



**Studying the Word of God
to Stand Firm in the Armour of God**

A Study of Ephesians 6:10-20

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Standing Firm

Introduction

“Saving Pastor Ryan.”

That was the theme of a conference for ministers that some of our pastoral staff attended several years back. When we arrived at the campground, we were herded into the dining commons (the “mess hall.”). We were each issued a camouflage jacket. A guy called “Sarge” ordered us, at the top of his lungs, to put the jacket on. (*What, I wondered, had we gotten ourselves into?*)

Next thing you know, we were marched into a nearby room with a large screen. The lights were turned off and a movie was started. It was the opening scene from *Saving Private Ryan*. (I hadn’t seen the movie before; I don’t like war movies). I watched as Allied soldiers stormed the beaches at Normandy. It wasn’t a pretty sight. Waves of men were mowed down by enemy fire. Those who survived were left dazed and disoriented.

When the movie was turned off, it was very silent in the room. “Sarge” got up in front. He wasn’t yelling anymore. But his words were still charged with emotion. He spoke of the harsh reality of the spiritual battle we find ourselves in. He talked about pastors who had been picked off and taken down by the enemy. He said the purpose of the conference was to help us understand how to “Save Pastor Ryan.”

Most of you reading these words are not pastors. But you are still caught in a spiritual battle. You *do* have an enemy. And, whether you know it or not, you are a target. So are the people you love—those in your family and in your church.

I don’t write this to be sensationalistic or to scare you. I’m simply stating the truth as it set out in Ephesians 6:10-20. In these verses, Paul briefs us on the spiritual battle that rages around us. He soberes us with a reminder that we are engaged in a struggle against the “*powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms*” (6:12). But then he bolsters us with the assurance that God has provided the equipment we need to stand firm in the face of the enemy’s attacks. We can be victors, not victims, in this war.

This *Standing Firm* study guide is written as a training manual to help you do well in spiritual battle. Over the next five weeks, you’ll explore truth that can set you free and make you strong. You’ll learn how to put on the full armour of God. You’ll discover how to help protect those you love—your friends, you spouse, your children. As you study God’s Word, you’ll find the strength you need for the battle you’re in!

I have been enriched and empowered as I’ve studied and written this manual. My prayer is that you will be too. After all, God has called us to **Stand Firm**. And by His grace and in His power, **we will stand!**



WEEK 1

Something Set Against Us

John Eldridge is on to something when he writes:

*Twenty clear days a year—that sounds about like my life. I think I see what’s really going on about that often. The rest of the time, it feels like fog, like the bathroom mirror after a hot shower. You know what I mean. What exactly are you perfectly clear on these days? How about your life? Why have things gone the way they have? Where was God in all that? And do you know what you ought to do next, with a deep, settled confidence that it will work out? Neither do I. Oh, I’d love to wake each morning knowing exactly who I am and where God is taking me. Zeroed in on all my relationships, undaunted in my calling. It’s awesome when I do see. But for most of us, life seems more like driving along with a dirty windshield and then turning into the sun. I can sort of make out the shapes ahead, and I think the light is green It’s almost as if there is something set against us (Eldridge, *Waking the Dead*, 5-6).*

There actually is something set against us. Especially when we are seeking to know and love and follow Jesus. We have an enemy. Or more accurately, we have three enemies. The Bible reveals that we face a trio of enemies. These three form a spiritual “axis of evil”.

Read Ephesians 2:1-3 and identify the three enemies that oppose us:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Did you see them? Today we’ll look at two of these enemies. Tomorrow we’ll study the third.

1. **The world.** In Ephesians 2:2 Paul talks about the “ways of the world”. So “the world” is one of our three enemies. But what exactly is “the world”?

Look up 1 John 2:15-16. What constitutes the “ways of the world”?

Clint Arnold describes the world as “*the unhealthy social environment in which we live. This includes the ungodly aspects of culture, peer pressure, values, traditions, ‘what is in’, ‘what is uncool,’ customs, philosophies, and attitudes. The world represents the prevailing worldview assumptions of the day that stand contrary to the biblical understanding of reality and biblical values*” (Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions About Spiritual Warfare*, 34).

In his hymn, *Am I A Soldier of the Cross?*, Isaac Watts asks, “Is this vile world a friend to grace to help me on to God?” The question is rhetorical, isn’t it? The world is clearly *not* a friend to

grace to help us on to God. In fact, the ways of the world will not lead you closer to truth or closer to God.

How do you find the “world” opposing your spiritual growth at this time in your life?

- 2. The sinful nature.** The phrase “the cravings of our sinful nature...and its desires and thoughts” (Ephesians 2:3) points to the second enemy that opposes us. This enemy actually resides in us. Paul refers to it as the “sinful nature” or the “flesh”.

Read Romans 7:14-25. What do you learn about the sinful nature (or the flesh) in these verses?

The sinful nature refers to the “leftovers” from our life apart from Christ. Even after we trust in Jesus and are placed “in Christ”, we still retain the leftovers of our old life. The good news is that if you are a Christian, God’s Spirit lives inside of you (Ephesians 1:13-14) and He has given you a brand new heart that desires to please God. The bad news is you still have the remnants of the sinful nature (the flesh) inside you as well.

Clint Arnold describes the sinful nature as *“the inner propensity or inclination to do evil. It is the part of our creatureliness tainted by the fall that remains with us until the day we die... As Christians, however, we are new creatures and the compelling influence of the flesh has been broken by Christ’s death on the cross. Nevertheless, this inner compulsion continually seeks to reassert its claim and we can only resist it by the power of the Holy Spirit”* (Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions*, 34).

Surely you’ve felt the civil war that sometimes rages inside of you? Galatians 5:16 explains what’s going on: “For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature.” That describes it well, doesn’t it. Part of you wants to do things God’s way; but there’s a part of you that pulls you towards independence from God. The “traitor within the gates” is your sinful nature.

Left unchecked, the sinful nature can really mess your life up.

Read Galatians 5:19-21. Which of these “acts of the sinful nature” are you battling most fiercely against these days?

Take time to pray that God would help you walk in His ways (not the ways of the world) and follow the promptings of His Spirit (not the pull of the sinful nature).

Dealing with Devil

Yesterday we studied two of the three enemies mentioned in Ephesians 2:1-3. We looked at “the world” and the “sinful nature” (the flesh). Today we come to the third enemy.

3. The devil. Did you notice the phrase “the ruler of the kingdom of the air” (Ephesians 2:2)? That’s a reference to the devil. Many people in our day discount the devil’s existence (see “Is there a real devil?” in the appendix). However, the Bible leaves no doubt that the devil is real.

Look closely at Ephesians 2:2. What do you learn about the devil from this verse?

Here’s what I came up with. In Ephesians 2:2 the devil is described as *personal* (not just a force), as *powerful* (he is a ruler who heads up a kingdom), as *spiritual* (his kingdom is in the “air”) and as *influential* (he’s at work in the lives of those who are disobedient to God). We’ll learn more about him, his cohorts and his schemes in the days ahead.

How can you tell which of the three enemies (the world, the sinful nature or the devil) you are facing at any given moment?

How does 1 John 5:19 help you understand the fact that these enemies work together?

Sometimes it is hard to pin down which of the three enemies we are up against. That’s because our enemies often work together in their attacks. For example, the *devil* influences culture (the *world*) in destructive ways and fans the desires of our *sinful nature*. The *world* creates opportunities for our *sinful nature* to gratify its desires. The *sinful nature* drives us to follow the ways of the *world* and tempts us to do things that give the *devil* a foothold in our lives (Eph. 4:26). The whole thing can leave you spinning...and get you stumbling.

I hope you're getting the point that you are in a spiritual battle, like it or not. You are caught in the crossfire of a spiritual battle with high stakes. Sadly, many Christians, especially here in the West, don't seem to get this. They view life as more of a "playground" than a "battle ground".

If we hope to stand firm, we have to get clear on our situation. We are at war!

John Eldridge says it well:

We are at war. How I've missed this for so long is a mystery to me. Maybe I've overlooked it; maybe I've chosen not to see. We are at war. I don't like that fact any more than you do, but the sooner we come to terms with it, the better hope we have of making it through to the life we want. This is not Eden. You probably figured that out. . . . The world in which we live is a combat zone, a violent clash of kingdoms, a bitter struggle unto the death. I'm sorry if I'm the one to break this news to you: you were born into a world at war and you will live all your days in the midst of a great battle, involving all the forces of heaven and hell and played out here on earth.

*War is not just one among the many themes in the Bible. It is the backdrop for the whole Story, the context for everything else. God is at war. . . . And what is he fighting for? Our freedom and restoration. The glory of God is man fully alive. In the meantime, Paul says, arm yourselves, and the first piece of equipment he urges us to don is the belt of truth (Eph. 6:10-18). We arm ourselves by getting a good grip on our situation, by getting some clarity on the battle over our lives. God's intentions toward us are life. Those intentions are opposed. Forewarned is forearmed, as the saying goes (Eldridge, *Waking the Dead*, 13,16)*

Let me ask you a few personal questions as we close today's study.

Do you regularly remember that you are in the midst of a spiritual battle? Why or why not?

Are you ready to learn how to stand firm under spiritual attack? Why or why not?

Take some time to talk to God about your desire to be ready to stand firm in the spiritual battle in which you find yourself.

Know Your Enemy

Forewarned is forearmed. That's why the Bible gives us an intelligence briefing on our enemy, the devil.

Study Ephesians 6:10-12. Write down at least ten things you learn about the devil and his cohorts from these verses. *(Sure, it would be easier to have someone else figure this out for you, but you'll get more out of it if you do the digging for yourself!)*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Did you catch that Paul says "we struggle" against "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"? The Greek term translated "struggle" (verse 12) has the idea of wrestling or hand-to-hand fighting. In fact, some translations say "we wrestle...."

What are the implications of the imagery of "wrestling" with our enemy?

Spiritual warfare is often an up-close-and-personal fight. In order to win, you'll have to learn to wrestle well. To stand firm, you'll need to know how to fight fiercely.

