

## The Whole Armor of God

Ephesians Part 10

*Ephesians 6:10-20*

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### We have an enemy.

- Katelyn's and my nephew is obsessed with bad guys.
  - The other day when we went to Katelyn's family for Thanksgiving, we decided to watch a Christmas movie. When we turned the movie on, our three-year-old nephew asked, "Are there any bad guys?"
  - One of his favorite games to play is the "tie up game."
    - Show picture of Katelyn tied up by our nephew.
  - His dad asked, "Should I be worried?" We said yes. He's obsessed with good and bad guys.
- We must be aware that we have an enemy and we are in a war. There is good and evil. We have an enemy that wants to destroy us, to destroy this world.
- The book of Ephesians is full of enemy language.
  - *Ephesians 6:12* - "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."
  - *Ephesians 1:20, 21* - "he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come."
  - *Ephesians 2:2* - "in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience"
  - *Ephesians 2:3* - "children of wrath"
  - *Ephesians 2:14* - "For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility"
  - *Ephesians 2:16* - "might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility."
  - *Ephesians 4:27* - "give no opportunity to the devil."
  - *Ephesians 5:16* - "making the best use of the time, because the days are evil."
- Eugene Peterson - "As followers of Jesus we live in a hostile country."<sup>1</sup>
- It is very important for us to understand that we are in a battle, and there is an enemy. It can be very easy to overlook and ignore this fact. It can catch us off guard.

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<sup>1</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, *Practice Resurrection: A Conversation on Growing Up in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 255.

- My campus minister Micah Cobb once shared a quote from one of his professors, Kelly Jolley: “The devil wins the battle by making you think you aren't in a war.”

### **Ephesians 6:10-20**

- In Ephesians 6:10-20, we are going to see some of the clearest “battling against evil” language in the Bible.
- When writing about *Ephesians 6:10-11* the famous British preacher of the early and mid-1900s, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, “There is nothing that is more urgently important for all who claim the name Christian, than to grasp and to understand the teaching of this particular section of scripture.”<sup>2</sup>
- Tonight we will look at five ways to combat the enemy biblically (these are based on recommendations by Eugene Peterson):
  - Stand firm
  - Acknowledge the enemy
  - Arm yourself with the Armor of God
  - Pray always
  - Speak the gospel boldly.<sup>3</sup>

### **Stand Firm**

- Stand Firm is referenced four times in this passage
  - *Ephesians 6:11* - “stand against the schemes of the devil”
  - *Ephesians 6:13* - “that you may be able to withstand in the evil day”
  - *Ephesians 6:13* - “stand firm”
  - *Ephesians 6:14* - “Stand therefore”
- What are some qualities of the most resilient people you know?
- We stand firm by keeping our eyes on Jesus.
  - *Hebrews 12:1-2* - “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”
  - When we focus on Jesus, he puts everything else in perspective.
- We stand firm by not getting distracted.
  - What’s your highest priority?
- We stand firm by remaining plugged into Christian community.
  - We need others’ help.

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<sup>2</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Christian Soldier: An Exposition of Ephesians 6:10 to 20* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977), 11.

<sup>3</sup> Peterson does include five reminders of Paul to the Ephesians church. However, in this message I use only four of Peterson's suggested list and add one of my own. The one I omitted was “a personal reference to Tychicus,” and I added, “speaking the gospel boldly.” Peterson, *Practice Resurrection*, 252.

### **Acknowledge the Enemy (*Ephesians 6:11-12*)**

- Jesus knew the devil. He knew Satan. He was tempted by the devil (*Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-13*).
- The word for evil in 6:12 is the same word Jesus uses in the Lord's Prayer: "Deliver us from evil" (*Matthew 6:13*)<sup>4</sup>
- Our enemy is not against flesh and blood (6:12), which means not human beings.
  - It is against Satan/the devil, but also against systemic powers, cosmic powers.
- Two dangers and errors we can have now: to focus on the devil and evil spirits/demons too much or too little.
  - This is C. S. Lewis' warning in the preface to his very popular book, *The Screwtape Letters*, a book about an older demon writing to a younger demon, giving him pointers on how to destroy a young man: "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist and magician with the same delight."<sup>5</sup>
- Jesus acknowledges Satan and his power.
  - When Jesus foretold Peter's denial he said, "Behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." (*Luke 22:31-32*)
- Jesus acknowledges in *Luke 22:31-32*...
  - Satan's power
    - Satan is more powerful than you.
  - Satan's desire is to make you sin
  - That Jesus will fight him on your behalf
    - Jesus prayed for Peter.
  - If and when you mess up, you can be restored

### **Arm Yourself with the Armor of God (*Ephesians 6:13-17*)**

- We must put on the whole armor of God (6:13)
  - "Just as the soldier in physical warfare needs all six items, if he is not to be needlessly vulnerable at some points, so the Christian needs each piece of spiritual equipment for his struggle."<sup>6</sup>
- Belt of Truth (*Ephesians 6:14*)

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<sup>4</sup> Peterson, *Practice Resurrection*, 256.

