

BECOMING A PEOPLE OF GRACE

STUDY TWENTY-FIVE

Strong Armor for Weak Sheep

Ephesians 6:13–20

If we are going to battle the enemy on enemy ground and in enemy terms, we must be people who live in and model truth.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

IT didn't take much for Paul to convince the Ephesian Christians of the reality of spiritual warfare. A stronghold of Satan loomed over Ephesus in the form of the temple of Artemis where worshipers participated in pagan rituals and prayed to dark powers. Many church members had practiced sorcery before converting to Christ. They caused quite a spectacle when they publicly burned their "incantation books" worth "several million dollars" (Acts 19:19).

In one front-page incident, a demon-possessed man overpowered seven prominent Jews, attacking them "with such violence that they fled from the house, naked and battered" (19:16). The Christians also witnessed firsthand the devil's work in the city's rampant wickedness. Paul warned his readers about the "things that ungodly people do in secret" (Ephesians 5:12) and to walk carefully "in these evil days" (5:16).

Paul's readers were well-acquainted with spiritual warfare . . . but they were not so well-equipped for battle. How could they stand against the "mighty powers in this dark world" (6:12)? In our evil day, we ask the same question. Weak as we are and made of flesh, how can we hope to prevail against a powerful, invisible spiritual foe?

Paul gave his readers the answer using the metaphor of armor—a stirring word picture that has encouraged Christians for two thousand years. In this study, we'll try on each piece Paul presented and learn to live every day in the strong protection of our God.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

The armor of God consists not of chainmail and steel but of spiritual values forged by Christ our King during His earthly ministry. As soldiers of Christ, we march under His banner and outfit ourselves in His truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and words from Scripture. Prepare to put on each piece of Christ's armor-like qualities by presenting yourself to your King in prayer. Ask Him to dress you entirely in Himself and clothe you for battle as His loyal soldier marching into war.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Read *Ephesians 6:13–20*, noting the two overarching commands: “Put on” (Ephesians 6:13) and “Pray” (6:18). Also, highlight Paul's supporting imperatives, such as “stand your ground” (6:14) and “stay alert and be persistent” (6:18). What are your initial impressions of Paul's tone and urgency in his instructions?



Observation: God's Armor and the Believer's Battle Cry

Let's take a closer look at the pieces of armor Paul lists and how they help us resist the devil and stand firm against his schemes.



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God’s Armor—Ephesians 6:13–17

The equipment includes a soldier’s belt, breastplate, boots, shield, helmet, and sword. Paul’s first-century readers easily pictured these pieces because Roman infantrymen were everywhere; however, modern-day readers need help. Consult your resources or the online commentary, *Constable’s Notes*, and, in the following chart, write down a brief description of each piece of armor. We’ll wait until the interpretation phase to examine what each item represents. For now, simply describe the armor.

Piece of Armor	Description
“belt” (Ephesians 6:14)	
“body armor” (6:14) or “breastplate” (6:14 NASB)	
“shoes” (6:15)	
“shield” (6:16)	
“helmet” (6:17)	
“sword” (6:17)	



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The Believer's Battle Cry—Ephesians 6:18–20

Lines of communication linking soldiers to their commanders were just as essential in the battlefield as armor. Prayer connects us to our King, allowing us to present needs and receive help. In his writing about prayer, how many times did Paul use the word, *all*, in the following verse? What key points did Paul make?

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints. (Ephesians 6:18 NASB)

As a fellow-soldier, Paul relied on prayer too. What did he request? Release from house arrest? A cushier assignment? No. What was number one on Paul's prayer list? And what positive perspective did he communicate about his circumstances?

Now let's examine the meaning of God's armor and how each piece causes the enemy to flee and helps us stand firm.

Shout until you're blue in the face and you will never impact a demon. You will never touch a demon with a literal shield or be protected by a literal helmet. These images represent things that make demons back off and Satan cower: truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and the Word of God. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Interpretation: What Makes Us Strong

The pieces of armor Paul listed represent Christian values that any follower of Christ can claim and live by every day. Use your study resources to define each concept. Also note the kind of satanic attack this value protects us against. To assist you, we’ve included a brief quotation from Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s commentary, *Insights on Galatians, Ephesians*. For an online commentary, consult *Constable’s Notes* at netbible.org.