One of the keys to wrestling well is to know your adversary's tactics. Did you notice the phrase "the devil's schemes" in verse 11? The word is in the plural ("schemes", not just "scheme"). Paul is clueing us in to the fact that Satan has more than one scheme going.

*Mention of the 'schemes' of the devil reminds us of the trickery and subterfuge by which evil and temptation present themselves in our lives. Evil rarely looks evil until it accomplishes its goal; it gains entrance by appearing attractive, desirable and perfectly legitimate. It is a baited and camouflaged trap (quoted in O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 464).*

Look up the following verses and identify the specific scheme Satan and his demons use to try to trip up people.

Genesis 3:1-5

Matthew 13:19

Luke 13:16

2 Corinthians 4:4

2 Corinthians 11:3

1 Timothy 4:1

Revelation 12:10

Which of his schemes tend to be most effective on you?

Satan is evil, but he's not stupid. He has figured out your weak areas and he schemes to take you down where you are most vulnerable. John Stott is right when he says, "[I]f we hope to overcome them [powers of darkness], we shall need to bear in mind that they have no moral principles, no code of honour, no higher feelings. They recognize no Geneva Convention to restrict or partially civilize the weapons of their warfare. They are utterly unscrupulous and ruthless in the pursuit of their malicious designs" (Stott, *Ephesians*, 264).

Ask God to help you stand firm against the schemes Satan uses most effectively against you.

We can't afford to be casual or careless in the fight we are in. We must know our *adversary*. But more importantly, we must know our *assets*. Tomorrow we'll study those.

Strong Enough to Stand Firm

By now I hope you realize that you are in a serious battle against some formidable enemies (the world, sinful nature and the devil). And yet there is no cause for panic or retreat. In fact, you are called to be strong and stand firm.

Ephesians 6:10 begins with a rousing call to “be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power”. What is the significance of the phrase “in the Lord” after the command to “be strong?”

Our strength to stand firm comes from the Lord. We are not strong enough to win this battle in our own power. But we don’t have to fight in our own strength. We rely on the Lord’s “mighty power.” This is not the first time we read about God’s mighty power in Ephesians. Paul already spoke of God’s power in chapter 1. Read Ephesians 1:18-23 and answer the following questions.

How does Paul describe God’s power in Ephesians 1:19?

How did God demonstrate the extent of his power according to verse 20?

How does Christ’s position and power compare to all other powers (human and angelic) according to verses 21-22?

Based on what you read in verse 19, who has access to God’s mighty power?

Ephesians 1:18-23 is part of a prayer that began back in verse 15. In this prayer, Paul prays that our eyes would be opened to know the hope of our calling, the riches of God's inheritance in the saints and the greatness of the power that is available to us in Christ!

How do you respond to the thought of being strengthened with God's "mighty power"?

Ephesians 6:10-14 makes it clear that God's power is given to us for a reason. It enables us to stand firm and withstand the devil's schemes.

How many times are we told to "stand" in verses 10-14? Why is this thought repeated?

Let's put together what we've seen so far this week. We live in the midst of a spiritual battle. We struggle ("wrestle") against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. At the helm of these dark powers is one called the devil. Unseen, but not unreal, the devil schemes to defeat those who belong to Christ. He's smart and powerful in his assaults.

The battle is real and the stakes are high. If left on our own, we'd all be in deep trouble. But we're not left to fight this battle alone. God wants us to make use of His mighty strength so we can withstand all the attacks of our adversary. In fact, as we will see later in our study, God's power can not only empower us to stand firm; it also can strengthen us to stride forward. Together we advance with the gospel, bringing a message of true liberation to those held captive by the evil one.

Does this summary capture your outlook on life? Why or why not?

Take some time to talk to the Lord about what you've studied today. Ask Him to reorient your thinking so that you see reality as God describes it, rather than the way society spins it.

The key to being strong in God's mighty power is putting on God's full armour. Tomorrow we'll get an overview of what that armour looks like. You won't want to miss it!

Checking Out Your Armour

Read over Ephesians 6:11-13. In these verses we are told (twice) to put on the “full armour” of God (verse 11, 13).

Why would a Roman soldier want to have on his “full armour” before going into battle?

Why is it vital that you have on God’s “full armour” as you face spiritual attack?

You won’t be fully prepared for battle unless you have on the full armour of God. When you are fully outfitted, you’ll be able to stand successfully against the schemes of the evil one. In other words, God has provided all the resources we need to be victorious in spiritual battle.

In the weeks ahead, we’ll take a close look at each piece of the “full armour” of God. Today, we’ll get an overview of the full outfit.

To get a visual picture of what a soldier’s armour looked like, check out these websites: www.legionxxiv.org/equipment and www.legionxxiv.org/loricapage/

Read over verses 14-20 and list the seven pieces of spiritual armour mentioned.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

You may have had trouble finding seven pieces. Only six are specifically listed. But there is one last “piece” that’s needed to complete the Christian’s armour. It’s prayer (verses 18-20). There is some debate as to whether prayer should be considered as the seventh piece of armour. We’ll discuss this matter more fully in Week 5 of our study. Whether you see prayer as a piece of the armour or not, I think you’ll agree that it is essential to standing firm in spiritual battle.

The inspiration for the “armour of God” may not have only come from the Roman soldiers that Paul was chained to while in prison (6:20), it may have also come from the pages of Scripture. One of the books that Paul frequently quotes in his letters is the book of Isaiah.

Look up the following passages and record the pieces of armour you read about:

Isaiah 11:5

Isaiah 52:7

Isaiah 57:19

From these passages you can see why Paul calls the Christian’s armour the “armour of God” in Ephesians 6:11. We are following God’s lead when we put on the armour He provides.

Based on verse 11, whose responsibility is it to put on the full armour? Is it God’s responsibility or ours?

Did you find that question a bit tricky to answer? That’s because there is a sense in which putting on the full armour is something we do and something God does for us. He provides the armour (that’s what it’s called the “armour of God”) but He expects us to pick it up and put it on. The Greek verb translated as “put on” is in what grammarians call the “middle voice”. The middle voice often carries the idea of something we do “for ourselves”. So you could translate verse 11, “Put on yourselves the full armour of God.” We have a personal responsibility to make sure we are fully outfitted as we fight the good fight of faith.

Do you consciously think about putting on God’s full armour? Why or why not?

Back in 1655, a Puritan pastor by the name of William Gurnall wrote a book entitled, *The Christian in Complete Armour*. It was a lengthy study of Ephesians 6:10-20 (1472 pages). Pastor Gurnall made the observation that Christians are pictured as wearing robes in heaven, but armour on earth. He put it this way: “*We must walk, work, and sleep in them or else we are not true soldiers of Christ*” (Quoted in Stott, *Ephesians*, 276).

Pray through the list of the pieces of armour and ask God to help you to put on the “full armour” of God.



WEEK 2

Standing in Truth

We are at war. We can win.

Those are the twin truths we discovered last week as we studied Ephesians 6:10-13. But if we are to be victorious with the strength the Lord Jesus provides, we'll need to put on the full armour of God. That's what we're going to learn to do, starting this week.

Beginning in verse 14 and going through verse 20, Paul tells us how to dress for success in spiritual warfare. In the Greek text, verses 14-20 comprise one long sentence. It's like Paul doesn't take a breath until he finished discussing the "full armour of God"!

The first piece of equipment mentioned is the "belt of truth". For a Roman soldier in Paul's day, this part of the equipment may well have been a belt-like "apron, which hung under the armour, which was made of loose or sewn thongs of leather for protecting the thighs" (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 839). In other words, this belt was the original "under armour", foundational for all the other pieces.

For the Christian, truth is the foundational "under armour" needed to stand strong in the midst of spiritual warfare.

It's not an accident that the book of Ephesians is laid out as it is. The book divides nicely into two halves. In the first three chapters, Paul discusses what we might call doctrinal truth (which is just biblical truth). In chapters four through six, Paul gives applicational truth; he applies doctrine to life.

Ephesians 1-3			Ephesians 4-6	
Our Calling in Christ (<i>doctrinal truth</i>)			Our Conduct in Christ (<i>applicational truth</i>)	
Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4 -5	Chapter 6
Our Blessings	Our Biography	A Prayer for Love	Our Walk	Our Warfare

When Paul tells you to put on the "belt of truth" in Ephesians 6:14, which category of truth do you think he's talking about:

- ☐ doctrinal truth (knowing biblical truth)
- ☐ applicational truth (living out biblical truth)
- ☐ both doctrinal and applicational truth

Since Paul highlights both kinds of truth in Ephesians, I'd say that the belt of truth would encompass *both* doctrinal and applicational truth. We'll look at both kinds of truth this week, beginning with doctrinal truth.

Satan's attacks often come at us in the form of false teaching or faulty thinking. So in order to stand firm against falsehood, you will need to know the truth. And that means knowing the truth about who Christ is and who you are "in Christ".

Work your way carefully through Ephesians 1 and write out everything you learn about Christ (who Jesus is, what He has done, where He is now, what power He has).

To put on the belt of truth, you not only need a firm grip on who Christ is, but also on who you are "in Christ". It's essential that you come to understand the truth of what it means to be "in Christ".

Slowly read through Ephesians 1:1-14 and note every reference to being "in Christ" or "in Him." (You might want to underline these phrases in your Bible).

What conclusions can you draw from the many repetitions of this concept?

The phrase "in Christ" (or "in Him") is Paul's shorthand way of talking about being "in union with Christ" or "in connection with him." Judging from the number of repetitions of this phrase in Ephesians 1, it's obvious God doesn't want Christians to miss the fact that our lives are closely linked to His Son, Jesus.

Now it's time to get more specific. It's important that you know precisely what is true about you as a Christian who is "in Christ".

Work your way once more time through Ephesians 1:1-14. Write out the things that are true about you "in Christ". I'll get you started.

In Christ. . .

I am blessed in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing (1:3)

I was chosen by God to be part of his family before he created the world (1:4-5)

(You take it from here...)

