

Ephesians 6:10-17

“Reflecting Jesus in Victory”

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Intro. The Christian Life is a battleground, not a playground. If you try to live for Jesus, you will have struggles with your flesh, conflict with the culture opposed to God, and spiritual battles. There is a danger in blaming all of your responses to temptation on the devil (e.g. The devil made me do it), and there is an equal or greater danger to neglecting or ignoring the reality of spiritual forces aligned with God for good and those opposed to God for evil. How can you be aware of the existence of this battle, and how can you experience victory?

Subject: Spiritual battles and the armor of God

Object: Experience victory in Christ

Context: Experiencing the Spirit-filled life in the context of being single, married, having a family, and in the workplace, is made more difficult by forces opposed to God.

Where can you find power to be victorious [10]?

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Finally, my brethren [10] signals what remains to be done to follow Jesus well. *Be strong in the Lord and the power of His might* [10] reminds us that we need to depend on His strength and mighty power and not rely on our own [Eph.5:18]. We are to *put-on* or be clothed in *the whole armor of God* [11] [cf. 4:24 “put on the new man”]. “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh” [Rom. 13:14]. The *whole armor* reminds us that it is complete and no other armor is needed. Paul wrote this letter from a jail cell in Rome where he was continuously chained to a Roman soldier. The soldier’s armor was a familiar metaphor to Paul and his audience. We will discover together how this armor protects us in battle as well as helping us to experience victory in Christ. But first let’s consider the nature of the battle.

What is a spiritual battle [11-12]?

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*.

A follower of Jesus wants to stand for God and live a life devoted to God. They want to stand for Christ without retreat, and advance God's kingdom [11,13,14]. A believer's enemies are the flesh (old nature), the world system opposed to God, and the devil [1 Jn.2:15-17]. Lucifer is an angelic being created by God. He is not all-powerful, all-knowing, nor omnipresent. He is not an equal to God. Lucifer was the most beautiful of the angelic beings, and being filled with pride led a rebellion against God, and was cast out of heaven with one-third of the angels who rebelled with him [Is. 14:12-15, Rev. 12]. Lucifer then became our adversary Satan or the devil. It is unwise to underestimate or overestimate our enemy [Jude 1:9]. Jesus called the devil a thief who comes to kill and destroy [Jn. 10:10].

The purpose of the armor is to stand against the wiles or schemes of the devil [11]. What are the devil's schemes? They include: disbelief, division, doubt, discouragement, doctrine, disobedience, denial, delay, disinterest, and dependence on self. The nature of the battle is spiritual not physical [12]. The enemy's goal is to keep people from coming to Christ and receiving salvation. Once you receive Christ the devil's goal is to neutralize your influence in advancing God's kingdom. *Principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, and spiritual hosts of wickedness* [12] describe the fallen-angels aligned with Satan.

What is the armor of God [13-17]?

¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

The armor is a picture of Jesus: He is truth [Jn. 14:6], righteousness [2 Corinthians 5:21], peace [Ephesians 2:14], faith [Galatians 2:20], salvation [Luke 2:20], and the Word [John 1:1,14].

We are to take up the whole armor of God [13]. There are six elements that either provide defense to protect, or offense to advance. The first is *the belt of truth* [14]. The belt would hold the breastplate in place, and hold the scabbard for a sword. To tighten the belt was a symbol of readiness as well as a symbol that a soldier was on-duty, to loosen the belt was a symbol of being off-duty. Jesus is the truth, and is full of grace and truth [Jn. 1:14]. The decision that there is moral truth, and that is revealed in the words and works of Jesus is the

beginning of the battle.

The second piece of armor is *the breastplate of righteousness* [14]. The breastplate protects from neck to thighs, and thus protects the vital organs. You are made right with God by faith in Christ's redemptive work on the cross [Rom. 3:22]. This is the greatest protection imaginable, because being right with God doesn't depend on your perfect performance of the commandments, but your trust in Christ's performance evidenced by a transformed life.

The third element of the armor focused on the sandals, *and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace* [15]. The Jewish historian Josephus observed that Roman soldiers would insert nails through the soles of their sandals to provide traction in battle, and keep from sliding. The gospel is our greatest source of peace. You can make peace with God through faith in Christ [Rom. 5:1]; and having made peace with God you can experience the peace of God. This speaks of contentment or wholeness in a fractured, broken world.

The fourth piece of armor is *the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one* [16]. The shield referred to here, is not the small round shield for hand-to-hand combat but a large wooden shield covered in leather about two feet wide and four feet long. The leather was soaked in water to protect against fiery darts or arrows dipped in pitch (e.g. tar) and lit before shooting. One soldier counted 220 arrows in his shield following a battle. Soldiers would interlock their shields and march into battles as a wall, and subsequent rows would raise the shields overhead to protect the ranks. This is a helpful reminder of the need for an authentic community of faith. What are the fiery darts? Fiery darts are primarily thoughts. The battle begins in the mind. Right thinking should produce right actions. Ideas such as lust, greed, jealousy, fear, hatred, condemnation, shame, apathy, and any other thought contrary to God are fiery darts. To overcome these ideas, we take every thought under submission to Christ:

Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts of itself against the knowledge God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ [2 Corinthians 10:3-5].

The fifth piece of armor is *the helmet of salvation* [17]. The testimony of your salvation experience, and your desire to be sanctified or set-apart to Jesus provides assurance of your salvation. We are saved by grace through faith in Christ. And those who are saved experience transformation. Knowing that you are saved provides hope that transcends your temporal circumstances, because you have assurance of eternity with Jesus!

The sixth piece of armor is *the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God* [17]. The sword referenced here is the short sword that was used in hand to hand combat in contrast with a long broad sword. The implication is the ability to handle the sword with a degree of precision. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, He parried or deflected the attack by repeatedly using the word of God [Matt. 4:1-11]. This was an example to us of the importance of knowing the word of God to experience victory in our spiritual battles [Heb. 4:12, Is. 55:11].

When Peter drew his sword to protect Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus instructed him to put the sword away [Lu. 22:47-51]. The battle we fight is primarily spiritual, and the key to experiencing victory is putting on Jesus and His armor of God.

Study Guide QS

Q1 What are some of the dangers of ignorance or neglect of the reality of spiritual battles.

Q2 What are some of the ways that the battle unfolds in the mind? Consider some of the ways that temptation begins in the mind?

Q3 What are some experiences or lessons that you've learned about bringing thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

Q4 What are some areas where you are likely to experience spiritual battles? How would you like to apply this lesson to your life?

Digging Deeper

I highly recommend reading William Gurnall's *The Christian in Complete Armour*. John Newton, author of the hymn "Amazing Grace," said, "If I might read only one book beside the Bible, I would choose *The Christian in Complete Armour*." Charles Spurgeon wrote, "Gurnall's work is peerless and priceless; every line is full of wisdom; every sentence is suggestive." Originally written in 1655, this Puritan classic on spiritual warfare has been updated into modern English and abridged for easy reading.