roman warfare; they would dip arrows in tar, set them on fire and launch them. But the Roman shields were designed to provide a defense against it.

So we have here another reminder that you are under attack. And it might be from an enemy you don't see. That's the thing about an archer; they can fire from a position you can't observe. A fiery arrow can be lobbed over a wall or seem to come out of nowhere. But the shield of your faith can still provide protection.

But let's think for a moment about what you expect spiritual warfare to be like. If you're holding a shield and someone is launching fiery darts, fiery arrows, at you – will you feel that? Yes, you will. You will be OK, the shield will hold. But you're going to feel some bumps. You're going to hear some noise.

What's the point? It's this: don't expect that you can just strap on the armor and take up your shield and think you're going to walk down Main Street for a parade. Christian armor isn't for show; it isn't for playing dress up, or looking cool. It's for war. You're being targeted, and you will take some hits. And when you do, you'll feel them. You'll be OK, but you'll feel them. Don't think that's strange. But don't fear either. God knows what you need, and He's designed it and issued it to you.

It includes

17 And take the helmet of salvation,

So use your head: remind yourself of the truth that is holding you together as a belt. Renew your mind. Take every thought captive. Speak truth to yourself.

And wield

(17 cont.) and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

Friends, you face your temptation, your darkness, your confusion or despair by turning to the Word of God. Remember, when Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, each time Jesus responded with the Word of God. He quoted Scripture to Satan.

The Bible is your protection for resisting attacks, and it's also your weapon of choice for launching attacks, it's a double-edged sword that can penetrate the deepest parts of a man. God promises that His Word will accomplish its purposes, that it will not return void. And that's why we put so much emphasis on it. That's why we take books of the Bible and go

through them verse by verse. This is what God has given us to defend ourselves and further His kingdom. Not our good ideas, not our planning and strategies, and certainly not whatever Oprah or your talking head of choice is hawking this month. No, He's given us the eternal truths of His unchanging word.

And after we receive all of this, we're told there's something else to do:

**18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,**

Do you know what this means? It means God hasn't just left our gear out for us to pick up and head off on our own, it means He wants to keep in touch. This is a relationship, right? God is calling you into a relationship with Him. He doesn't just want you suited up and out there doing your own thing. He wants to hear from you.

But notice this, because this is very important:

**being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—**

Wait, what? Did you notice the subtle shift in focus right there? After you take up all this armor, after you strap it all to your body and hold it all in your hands, after you're told to be strong in the Lord and stand your ground against a scheming spiritual enemy who is actively targeting you, after you've done all this personal preparation, the command is: be watchful *for others* and pray for them with perseverance.

Friends, this is Christianity! Love God and love others as yourself. Get your armor on, guard your heart, stand firm on the truth, SO THAT you can be a blessing to others. Be a guardian angel. Intercede for others, watch over others... including the pastor. Paul, the one who is writing all of this, who knows all of this himself, still says:

**19 and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.**

Church, would you do that for me? Would you pray this exact verse for me? Would you pray that God would give me the words to say? I want to have utterance from Him. I want to say the things that He wants you to hear. I want to open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel. Pray that I would speak boldly as I ought to speak. And pray that I would know how to say what needs to be said without being unnecessarily offensive or confusing.

Pray, please, pray for this pulpit ministry and for my personal ministry in my own life.

I encourage people to pray for me selfishly. Pray that I would grow, for your sake. Pray that I would grow so that you would be blessed by what you hear. And do the same for Matt and the other worship leaders. Do the same for Stephen and the youth. Do the same for your small group leaders and children's ministry. Pray for all of us who teach, that we would know the truth and proclaim it boldly in a manner that is helpful for those we reach.

Well, we come to the end of the letter and now, Paul wraps up with some personal details.

21 But that you also may know my affairs *and* how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you; 22 whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and *that* he may comfort your hearts. 23 Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace *be* with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

This is Paul's hope for the Ephesians, and my hope for all of us. That we would know peace in our fellowship, that there would be love and faith filling this place and that they would come to us, not through our own planning and promoting and efforts, but directly from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. That we would know grace in the midst of the battle and offer each other strength and encouragement as we grow personally in Christ.

There is a war going on out there. There is a fight going on for the control and influence of your soul. But God offers to rescue you, protect you, and use you to help others. Are you going to cower in a corner, or stand like He's calling you to do? Will you be defeated and controlled or will you defy the darkness? Join the rebellion my friends! Hear God calling to you and let Him have His way today.

Let's Pray.