Paul ends chapter 1 with a prayer that God would open your heart and mind to understand the truth about Christ and about our place of privilege in Him.

Read through Ephesians 1:15-23 and let it be the basis for a prayer time to finish today's lesson. Ask God to open your eyes and heart to understand truth you've studied in this lesson. Take some time to praise Christ for who He is. And thank Him for who you are "in Him."

The Truth about Your Position

Yesterday you studied the truth revealed to us in Ephesians 1: truth about who Christ is and who you are “in Christ”. Today, as we look at Ephesians 2, you’ll discover more truth to help you stand firm in spiritual battle.

Read through Ephesians 2:1-10. If you are a Christian, you’ll find a brief bio of your life in these verses. Answer the following questions about your spiritual story.

What was your condition before you were saved?

How were you saved?

What’s your condition now that you are saved?

I’ve read these verses many times. I must confess that I’ve tended to notice what is said about my spiritual condition as a believer (*no longer dead in transgressions and sins, but raised to new life*). But while I’ve seen what these verses say about my spiritual condition, somehow I’ve missed what they say about my spiritual position.

According to Ephesians 2:6, what is a Christian’s present spiritual position in Christ?

Why do you think Paul makes the point that we are currently seated with Christ in the heavenly realms? Why is that important?

To really understand the significance of being seated with Christ in the heavenly realms, we need to look at a few other passages and then connect the dots.

According to Ephesians 1:19-20, where is Christ seated right now?

According to Ephesians 1:21, how does Christ's position compare to all other powers (including demonic powers)?

According to Ephesians 6:12, where are our spiritual enemies?

Let's put this all together. Let me ask you some questions that may seem simple, but the answers have a profound effect on how you understand spiritual warfare.

Where is Jesus right now?

How does Jesus' power compare to the power of the devil and his forces? Who has the greater power according to Ephesians 1:21?

Where are you seated right now?

What does that mean about your position in relationship to the evil powers that attack you?

Do you see it? The Bible is telling you that, as a Christian, you are in a position of strength as you engage in spiritual battle. You are "in Christ" and Christ is "far above all rule and authority, power and dominion". In other words, you have the high ground in this battle. You don't fight an enemy who is "above" you but one who is "beneath" you.

To finish off today's study, I want you to read what Arthur Matthews says in his book, *Born for the Battle*.

Our wrestling does not begin in our hearts. It has as its foundation the mighty victory over Satan that Jesus Christ won on the cross. This includes all that God did with Jesus as the direct result of that victory, and also with us when God gave him to be "head over everything for the church," his body. The exaltation of the Head, "far above all rule and authority, power and dominion," far from separating him from his body on earth, has taken us in him as co-sharers in all that God has done with him. This means we are seated "with him in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 2:6).

So when Paul says, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power" (Ephesians 6:10), his finger is pointing back to the foundational truths he developed earlier. Satan is a defeated foe with a crushed head. There is no power in him, nor are there any means available to him to reach and unseat the Victor of Calvary now seated at the right hand of the Father. This is one fact we need to keep strengthening ourselves with.

There is another: All the things God did for the Head, he did for the body also. This means that positionally we are in the heavenlies in our Head. Our strengthening in the Lord is achieved as we reckon by faith on what God has told us he has done in fact. "The true order of faith," says Dr. Stuart Holden, "is not that we have to live an earthly life with a view to heaven, but that we are called to a heavenly life with a view to earth."

Oh, that all believers could realize and continually appropriate for themselves, by faith, the glory of the objective facts God has told us about in his Word! That they could be strengthened by them, developing spiritual muscle in order to fulfill their high calling!

*Even though our feet are walking about here on earth, positionally our life is "hid with Christ in God". So we go into battle, not from the perspective of our circumstances here on earth, but from our position above in Christ (Matthews, *Born for the Battle*, 23-26).*

Close off your time today by talking to God about the truth of your *condition* in Christ (raised to new life) and your *position* in Christ (seated with him in the heavenly realms). Knowing this truth will help you stand firm in spiritual battle.

Living the Truth

In Ephesians 1-3, Paul presents the truth about our condition and position “in Christ” and prays that we would be filled up with the reality of God’s great love (Ephesians 3:14-21).

After helping us come to know the truth, Paul now calls us to live it out. Beginning in the first verse of chapter 4, he exhorts us to live out our new condition and position in Christ: “*As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received*” (4:1).

Today we’ll see how truth should shape our speech and our control our conduct. We’ll learn some practical ways to strap on the belt of truth in our daily lives.

Truth should characterize our speech. What do the following verses have to say about speaking truth?

4:15

4:25

What motivation is given to speak the truth in these verses? Why should we do it?

According to verse 15, what keeps us from wounding each other with “truthful words”? How are truthful words to be spoken?

Take inventory on your speech over the past few days:

Have you spoken words that were not true? When?

Have you spoken truth, but not “in love”? When?

Is there someone with whom you need to make things right? When will you take steps to do this?

We are not only to speak truth, but we are to live in line with truth. Read Ephesians 5:8-10 and answer the following questions.

What was your condition before you were “in Christ”? What is it now?

What does it mean to be “children of the light”?

How does truth relate to living “in the light”?

Why do you think truth is called a “fruit of the light”?

Remember that our spiritual enemies are called “powers of this dark world”. In other words, when we drift back into darkness rather than living in the light, we are much more vulnerable to the spiritual attacks of the powers of darkness. This is why living the truth is vital to standing firm in spiritual battle.

**Are there aspects of your lifestyle that are still in the shadows and not in the light?
Which ones?**

Are you willing to bring all of your words and deeds into the light? (Read 5:11-14)

Close off today’s lesson by asking the Lord to forgive any sins and flood you with His light. Ask Him to help you know and live the truth.

Covered with Righteousness

After strapping on the belt of truth, we're told in Ephesians 6:14 to put on the breastplate of righteousness. This is a vital piece of our protective armour in spiritual battle, as we'll see today.

In Paul's day, Roman soldiers wore breastplates made of brass. Wealthier soldiers might have a breastplate made of chain mail. The breastplate covered the front and back of a soldier's torso.

The biblical concept of "righteousness" can refer to what we might call "imputed righteousness" or "imparted righteousness". Here's a brief definition of both:

Imputed righteousness refers to *justification*—the pronouncement of God that we are eternally pardoned, forgiven and considered holy because of Christ's death on our behalf and our faith in Him.

Imparted righteousness refers to *sanctification*—the process by which God gradually transforms our attitudes and actions so that they increasingly reflect Christ's character.

Now, which kind of righteousness do you think Paul is referring to when he calls us to put on the breastplate of righteousness?

- ☐ **imputed righteousness (justification)**
- ☐ **imparted righteousness (sanctification)**
- ☐ **both imputed and imparted righteousness (justification and sanctification)**

Since Ephesians emphasizes both imputed and imparted righteousness, I think it's safe to say Paul has both kinds in mind. First we receive God's righteousness by faith. Then we learn to live righteous lives.

According to Ephesians 2:8-9, how does a person receive God's gift of salvation (which includes imputed righteousness?)

I hope you never get dull to the incredible truth that God saves us solely on the basis of His grace. We don't deserve it and we can't earn it. But we can receive it, by placing our faith in Jesus. When we receive God's salvation, we are placed "in Christ." Being "in Christ" not only ensures that our sins are forgiven. There's more. Christ's righteousness is credited (imputed) to us. God sees us as righteous because of Jesus. Let that sink in: you are righteous in God's sight.

It follows that since God sees you as righteous, He expects you to live that way.

What are Christians told to do in Ephesians 4:22-24?

According to verse 24, what characterizes your “new self”?

Because you have been given a new condition and a new position in Christ, God wants you to “put on your “new self” and that will mean living a life characterized by “righteousness and holiness.”

Read Ephesians 4:17-32 and describe characteristics of a righteous lifestyle.

According to Ephesians 4:26-27, what happens if we don’t live in keeping with God’s righteousness? How does this affect our ability to stand against the devil?

If you are going to stand firm in spiritual battle, you’ll need to wear the breastplate of righteousness. You receive righteousness from God by putting your faith in Christ as your Saviour. You reflect the righteousness of God as you learn to live out your new life in Christ.

Is there anything in your life today that is not reflecting the righteousness of Christ? Ask God to reveal it to you and remove it from you. Ask Him to help you reflect the righteousness of Christ as you go through this day.

Free to be Righteous

To stand firm in spiritual battle, you need to be wearing the full armour of God. And that includes the breastplate of righteousness. Yesterday we learned that righteousness is *imputed* to us when we trust in Christ for salvation. And it's *imparted* to us as we learn to live out our new lives in "righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:24).

Today, we'll see how the two work together in an amazing way. I'm not exaggerating when I say that what you will study today could change your life in a dramatic way. It has done that for me. My prayer is that God will open your eyes to see how imputed righteousness (justification) is the basis for imparted righteousness (sanctification).

Listen to how J. C. Ryle explains the connection:

Both [imputed and imparted righteousness] are to be found in the same persons. Those who are justified are always sanctified and those who are sanctified are always justified. God has joined them together and they cannot be put asunder. Both begin at the same time. The moment a person begins to be justified, he also begins to be a sanctified person. He may not feel it, but it is a fact (Ryle, Holiness, p. 7).

What is J.C. Ryle is saying?

Here's an important truth that many Christians seem to miss: the key to experiencing a greater degree of imparted righteousness (sanctification) is found in truly grasping imputed righteousness (justification).

When I was in university, I was given a book by John White called *The Fight*. It remains one of my all-time favourite books. And my favourite chapter in the book is the one on holiness. When I read this, now almost thirty years ago, the light came on in my soul. The eyes of my heart were opened and I began to see how imputed righteousness (justification) is the basis and catalyst for imparted righteousness (sanctification).

Let me quote what John White wrote. See if it doesn't give you hope as well.