Truth—Ephesians 6:14

Definition	Protection from . . .

The belt is composed of truth—the truth of God, revealed in His written Word (John 17:17). It also includes truth of character, or integrity—practical living that conforms to the instruction of God’s Word (2 Jn. 1:4).¹

Righteousness—Ephesians 6:14

Definition	Protection from . . .

[The breastplate] was a perfect image of the righteousness that comes from God alone, righteousness we could never earn by our own merit or maintain in our own strength.²



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Peace—Ephesians 6:15

Definition	Protection from . . .

Our “footing” against Satan is our peace with God. Christ has secured this peace for us (Eph. 2)—peace not only with God but also with one another and within ourselves.³

Faith—Ephesians 6:16

Definition	Protection from . . .

Through faith we see our circumstances from God’s perspective. We trust in Him to carry us through all trials and temptations.⁴

Salvation—Ephesians 6:17

Definition	Protection from . . .

We need to have *assurance* of our position with Christ. Why? Because Satan would like nothing better than to aim his arrows at our minds, convincing us that we don’t really belong to Christ.⁵



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Word of God—Ephesians 6:17

Definition	Protection from . . .

The Christian’s sword is the Word of God. The Greek word translated “word” here, *rhema* [4487], is a reference to the spoken Word—the Word verbalized. . . . Paul’s emphasis here is not simply reading Scripture but actually using God’s revealed Word against Satan.⁶

As you reflect on this list, note the essential nature of every piece. A soldier without a helmet or shield or any other piece of armor would be an easy target for the enemy. Has the spiritual enemy been targeting you lately in one of the areas above? Which of the pieces of God’s armor do you need to put on to better stand your ground?



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Correlation: Our Model for Standing Firm

Christ modeled these spiritual values during His earthly ministry. Read the following verses that describe Jesus using each piece of armor. Write down what Christ did or taught and how you can follow His example.

Truth—*John 8:31–32, 42–47*

Righteousness—*Matthew 6:31–33*

Peace—*John 14:27; 16:33*



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Faith—*John 5:24; 11:25–26*

Salvation—*Luke 19:9–10; John 10:7–10*

Word of God—*Matthew 4:1–11*

Many valiant Christian soldiers through history have taken up Christ’s armor and marched under His banner. Paul, himself, is one of our finest examples. He concluded his prayer for courage by stating he was “an ambassador in chains” (Ephesians 6:20 NASB).

In chains. What a poignant description of the visible evidence of Satan’s warfare against Christ and His people. The devil bound Paul, but, even so, the truth of the gospel broke through. According to the book of Acts, during those two years in chains, Paul preached “the kingdom of God and [taught] concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered” (Acts 28:31 NASB).



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Unhindered! No power on earth can stand against believers who take up the armor of God. Let's put on His truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and Word in our world today!

I'm asking you to look at the armor and to place your hands, if you will, on each piece. The belt, the breastplate, the boots, the shield, the helmet, the sword. For the sake of your survival, I challenge you to claim God's protection in whatever situation you find yourself.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Putting on the Armor Today

Would you like to put on God's armor?

Use the following space to write a prayer asking the Lord to clothe you with each piece of His armor. And then, live as a soldier of Christ, fit for battle and bold in the fight against the evils of our day.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I put on Your truth. Fill my mind with Your thoughts to counter the lies of the enemy. I put on the promise of righteousness in Christ before You. Guard my heart from the temptation to sin. I put on Your peace. Keep me at rest in life's storms. I put on faith in You alone. Help me to trust when fear assaults. I put on the assurance of my salvation in Christ. Protect me from doubts. Finally, I take up Your sword—the words of the Bible that cut to the heart of every lie of the devil. Fitted with Your armor, I commit myself to You and Your cause today and forever. Amen!

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Galatians, Ephesians*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 8 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2015), 309.
2. Swindoll, *Insights on Galatians, Ephesians*, 310.
3. Swindoll, *Insights on Galatians, Ephesians*, 310–311.
4. Swindoll, *Insights on Galatians, Ephesians*, 311.
5. Swindoll, *Insights on Galatians, Ephesians*, 312.
6. Swindoll, *Insights on Galatians, Ephesians*, 313.