<sup>5</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: HarperOne, 1942), IX.

<sup>6</sup> Arthur G. Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, New International Biblical Commentary vol. 10 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1984), 288.

- “To belt on truth means to be strengthened by god’s truth in the gospel and to resolve to live truth.”<sup>7</sup>
- Jesus came in the flesh full of grace and truth (*John 1:14*)
- Breastplate of Righteousness (*Ephesians 6:14*)
  - *Isaiah 59:17* - “He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head”
  - “To put on the breastplate of righteousness means that Christians are to reflect the righteous character of God in their actions.”<sup>8</sup>
  - Righteousness could also be translated as justice here.
    - N. T. Wright - “The one true God is the one true judge, and intends to put the whole world to rights.”<sup>9</sup>
- Shoes as the Readiness of the Gospel of Peace (*Ephesians 6:15*)
  - Readiness pertains to all of life.<sup>10</sup> The gospel affects the whole Christian life.
- Shield of Faith (*Ephesians 6:16*)
  - The shield Paul is referring to the the Roman army shield. These shields were four feet high and two and a half feet wide.<sup>11</sup>
  - The shield of faith implies that we have faith in God, that we trust in Him. But it also implies God’s faithfulness to us.
  - God’s faithfulness protects us from Satan’s attacks.
  - “Faith is complete confidence in and reliance upon god to give the victory.”<sup>12</sup>
- Helmet of Salvation (*Ephesians 6:17*)
  - Also from *Isaiah 59:17* (see the Breastplate of Righteousness)
  - We receive our salvation from God. That’s what protects us.
- Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (*Ephesians 6:17*)
  - This is the only offensive element of the Armor of God mentioned. The others are defensive, to protect.
  - When Jesus was tempted by Satan (*Matthew 4:1-11*), each of the three times the devil tempted Him, Jesus quoted scripture at the devil.
  - N. T. Wright - “The ‘word’ in question is...the word of the gospel through which God accomplishes his powerful, cleansing work in people’s hearts and lives.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Pray Always (*Ephesians 6:18*)**

- Paul begins this letter by praying for the Ephesians (*1:15-23*), prays for them in the middle (*3:14-21*), and ends the letter asking the Ephesian church to pray for him.

<sup>7</sup> Klyne Snodgrass, *The New International Commentary: Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 342.

<sup>8</sup> Snodgrass, *The New International Commentary: Ephesians*, 342.

<sup>9</sup> N. T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 74.

<sup>10</sup> Snodgrass, *The New International Commentary: Ephesians*, 342.

<sup>11</sup> Snodgrass, *The New International Commentary: Ephesians*, 343.

<sup>12</sup> Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, 289.

<sup>13</sup> Wright, *Paul for Everyone*, 75.

- We must pray always in the midst of our battle with the enemy because we can not do it on our own. We are not strong enough. We need God's help.
- Remember as we mentioned earlier, Jesus prayed for Peter (*Luke 22:31-32*)
- Eugene Peterson - "Paul is no more self-sufficient than are the Ephesians...Many of us would much prefer to be in position to only help others, to pray for them instead of asking them to pray for us. Asking for help is an admission that we are not adequate for the task at hand. Asking for help reveals weakness...Asking for prayer keeps us all on the same level. When we ask for prayer we are companions in the pilgrim life of church...Asking for prayer also keeps prayer immediate, relationally personal, local, and honest."<sup>14</sup>
- Prayer does work.
  - When asked if prayer works, he would reply by saying that when he prayed, coincidences would happen. When he stopped praying coincidences stopped happening. Someone else was once accused that luck was the reason for his success. He responded that the more he worked, the luckier he got.<sup>15</sup>

### **Speak the Gospel Boldly (*Ephesians 6:19-20*)**

- Remember, Paul is still in prison for his boldness to proclaim that Jesus was the Christ (*Ephesians 3:1, 4:1, 6:20*). But even though he has been persecuted for the sake of spreading the gospel, he wants even more boldness to speak the gospel to even more people.
  - Mystery of the gospel (*6:19, 3:6*) - that gentiles and Jews are fellow heirs through Jesus.
- Paul knows the best way to combat the enemy is to spread the message of Jesus.
- He asks to have boldness when speaking the gospel.
- At the end of Acts in chapter 28 we know that Paul proclaimed the gospel in Rome while he was under house arrest.
  - *Acts 28:30-31* - "He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance."

### **God has Already Won the Battle**

- One year at Gulf Coast Getaway Randy Harris once said, "The book of Revelation is summarized like this: God's side wins. Pick a side. Don't be stupid."
- God fought the battle for you.
- He sent Jesus to defeat death, to defeat sin, and to recreate you to be the man or woman God created you to be. The work he began in you will be brought to completion. You are a new creation. God has reconciled the world to Himself through Jesus.

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<sup>14</sup> Peterson, *Practice Resurrection*, 268.

<sup>15</sup> Wright, *Paul for Everyone*, 78.