Although I knew in my head that I was justified by faith, I rarely profited from the knowledge. I dragged my feet through life beneath a burden of guilt. Often I had little heart for common Christian duties (though for the most part I was faithful in maintaining them) because of a leaden sense of the impossibility of straightening out my life. How could I confess the same sin for the hundredth time? Where was my sincerity? Having gone through "sanctifying experiences" several times, having dedicated my all to Christ, having rested in him, yielded to the Holy Spirit and trusted God to work in me what I could never work in myself, my situation seemed hopeless.

Anyone resonating with this so far? Listen to what John White goes on to say.

Light began to break over me when I realized in the depths of my spirit that I was forgiven, cleansed, accepted, justified because of what Christ had done for me and not because of the depth of my yieldedness. I had preached this gospel to non-Christians for twenty-five years but had never tasted its full sweetness. It was as though dawn broke. Suddenly the relief of knowing that I was forgiven and loved lifted the load off my spirit. I found that I was set free, free to be holy. To my astonishment I discovered that I wanted to live a holy life far more than I wanted to sin. Forgiveness freed me to do what I wanted most.

Even after all these years, I still love reading those words. But he's not done yet. Read on.

*I cannot say my life has been sinless since then, only that now each time I am guilt-ridden, I return to the cross of our Lord Jesus. I go shamelessly. I do not struggle to experience feelings or to achieve the requisite degree of piety. I recognize that peace and forgiveness do not depend on feelings of piety but on Christ and on what he has done. To the degree that by faith I praise God for Christ and his finished work, I find myself liberated anew to be holy. It was not that previous teaching had been wrong so much as that it never got to the root of my problem (White, *The Fight*, 185-186).*

Summarize, in your own words, what John White is saying helped him live a more righteous life.

How can this understanding help you?

So let's summarize what's we've learned about putting on the breastplate of righteousness. Here's what I think it means: putting on righteousness involves **consciously** living in light of the truth that you are forgiven, accepted and cleansed by God simply because of His grace and your faith in His Son. And then **consistently** depending on God's Spirit to help you live an obedient, holy life.

What is the main thing you've learned in this week's study?

How will it help you stand firm in spiritual battle?

Finish this week's study by talking to God about the things you are learning.



WEEK 3

Finding Firm Footing in the Gospel

In last week's lesson we learned that putting on the full armour of God begins with wearing the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness (6:14). This week we'll focus on the shoes of the gospel and the shield of faith.

To stand firm in battle, a soldier needed good footing. Harold Hoehner describes the footwear worn by Roman soldiers as "heavy sandals (*caliga*, a low half-boot) with soles made of several layers of leather averaging 2 cm (3/4 inch) thick, studded with hollow-headed hobnails. They were tied by leather thongs half-way up the shin and were stuffed with wool or fur in the cold weather" (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 842).

As Christians we are to stand firm by having our feet "fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace". We take our stand on the gospel. And to do that, we must know what the gospel message is.

What do these verses from Ephesians tell you about the gospel?

1:13

3:6-7

6:19

The gospel message is God's truth (1:13) about Christ--His death and resurrection. The gospel reveals a mystery—a truth previously hidden: salvation is offered to all people (both Jews and Gentiles—3:6-7). Those who believe the gospel are saved from their sins (1:13), indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1:13) and given the promise of a future inheritance in heaven (1:14).

Why do you think Paul refers to the gospel as "the gospel of peace" in 6:15? What kind of "peace" is announced in the gospel message?

Did you write down "peace with God"? If so, you got it right. Well, you got it partly right.

It is true the gospel message tells us how we can be at peace with God. Paul focuses on this wonderful truth in his letter to the Romans. For example, in Romans 5:1 he writes, "*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" When you believe the gospel message about Christ, you are reconciled to God; you are no longer His enemy but are now at peace with Him. That's why Paul begins Ephesians with the words, "*Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*" (1:2).

So the gospel announces the good news that we can be at peace with God. But that's not all. In fact, a major emphasis in the book of Ephesians is on how the gospel brings peace *between people*. Even people who have been historically at odds.

Read Ephesians 2:14-17. What do these verses say about the peace Christ brings between people from very different backgrounds?

In Paul's day there were historic hostilities and deep divisions between Jews and Gentiles. (Does that sound familiar?) But the gospel of Christ brought a message that could bring Jews and Gentiles together in Christ as part of His church. This was nothing short of miraculous!

How have you seen the gospel bring peace between people of different backgrounds?

Sometimes what divides us from others is not our racial backgrounds but our personalities, priorities and preferences. Even believers who are culturally similar can be relationally separated.

How can the truth of the gospel bring peace to believers who are having trouble getting along or getting close to one another?

When believers live at peace with one another, in spite of natural differences, it can be a powerful witness to the truth of the gospel. Why is that? (see John 13:34-35: 17:21)

To stand firm in battle, we'll need to have our feet outfitted with the gospel of peace. To do that we must be clear on the fact that the gospel is a message that tells how we can have peace with God and with other members of God's family.

Take some time to thank God for the good news of the gospel of peace.

Standing Firm and Striding Ahead

A Roman soldier's shoes helped provide him with solid footing when attacked in battle. They kept his feet from slipping; they enabled him to stand firm. The same thing is true of a Christian's shoes—the gospel of peace. Our shoes help us in battle.

How does the truth of the gospel help a Christian stand firm when under spiritual attack?

How would giving way on the gospel cause us to lose our footing spiritually?

A Roman soldier's shoes were not only important for standing; they were also essential for marching. Good footwear helped a soldier be ready to advance at the order of his commander. Paul indicates that the shoes of the gospel of peace also make us “ready” to advance at the order of our Commander, Christ Jesus.

What kind of “readiness” are we to have when it comes to the gospel? (1 Peter 3:15)

Our Commander has given us marching orders. He's told us to take the gospel to all people in all places (Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8). Clint Arnold says it well: *“The footgear of the Christian needs to be the ‘readiness to announce the Good news of peace’ (Ephesians 6:15 TEV). Believers need to be prepared to share the good news of Christ wherever God may lead them”* (Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, 157). We are to be ready to stride forward for the gospel.

The Greek word for “gospel” (*euangelion*) literally means “good news”. Paul's words about getting our feet ready to carry the good news sound strikingly similar to words spoken by the prophet Isaiah.

What similarities do you see between Isaiah 52:7 and Ephesians 6:15?

Sometimes in the middle of a battle, soldiers are tempted to hunker down and just hope for survival. But our mission as Christians is more than just survival. We are called to bring liberation to those held captive by the devil (2 Timothy 2:26). We announce the good tidings that there is a way to end the hostilities between a holy God and sinful people. God has reconciled the world to Himself through the death of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17-19). He is granting amnesty and pardon to all who will surrender to Him, receive His grace and come under His rule. Our assignment as Christians is to appeal to people to accept God's offer and be reconciled to God.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:20 and summarize what it says about our assignment.

As Christians we are soldier/ambassadors. We fight against the devil as we bring God's message of reconciliation to people.

We can expect the fighting to be fierce as we move forward with the gospel, bringing the message of spiritual liberation to dying people. Satan is the "god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4). John tells us "the whole world is under the control of the evil one" (1 John 5:19). It's no wonder we meet heavy resistance as we live out and give out the gospel. But that doesn't change our orders. So we need to be ready to advance with the gospel message.

Do you start each day with a "readiness" to tell someone the good news of the gospel? Why or why not?

Having your "feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace" will involve starting your day with a readiness to carry the gospel to those around you. As you head to school or drive to work, pray that God would "open a door" for the message (Colossians 4:3). Pray that when you open your mouth, "words may be given you to make known the mystery of the gospel" (Ephesians 6:20).

If you and I don't have our feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace, we aren't fully outfitted in God's spiritual armour.

Take some time to ask God to give you a heart that is "at the ready" when it comes to the gospel. Pray for opportunities to tell the good news of the gospel with courage and clarity.

Take up the Shield

The Greek word Paul uses for shield in Ephesians 6:16, identifies the kind of shield he had in mind. Paul uses the word *thureon*, which referred to a large, full-body shield. In fact, the word for shield is related to the Greek word for “door.” This was a sizeable piece of armour. A Greek historian and statesman named Polybius wrote a fairly detailed description of what these shields looked like:

This among the Romans consists in the first place of a shield of a convex surface; the breadth of which is two feet and a half; and the length four feet, or four feet and a palm of those of the largest size. It is composed of two planks, glued together, and covered first with linen, and afterwards with calves' skin. The extreme edges of it, both above and below, are guarded with plates of iron; as well to secure it against the strokes of swords, as that it may be rested also upon the ground without receiving any injury. To the surface is fitted likewise a shell of iron; which serves to turn aside the more violent strokes of stones, or spears, or any other ponderous weapon (Polybius, History, Book 6).

You can see replicas of these at www.legionxxiv.org/equipment/

According to Ephesians 6:16, what exactly is the Christian’s shield?

I’d like you to think about your answer to the last question a bit more. Paul says that our shield in battle is “faith.” The word “faith” shows up a handful of times in the book of Ephesians.

Look up each reference and write what you learn about “faith” in these verses.

1:15

2:8-9

3:12

4:4-5

4:13

6:23

As I survey these verses, it hits me that faith is what allows me to come to Christ for salvation (2:8-9) and what allows me to keep coming to God with freedom (3:12). In other words, faith is essential at the start of the Christian life and throughout our lives as Christians. The Christian life is a life of faith—from beginning to end.

In Ephesians 6:16, Paul says we need faith, not just to draw near to God, but also to stand against the devil.

According to Ephesians 6:16, what does the shield of faith allow us to do?

Notice how Paul says the shield of faith can extinguish all the “flaming arrows” of the evil one. That’s a vivid picture, especially in light of what Roman soldiers had to face in battle. They could expect their adversaries to hurl javelins and shoot arrows dipped in pitch and set on fire. So Roman soldiers would sometimes soak their shields in water so these flaming arrows would be extinguished more quickly. Paul says your faith can put out the flaming arrows the evil one sends sizzling your way.

How many of the enemies flaming arrows can the shield of faith extinguish?

- ☐ a few
- ☐ most
- ☐ all

I didn’t throw in that last question just to give you an easy one. I wanted you to make a note of the fact that the shield of faith can handle *all* (not just a few or most) of the devil’s flaming arrows. Tomorrow we’ll examine what those flaming arrows are and how Satan fires them at us. But for today, I want you to hold on to the truth that holding up the shield of faith is sufficient to protect you from *any* and *all* of the devil’s flaming arrows.

Finish today’s study by writing out your prayer to God. Tell Him you desire to believe His promises and be protected by a shield of faith. Ask Him to help you hold on to faith when Satan’s arrows are targeted at you.

Dear Lord,

Incoming!

God doesn't promise to keep you from being fired at, but He has provided a way to keep you safe. In the spiritual battle we call the Christian life, you will be attacked. Satan will fire flaming arrows your way. Today we'll consider what those arrows are and how they come at us.

In Week 1, we learned we are up against an "axis of evil" in our spiritual battle. We face attacks from three fronts, often simultaneously. Paul spotlights our three adversaries in Ephesians 2:1-3.

Review Ephesians 2:1-3 and list the three enemies we are up against.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

In these verses, Paul speaks of "*the ways of this world*". Next he mentions "*the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient*". Finally, he alludes to "*the cravings of our sinful nature*" and its "*desires and thoughts*". So we battle the world, the flesh (the sinful nature) and the devil.

Clint Arnold gives a helpful perspective on the relationship between our three enemies.

Paul...presented the true character of evil influence in all three of its manifestations. The source of evil tendencies is both internal and external to people, as well as supernatural. Individuals possess an internal inclination towards evil, and their environment (peers, media, societal norms, and so forth) also strongly influences them.

In the final analysis, however, Paul regarded Satan as the chief opponent of Christ and his kingdom. The demonic explanation for evil behaviour needs to be seen as the thread that ties together all the evil influences. In practice Satan exploits the depraved tendencies of the flesh and exercises a measure of control over all levels of a social order (Arnold, Powers of Darkness, 125-126).

With this background, we're ready to explore how Satan fires his flaming arrows at us. To begin with, let's look at a few case studies where Satan is identified as attacking people. Read the following passages and summarize how Satan attacked.

Passage	Who was attacked	How Satan attacked
Matthew 16:21-23		
Acts 5:1-5		
2 Corinthians 12:7-12		

What conclusions can you draw from these examples regarding the way Satan attacks?

Let's go a bit further. In the following passages we are read that the devil tries (sometimes successfully and sometimes unsuccessfully) to gain advantage over believers.

In these passages, how does the devil go about his dirty work?

1 Corinthians 7:1-5

Ephesians 4:26-27

1 Timothy 4:1-2

I hope you are noticing that Satan comes at us *both* directly and indirectly? He can whisper thoughts into our heads. (Not all your thoughts originate from you!) He can exploit our natural desires (i.e. sexual drive—in 1 Corinthians 7:5). He can try to trick us through false teachers (1 Timothy 4:1-2). He can gain a “foothold” in our hearts when we are wounded or wayward (Ephesians 4:26-27).

If you want to get a imaginative picture of Satan's subtle attempts to adversely influence a person's life, you might want to read C.S. Lewis' book *The Screwtape Letters*. Lewis invents a series of letters, chronicling the correspondence between a senior demon, Screwtape, and his younger, inexperienced nephew, Wormwood. The veteran demon counsels the rookie on how to try and pull “the patient” (a new Christian) away from truth.

The power of Lewis' presentation is in his ability to balance the 'patient's' free will with the compelling power of the incessant supernatural temptation that vies with the ever-wooing, enabling and encouraging Spirit of God. Lewis provokes his readers into thinking about Satan's potential involvement in the hour-to-hour mundane affairs and decisions of everyday life (Arnold, Powers of Darkness, 189)

To sum up, Satan sometimes comes at us directly, infiltrating our thinking to lead us from the truth. Other times he works more indirectly, tempting us to follow the ways of the world or the cravings of our sinful nature. His uses arrows he knows have the best chance of finding their mark in our hearts.

What flaming arrows have been coming at you recently?

Don't panic! The shield of faith can extinguish *all* the devil's flaming arrows. You can be strong in the Lord and withstand his attacks. Ask God to help you carry your shield today!

Flame Out!

I hope by now you are seeing that Satan is shooting thoughts our way to get us to buckle. But if we give way, we can't blame him for our sin. We are responsible. That's because we have the resources we need to withstand his temptations. We have a new identity in Christ and a new power inside of us—the Holy Spirit. On top of that we can hold on to faith, which will shield us from being taken out by Satan's temptations.

So how should we respond when we feel the heat of Satan's flaming arrows coming our way? Here's what we can do: We hold on to God's promises by faith. And then, by faith, we hold out against Satan's lies.

Holding on to God's Promises

You hold up the shield of faith by holding on to the promises in God's Word. And to hold on to the promises in God's Word, you have to know them. That's rather obvious, right? I think you can see why spending time regularly in Scripture is vital to your spiritual welfare in warfare. If you don't know God's promises, how can you believe them when the arrows are flying?

Quick! List off five promises that you can count on in the midst of warfare. And list the reference where the promise is found.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

How did you do? Were your answers vague or unsure? If so, you have holes in your shield. If you couldn't list five promises, talk to a Christian friend who's doing this study and see what he or she wrote. Or reread Ephesians 1-2 and write down some of God's promises that are true about you.

Hold Out against Satan's Lies

Holding up the shield of faith involves holding on to the promises of Scripture. But it also means holding out against Satan's deceptions. By faith, you must refute and renounce the arrows he shoots your way.

What is Satan called in John 8:44?

What is the devil called in Revelation 12:10?

He lies and he accuses. He tries to deceive. He seeks to discourage and discredit. He wants you to lose your grip on who Christ is and who you are “in Christ”. He’d like to get you to agree with his half-truths and all-out lies.

Consider what John Eldridge writes in his book, *Waking the Dead*:

Satan is called in Scripture the Father of Lies (John 8:44). His very first attack against the human race was to lie to Eve and Adam about God, and where life is to be found, and what the consequences of certain actions would and would not be. He is a master at this. He suggests to us—as he suggested to Adam and Eve—some sort of idea or inclination or impression, and what he is seeking is a sort of “agreement” on our part.

The whole plan is based on agreements. When we make those agreements with the demonic forces suggesting things to us, we come under their influence. It becomes a kind of permission we give the Enemy, sort of like a contract. The bronze gates start clanging shut around us. I’m serious—maybe half the stuff people are trying to “work through” in counselling offices, or pray about in their quiet times, is simple agreements they’ve made with the Enemy. Some foul spirit whispers, I’m such a stupid idiot, and they agree with it; they spend months and years trying to sort through feelings of insignificance. They’d end their agony if they’d treat it for the warfare it is, break the agreement they’ve made, send the Enemy packing.

So we hold out against Satan’s attacks by rejecting his lies and renouncing any agreements we’ve made with his deceptions. By faith we choose to believe what God says—about us and about life. We believe even when our feeling scream otherwise. We refuse to buy Satan’s lies. We refute his accusations. We stand firm on God’s Word, holding up the shield of faith in His promises. As we do, the devil’s flaming arrows will begin to flame out.

Pray and ask God to expose any of Satan’s lies you’ve believed and any of his accusations you made agreements with. Write them out below.

Now, in a prayer of faith, take your stand on God’s promises. You can do it with God’s help. Remember: Be strong *in the Lord* and in His mighty power!



WEEK 4

Heads Up!

The helmet was a crucial part of a soldier's equipment. For obvious reasons. The outside shell of the helmet was made of bronze. This shell was fitted over an iron skullcap which was lined with leather or cloth, to make it a little more comfortable to wear. By Paul's day, helmets had been enhanced with extra pieces designed to help protect the back of the soldier's neck, as well as his nose, eyes and cheeks.

In Ephesians 6:17, Paul associates a soldier's helmet with a Christian's salvation: "Take the helmet of salvation."

Why do you think Paul compared a soldier's helmet to a Christian's salvation?

Just as a helmet gave a soldier protection and confidence in battle, so our salvation gives us protection and confidence in spiritual battle.

This isn't the first mention of "salvation" in Ephesians. Paul has already spoken of a Christian's salvation in Ephesians 1:13 and Ephesians 2:4-10. Let's review both passages and focus on what they tell us about our salvation in Christ.

According to Ephesians 1:13, what is the connection between the "gospel" and "salvation"?

What has to happen in order for a person to be saved by the gospel? (Hint: there are two things mentioned in verse 13.)

According to Ephesians 1:13-14, what happens to a person when he or she hears and believes the gospel?

Do you see how much we learn about salvation from this one passage alone? We're told the gospel (the good news about Jesus) is essential to salvation. A person must hear ("*when you heard*") and believe ("*having believed*") the gospel to be saved. Salvation results in a person being "included in Christ", sealed with "the promised Holy Spirit", and assured of a future, heavenly "inheritance" on the day of "redemption", Pretty amazing, wouldn't you say?

Paul gives an even fuller discussion of salvation in Ephesians 2:4-10. Read this passage and answer the following.

How does Paul make it clear that salvation is not something you can gain or earn for yourself?

What was your spiritual condition prior to salvation? What was your condition after you were saved?

When God saved you, He raised you up in two ways. What are they? (See verses 5-6.)

Don't miss the emphasis that you have been raised to new life (verse 5) *and* raised to new heights (verse 6). Your salvation gives you a position of spiritual security in the midst of spiritual battle. After all, you are seated with Christ, who is "far above" all opposing spiritual powers (1:20-23)!

Here's a fascinating insight that comes out of Ephesians 2:4-10. Paul uses a rather rare verbal tense to talk about salvation. It's called the perfect tense. He uses the perfect tense twice when he says "you have been saved". The perfect tense signifies a past action with continuing results in the present time. So Paul is hammering home the point that salvation took place in the past (when you believed the gospel message about Christ) but its effects carry on into the present. You have been saved (in the past). And you are still saved (in the present).

But there's more. Salvation has a future dimension to it as well.

According to Ephesians 2:7, how does salvation give you great hope for your long-term future?

Let's bring this back to the subject of spiritual warfare. Can you see how a grasp of your salvation will protect your mind and help you stand firm against the devil's attacks? As you are confident in your salvation (past, present and future), you will be able to keep your head in battle and hold your head high. You are "in Christ" and seated "with Christ" in the heavenly realms. Your eternal destiny is secure. You have good reason to stand strong and stand firm.

Take some time to reflect on and rejoice in your salvation.

Grab Your Sword

Much of the armour worn by a Roman soldier was defensive. The breastplate, helmet and shield were designed to protect against an enemy's assaults. But a soldier had one piece of equipment that wasn't just used for defensive purposes: a soldier's sword enabled him not only to stand, but also to strike back.

There were several types of swords used by Roman soldiers. The word for "sword" that Paul uses in Ephesians 6:17 refers to a dagger. Polybius, who wrote during the first century A.D., described this sword as doubled edged and called it "the Spanish sword" (Polybius, *History, Book 6*). This sword could be carried on the right thigh of a soldier and was ideal for close combat and hand-to-hand fighting.

In Ephesians 6:12, when Paul speaks of "our struggle" with demonic powers, he chose a word ("struggle") that emphasized hand-to-hand wrestling. Now he tells us that we are to carry a sword that is perfectly suited for up-close, cut and thrust fighting.

In verse 17, Paul compares a soldier's sword with the Word of God. How is the word of God similar to a soldier's sword?

When Paul speaks of the word of God in verses 17, he doesn't use the common Greek term for word (*logos*). Instead, he uses a less common one (*rhema*). This term often carries the idea of a spoken word or pronouncement.

Can you suggest why Paul chose this term (*rhema*) to speak of the "Word" of God?

Biblical scholars highlight two possible reasons for Paul's terminology here in Ephesians 6:17.

First, Paul could be emphasizing the spoken word of the "gospel" as the sword that Christians use to attack and beat back demonic powers. The gospel is the "power of God" for the salvation of all who believe (Romans 1:16). As we proclaim the gospel message, we take the offense against the powers of darkness.

As Clint Arnold notes, "...according to Paul, the primary aggressive action the Christian is called to take in the world is to spread the gospel—the good news of salvation through the death and resurrection of Christ. The gospel represents 'God's power to rescue people from [the devil's] tyranny'" (Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, 157).

But there's a second reason why Paul may have selected the term *rhema* to talk about the "word" of God in Ephesians 6:17. Scripture shows us that one of the best ways to resist the devil and drive him back is by speaking forth words that come from God's Word.

The classic example of how God's Word can be spoken in spiritual battle comes from Jesus' encounter with Satan in the wilderness. Read Matthew 4:1-11 and complete the following chart.

Satan's temptation	Jesus' response
1.	
2.	
3.	

What phrase reoccurs in each of Jesus' three responses?

Most Bibles have cross-reference marks indicating that each of Jesus' responses was a brief quotation from a book in the Old Testament. Which book in the Old Testament does Jesus quote here?

Did you notice that Satan quoted Scripture in one of his temptations (verse 6)? What does that tell you about Satan's strategy in tempting people?

Jesus spoke the "Word" of God when attacked by Satan. The Word of God not only enabled him to withstand the devil's temptations, but to drive the devil away (at least for a time).

Take some time to thank God for the power of His Word!

Wielding Your Sword Well

Yesterday we looked at how Jesus spoke words from Scripture to effectively repel and counter the devil's temptation. He used the sword of the Spirit in a powerfully effective way.

Jesus sets an example for us to follow in spiritual warfare. We too can use the sword of the Spirit by speaking out words from God's Word when we are assaulted and attacked by the evil one. We can wield the sword of the Spirit like Jesus did.

But here's the rub. If we hope to wield the sword of the Spirit well, we'll have to know it well. (Just like we need to know God's promises to hold on to them by faith.) We need to be versed in the verses of Scripture so we can respond to the variety of temptations Satan will throw our way.

You may be thinking, "I'm in trouble here. I don't know that many verses by heart. And I'm lousy at memorizing Scripture. Surely God doesn't expect me to be a walking Bible software program, recalling the perfect verse for every temptation with just a click of my memory?"

God actually does expect his children to know His Word well. If you doubt that reread Psalm 1, Colossians 3:15 or 2 Timothy 3:14-17.

If we are to know God's Word well, we'll need to read and study it often. My conviction is that every Christian should spend time reading and reflecting on God's Word every day. It's part of putting on the full armour of God. It's part of getting ready for the battle.

How many days a week do you normally spend reading/studying Scripture?

What keeps you from being as consistent as you need to be? Check the boxes that apply to you. Be ruthlessly honest.

- ☐ I'm too busy
- ☐ I'm too lazy
- ☐ I don't feel the need
- ☐ I lack desire
- ☐ Other _____

In calling you to regularly spend time in God's Word, my goal is not to burden you with another thing to do. I'm well aware that most of us already have more to do in a day than we can manage. And I'm not interested in trying to goad you through guilt to get into Scripture. Guilt, even when it's deserved, usually only serves as a short-term motivator for people.

Still, we can't dodge the fact that we're called to put on the "full armour" of God (6:11, 13). And our armour isn't "full" without the "sword of the Spirit". I don't know about you, but I'm not eager to face the temptations Satan throws at me without a way to fight back.

How can remembering the reality of the spiritual battle you are in help motivate you to faithfully devote yourself to digging into God's Word?

Let's put this into practice as we end today's lesson. Here's what I'm asking you to do: read slowly through Ephesians 1 again. Make a list of the truths from this chapter that can help you fight off some of the garbage and lies Satan may throw your way today. This chapter is filled with truth that can strengthen and sharpen you for battle with the "father of lies".

Truths I can use from Ephesians 1

Wrap things up by praying through the truths you've listed. Ask God to help you remember them today so you will be "armed and dangerous" in spiritual battle.

Armed and Dangerous

When Jesus was tempted by Satan, he quoted or paraphrased verses from the Bible. But He didn't just speak out random verses of Scripture. Each verse He chose was specifically suited for one of Satan's attacks. When Satan tried to get Him to use God's power to satisfy His hunger, Jesus slashed back with the word, "*Man does not live on bread alone....*" When Satan tried to goad Him into a splashy display of His power and identity through a reckless leap off the temple, Jesus parried with the words, "*Do not put the Lord your God to the test.*" When Satan tried to lure Jesus into false worship, Jesus sent him scurrying with the thrust of this word: "*Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'*"

You get the point. Each of Jesus' responses was a customized counter to a specific temptation.

If we hope to fight wisely and well, we will want to know specific Scriptures to use against the temptations Satan fires our way.

It may seem daunting to try and have a Scripture verse ready for every conceivable temptation. But actually, it's not as difficult as you may think. After all, Satan tends to work in some predictable ways; that's why Paul could say "*we are not unaware of his schemes*" in 2 Cor. 2:11. Satan is smart enough to know our vulnerable spots and ruthless enough to attack us repeatedly where we are most easily defeated.

Satan's strategy is to assault us where we are weak and accuse us where we are wounded.

Assaults where you're weak

Read Ephesians 4:17 to 5:14. Make a list of the sins mentioned in these verses that seem to ensnare you most often.

List any other sins you struggle with that weren't mentioned in these verses.

Accusations where you've been wounded

Many Christians carry hurts in their hearts from their past. They are weighed down by warped ideas about God or themselves. Some of these faulty notions can be traced back to childhood days. On top of these hurts from the past, some Christians also carry a load of guilt and shame linked to previous events or personal choices.

Satan, who is no gentleman, is happy to exploit these wounds. Someone once told me that Satan feeds on emotional garbage. The Bible calls him the “*the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night*” (Revelation 12:10). He loves to shoot flaming arrows of accusations like these into our heads and hearts:

*No one could love you; you are unloved and unlovable.
You’ve sinned so many times that you can’t still be saved.
You are a failure; everything you try bottoms out. So just give up.*

What accusations do you most frequently face from the enemy? (Think of the unbiblical, unhealthy thoughts that most plague your mind.)

O.K. Now that you’ve identified some areas where Satan repeatedly tempts you or trips you up, it’s time to get your sword ready to fight back. What you need is a specific verse(s) that you can speak out (out loud, or at least internally) when these temptations come.

I’ve listed some verses below that can be used in specific temptation situations. I’ve chosen to stick to the book of Ephesians, but there are many other verses throughout the Bible that are also incredibly useful. Select a few that apply to you. Look them up. Write them out on sticky-notes or 3x5 cards. Get them into your head and heart. Use them next time you are assaulted or accused!

Attacks where you are weak

Lust	Ephesians 5:3
Lying	Ephesians 4:25
Anger	Ephesians 4:26-27
Bitterness/Unforgiveness	Ephesians 4:31-32
Greed	Ephesians 5:3
Pride	Ephesians 4:2
Laziness	Ephesians 4:28 or 6:7-8
Complaining/Grumbling	Ephesians 5:20
Hurtful words	Ephesians 4:29-30
Marriage conflict	Ephesians 5:22-33

Assaults where you’ve been wounded

“You are unloved”	Ephesians 1:4-5; 2:4
“You are unforgiven”	Ephesians 1:7
“Your future is bleak”	Ephesians 2:7
“You are inadequate”	Ephesians 1:18-19 or 3:20-21
“You are an outcast”	Ephesians 2:19
“You don’t deserve grace”	Ephesians 2:8-9
“You are useless to God”	Ephesians 2:10

End today’s lesson by asking God to help you use the sword of the Spirit in battle.

Hiding God's (S)word in Your Heart

Do you think Jesus had His Bible (or scroll) with Him when He was tempted by Satan in the wilderness? Did He have access to a Dell notebook computer with Quick Verse Bible software?

Assuming He didn't have a copy of the Old Testament (we know He didn't have a laptop!), how was He able to pull up the verses He needed when He needed them most? Answer: He had them in His heart and on His mind.

Now some of you will be thinking, "Yeah, but Jesus is the Son of God who knows EVERYTHING. It's not surprising He knew the Scriptures so well." It is true that Jesus knows all truth, since He is the Truth (John 14:6).

But the Bible also informs us that Jesus, as a child, "*grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man*" (Luke 2:52). He chose to subject Himself to the normal developmental processes. So, He also grew up learning the Scriptures. We need to follow His example.

Roman soldiers carried their swords at their sides; we are to carry the Scriptures in our heads and in our hearts. It will help us when we are tempted to sin. "*I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you*" (Psalm 119:11).

Rather than give you a treatise on the value of Scripture memorization, I want to give you time to do it. (By the way, if you'd like more information about memorization and access to a free Bible memory software, check out this website: www.pursuinglife.com)

Today, you have your choice of two assignments.

1. Work on memorizing Ephesians 6:10-20

2. Select one or two specific verses from yesterday's lesson (or other verses that you find helpful in facing specific temptations) and spend your time memorizing them.

To build in a little accountability, I'd like you to say your verse(s) to someone by sundown tomorrow. That gives you a bit of time to get them in your head and heart.

Let's get ready to use the sword of the Spirit and stand firm in battle!



WEEK 5

Warfare Prayer

Today we begin our final week in this **Standing Firm** series. This week, we'll discover that standing firm is best done on our knees. That comes out as Paul wraps up the section on spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6:18-20.

What piece of armour does Paul compare prayer to in verse 18?

Paul actually doesn't make a comparison between prayer and a soldier's equipment like he does for each of the other six pieces of armour. But don't let that throw you. Don't assume Paul has changed topics (from spiritual warfare to prayer). In the Greek text of Ephesians, verses 14-20 comprise one long sentence. So Paul's instructions about putting on the full armour of God, which begins in verse 14, carries on all the way through the end of verse 20.

Paul's words about prayer in Ephesians 6:18-20 must be understood in light of his words about our struggle with "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." You could say that Paul is calling us to warfare prayer—prayer that helps us (and others) to stand firm in spiritual battle.

This is not the first time Christ's followers are called to pray for spiritual protection. In fact, Paul is echoing and amplifying the words of Jesus.

Read Jesus' words in Matthew 6:9-13. How does Jesus make it clear that we are to pray for spiritual protection?

How regularly do you think we should be praying for deliverance from the evil one? (Consider how often we are told to pray for bread and how often we need to ask for forgiveness?)

How often, at this stage in your life, do you actually pray for spiritual protection for yourself and for others?

So if we are to put on the full armour of God, we'll need to pray for protection.

What connection is there between prayer and the other pieces of armour already mentioned in verses 14-17? How does prayer relate to the other six pieces of a Christian's armour?

I hope you concluded that prayer plays a vital role in helping us put on the full armour of God. I think Clint Arnold has it right when he writes,

If Paul were to summarize the primary way of gaining access to the power of God for waging successful spiritual warfare, he would unwaveringly affirm that it is through prayer. Prayer is given much greater prominence in the spiritual warfare passage than any of the other implements (Arnold, Powers of Darkness, 158).

To put it another way, prayer is “foundational for deployment of all the other weapons” (Arnold, *Power and Magic*, 112).

Do your prayers help you put on the full armour of God?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

Over this course of this week's lessons, you'll learn how to pray in a way that puts on the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of readiness to speak the gospel, shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit. In short, you'll learn how to pray for spiritual protection for yourself and for your brothers and sisters in Christ.

To help get you ready to “pray on the full armour of God,” take few minutes to look back over the previous week's lessons. Review what you've learned about the various pieces of the armour of God.

Praying in the Spirit

Today we're going to take a closer look at the specific ways we are told to pray in Ephesians 6:18. Read verse 18 closely and answer the following question.

List the three descriptive phrases that follow closely on the heels of Paul's command to pray. I'll give you the first word in each phrase to get you going.

And pray....

1. in _____
2. on _____
3. with _____

Let's look at each of these three phrases to gain a better understanding of what warfare prayer looks like.

Pray . . . in the Spirit

Suppose you got an email from a new Christian who had just read this verse for the first time. Imagine this friend asked you, "What does it mean to pray *in the Spirit*?" How would you answer?

If I were asked what it means to pray "in the Spirit," I'd emphasize at least two things:

First, praying in the Spirit involves praying "*in dependence upon the Spirit.*" Ephesians 2:18 says the Spirit gives us access to God the Father. We come to God in prayer depending upon the Spirit to make our communication and communion possible. God's Spirit helps us in our weakness by communicating what is on our heart to the heart of God (Romans 8:26-27).

Second, praying in the Spirit involves praying "*in agreement with the Spirit.*" Since the Word of God is called the sword of the Spirit (verse 17), one way to know you are praying in agreement with the Spirit is to pray in agreement with the Scripture. When your prayers are based on God's Word, you can be confident they are in line with God's will (1 John 5:14-15).

Pray . . . on all occasions

Ephesians 6:18 tells us to pray in the Spirit "*on all occasions.*"

What does Paul mean when he says we are to pray on "all occasions"?

Prayer is to be the life-breath of a Christian. We are to “pray continually” as we go throughout the day (1 Thessalonians 5:17). We whisper prayers of praise to God as we wake up (Psalm 113:3). We make time to talk with God in solitude (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16), we shoot up “arrow prayers” for help at work (see Nehemiah 2:4). We ask for forgiveness when we stumble in our words or actions (1 John 1:9). We give thanks for our meals and for the many other mercies that God sends our way (Colossians 3:17). We even talk to God at night when sleep eludes us (Psalm 63:6). In short we pray “on all occasions” (Ephesians 6:18).

But remember, here in Ephesians 6, Paul’s instructions on prayer come in the context of his call to stand firm in spiritual warfare. When Paul talks about “all occasions” he’s focusing on the occasions when we face spiritual assault from the enemy of our souls. You’ve already discovered that these attacks are not just “occasional.” in the “evil days” in which we live (Ephesians 5:16). Attacks come more frequently than we’d like and in ways we don’t expect.

Pray . . . with all kinds of prayers and requests

We are not only to pray “*in the Spirit*” and “*on all occasions*” but we are also instructed to pray “*with all kinds of prayers and requests.*” Isn’t it good to know that God allows us to pray with all kinds of prayers and for all kinds of requests?

What are some the ways you can pray?

What are some of the requests you can pray for?

You can pray about anything that’s on your hearts (Philippians 4:6). You can ask for “daily bread” (Matthew 6:10). You can cry out when you feel overwhelmed (Psalm 40:13). The Bible makes it clear that you can pour out our heart to God (Psalm 62:8). “*You can throw the whole weight of your anxieties upon him, for you are his personal concern*” (1 Peter 5:7, Phillips Translation).

But don’t forget the context for Paul’s instruction on prayer in Ephesians 6:18-20. He’s still talking about standing firm in spiritual warfare.

How does the context of spiritual warfare help shape your understanding of the call to prayer in Ephesians 6:18? What kinds of requests should we be making in the midst of a spiritual battle?

As you go through your day, ask God to help you pray “*in the Spirit, on all occasions, with all kinds of prayers and requests.*”

Be Alert!

The reason we are to pray on *all* occasions is due to the harsh reality that our enemy can attack us on *any* occasion.

In light of the fact we could come under attack at any time, what command does Paul give in the last part of verse 18?

Things can go badly if we fail to “be alert.” Peter found that out the hard way. On the night Jesus was betrayed and arrested, Peter learned a painful lesson about what can happen if we fail to “be alert” in prayer. Let’s take a look at the incident and seek to learn from it.

Read Matthew 26:36-46. What instructions did Jesus give Peter (and James and John) in verse 38 and 41?

How confident was Peter in his ability to stand firm for Jesus? (read verse 35)

How well did Peter do at standing up for Jesus over the course of the night? (Read Matthew 26:69-75)

Why did things go so badly for Peter when he was under fire?

Peter learned a hard lesson about the need to “be alert” and to “watch and pray.” *If you are sleeping when you should be praying, you’ll wind up falling when you should be standing!*

It's easy to beat up on Peter and point out his failures. But, really, how well do we do when it comes to staying alert in prayer?

How watchful are you being in your prayers? Do you regularly pray for spiritual protection? Why or why not?

You'll notice that we are not just to be alert and pray for ourselves. Look again at the end of Ephesians 6:18.

For whom are to pray as we stay alert?

We are to pray for "*all the saints*." Warfare prayer is not just a way to protect ourselves. It's a way we help provide cover for others. While we can pray for any need a fellow believer has, in this context, Paul is calling us to pray that our Christian brothers and sisters might be strong in the Lord and able to stand firm in spiritual battle.

Consider what Clint Arnold says about our role in helping other believers in the battle:

The spiritual warfare passage is often viewed in individual terms; that is, each individual Christian should pray and ask God for strength to do battle. Paul actually depicted the arming in corporate terms. The whole church is involved in the process of arming. In fact, each believer is responsible for arming other believers. All of Paul's admonitions in this passage are in the plural. More important, however, is the fact that Paul urged believers to pray for "all the saints" (Arnold, Powers of Darkness, 159).

Do you pray for others to have the spiritual strength to withstand the enemy's attacks? Why or why not?

Sometime we fail to see how much we need each other in this battle we're all in. We pray pacifistic prayers for each other even though we are all engaged in fierce firefight with powers of darkness.

We need to pray for our brothers and sisters to be surrounded and shored up by God's truth, covered in the Christ's righteousness, ready to spread the gospel, shielded by faith in God's promises, secure in their salvation and quick to wield the Scriptures as a sword.

Spend some time praying for other Christians you know and love. Ask God to make them strong in the Lord and to help them stand firm in the midst of spiritual attack.

Praying for Leaders

Paul ends the section on spiritual warfare with a very personal request—he asks believers to pray for him. Today we’ll examine his request and see how it can help us pray for the spiritual leaders around us.

From what Paul says in verses 19-20, where is he when he writes this letter to the Ephesians?

Paul calls himself an “*ambassador in chains*.” There is a bit of irony to his words. Ambassadors are normally given “diplomatic immunity” and not subject to being imprisoned. However, that’s not the case for ambassadors of the King of kings. Paul writes from a Roman prison, chained to Roman soldiers (no wonder he was so familiar with a soldier’s armour).

If you were imprisoned for your faith, what would you be asking people to pray about?

My instincts tell me I would be asking people to pray that I was released. Quickly released. Especially if I were in prison like the ones in Roman times—dark, damp, dirty cells.

What does Paul ask people to pray for him while he is in prison?

Paul’s first desire is not to be free from prison but to be fearless in prison. He asks people to pray that he would “*fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel*.” He doesn’t ask people to pray he will be cleared of the charges against him; rather he requests prayer that he may be clear in explaining the mystery of the gospel. Courage and clarity. Those are Paul’s two requests.

It’s not that Paul didn’t want to be released from prison. He wrote to the Philippian Christians from prison and told them, “*...I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance*” (Philippians 1:19). He wrote his good friend Philemon while in a Roman jail and told him, “*Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers*” (Philemon 1:22).

So Paul was not opposed to people praying for his freedom. It’s just that being a faithful, fearless ambassador for Christ was more important than being a free ambassador. Even though the Roman authorities imprisoned Paul, he did not see them as his real enemy.

Look back at verse 12. Who does Paul see as his true adversary?

How might Satan have attacked Paul's courage or clarity while in prison?

Now think for a moment about the spiritual leaders you know. In our country, Christian leaders are not put in prison for speaking out for Christ (at least not yet). But that doesn't mean they don't need our prayers.

Why do Christian leaders still need prayers for courage and clarity?

How regularly do you pray for Christian leaders?

I used to feel somewhat sheepish about asking people to pray for me and my family. After all, I reasoned, all Christians need prayer, not just pastors. It felt somewhat selfish to ask to be singled out for special prayer. But the spiritual battle I face has caused me to lose my reticence. I no longer hesitate to ask for prayer and to thank those who pray for me and my family. Most Christian leaders I know feel the same way. The stakes are high. The battle is intense. We need the fervent prayers of God's faithful people if we are to continue to stand firm.

Make a list of at least five Christian leaders you know. Take some time today (and in the days ahead) to pray for them. Ask God to protect them and their families. Ask Him to help them be courageous and clear in declaring the message of Jesus.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Praying on the Full Armour of God

In a sense, all we've studied over the past five weeks leads up to today's lesson. We're going to see how prayer can help us put on the full armour of God and find the strength we need for the battle we're in. Today, we'll learn how we can be strong and stand firm through prayer.

Some years ago, I was challenged to see prayer as essential for accomplishing God's mission in the midst of our spiritual battle. The challenge came from the pen of John Piper:

*...we see repeatedly in Scripture that prayer is a walkie-talkie for warfare, not a domestic intercom for increasing our conveniences. The point of prayer is empowering for mission. . . . Could it be that many of our problems with prayer and much of our weakness in prayer come from the fact that we are not all on active duty, and yet we still try to use the transmitter? We have taken a war-time walkie-talkie and tried to turn it into a civilian intercom to call the servants for another cushion in the den (Piper, *Desiring God*, 146).*

More recently, John Eldridge sparked my thinking along this same line. In his book *Waking the Dead*, he writes,

*A few years ago, as Stasi and I really began to wake up to and have our eyes opened to the spiritual battle raging against us and those we love, she said, "Quick little prayers just aren't going to do it anymore." I'm smiling and shaking my head as I recall this. How true it was; how true it has become. If we would do what Jesus did—heal all those who are under the power of the devil—and if we would find the life that he offers us, we have to fight for it. Fiercely. That is where we are now in this great Story (Eldridge, *Waking the Dead*, 173-174).*

Piper and Eldridge are on to something. We *are* in a fierce battle. We have an important mission to accomplish as part of Christ's church. Our mission is integral to the great Story God is writing in history. At this point in the Story, we find ourselves in a fierce battle. So we need to pray. And not just "quick little prayers."

We need to pray in a way that helps outfit us with the full armour of God. But what does that look like in practical terms? When Paul speaks of "*all kinds of prayers and requests*" what exactly does he mean?

I think we get an answer by connecting the words of Jesus with the writing of Paul. First, remember that Jesus gave us a template for praying. We call it the Lord's Prayer. In this prayer Jesus gives us six topics that should regularly be a part of our prayers.

1. the honouring of God's name,
2. the coming of God's kingdom,
3. the doing of God's will,
4. the provision of our needs,
5. the forgiveness of our (and others') sins

What is the sixth request in the Lord's Prayer (see Matthew 6:13)?

The sixth request in the Lord's Prayer is for protection and deliverance from the temptations of the evil one.

Now, link that last request to Paul's words in Ephesians 6:10-20.

How do you think the last request in the Lord's Prayer relates to the kind of prayer Paul speaks of in Ephesians 6:18-20?

My conclusion is that Paul is echoing and amplifying Jesus' words about praying for spiritual protection. We pray for protection by praying on the armour of God.

Let me take it a step further. Paul's words about the armour of God in Ephesians 6 come at the conclusion of his letter to the Ephesians. All that Paul wrote in the earlier chapters of the letter form a theological foundation for his words on spiritual warfare. That's clear from the fact that many of the themes that come out in Ephesians 6:10-20 were introduced and addressed earlier in the Ephesians. That's obvious as you from the chart below.

Topics from Ephesians 6	Previous references in Ephesians
heavenly realms (6:12)	:21; 3:10
truth (6:14)	1:13, 4:15, 21, 24-25; 5:9
righteousness (6:14)	4:24; 5:9
gospel (6:15)	1:13; 3:6
peace (6:15)	1:2; 2:14-18; 4:3
faith (6:16)	1:13, 15; 2:8; 3:12; 4:5, 13
salvation (6:17)	1:13; 2:5, 8
word of God (6:17)	1:13; 5:26

Peter O'Brien draws this conclusion:

"There are conceptual and thematic links between the beginning and end of the letter, between what God has been praised and petitioned for (1:3-14, 16-23) and what is to be preserved by Christians against evil spiritual forces led by the evil one" (O'Brien, The Letter to the Ephesians, 459).

My conclusion is that warfare prayer should be shaped by the truth already presented in the letter to the Ephesians. The letter itself is a primer on what our prayers should look like as we talk to God in the midst of spiritual battle.

Do you find yourself shaken by what's happening in our world today?

Do you feel the intensity of the spiritual battle around you and inside of you?

Do you long for greater spiritual stability and strength in your life?

Do you want to be able to stand firm?



In the ***Standing Firm Bible Study***, you will explore powerful truth found in Ephesians 6:10-20.

You will discover truth from God's Word that will enable you to "be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power" (Ephesians 6:10).

You will learn how to "Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes" (Ephesians 6:11).

You will gain the strength you need to Stand Firm in Christ Jesus.



The ***Standing Firm Bible Study*** was written by Drs. Rick and Linda Reed. The Reeds serve the Lord at Heritage College and Seminary in Cambridge, Ontario, Canada. Rick is the school's president and Linda directs the Heritage Centre for Women in Ministry. Before coming to Heritage, they spent 14 years in pastoral ministry at the Metropolitan Bible Church, in Ottawa, Canada.

In his book, *Waking the Dead*, John Eldridge includes the words of a prayer he and his ministry team pray each day. The prayer is thick with theology. It's based on biblical themes. Spurred on by his example, I've written a prayer that centers on the wonderful, life-giving truth that comes out of the letter to the Ephesians. You'll find a copy of the prayer on the following page.

I've been praying something like this prayer for a while now and have found it to bring strength to my soul. I offer it to you as a way (one of the "all kinds of prayers" spoken of in Ephesians 6:18).

You can read this prayer through, but it's not meant to be a formulaic or rote prayer. Instead, it is intended to be a template for talking to God about spiritual protection for yourself and others. It's a way to "pray on" the full armour of God in order to stand firm in spiritual battle.

You'll notice the prayer follows the progression of the pieces of armour given in Ephesians 6:14-20. If you memorize Ephesians 6:10-20 (a very good idea), you'll have the flow of the prayer in your head no matter where you are. You'll be able to pray on the armour at any time.

I've included the references to various verses in Ephesians that form the basis for the statements of truth and specific requests. You might enjoy reviewing these verses from time to time just to keep the truth embedded in your heart.

I'd encourage you to use this prayer as a template to help you "pray on the full armour of God." Pray through these themes each day. Some days your prayer may be abbreviated; you may just ask that God help you put on the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, etc.

Other days you'll want your prayer to be more extended (like the sample I've given you). It's healthy to remind yourself of these truths as you talk to God.

Finally, be strong in the Lord... and Stand Firm!

We come to the end of this study, but not the end of the battle. It will rage, with varying degrees of intensity, until the glorious day when "the times will have reached their fulfillment" (Ephesians 1:10). Then all things "in heaven and on earth" will be eternally brought under Christ Jesus. The Great Story will reach its grand finale.

Until then, the battle continues. The outcome is not in doubt. But the fighting will still be fierce.

And so, my brothers and sisters, until the Day comes, be strong in the Lord and stand firm!

Praying On the Full Armour of God

Dear Father, I come to you through the Spirit (2:20, 6:18) in the name of the Lord Jesus (2:13). I want my words and life to be to the praise of your glory (1:14).

I put on the **belt of truth**, surrounding myself with the truth of who I am in Christ. I thank you that I was chosen to be Your child even before the creation of the world (1:4). I affirm that I have been adopted into your family (1:5), raised up to new life (2:4-5) and am seated with Christ in the heavenly realms (2:6). Since Jesus is exalted far above all other spiritual powers, I take my place of spiritual authority with Him (1:21). Grant me a more complete knowledge of the incomparably great power available to help me live for worthy of my calling (1:18-19; 4:1).

I put on the **breastplate of righteousness**, depending solely on Jesus' righteous life and sacrificial death as the basis for my forgiveness (1:7). I ask You to point out any area where I have grieved Your Spirit (4:30) by sinful attitudes (4:26-28, 31), words (4: 29: 5:4) or actions (4:28: 5:3). [Take time to allow God's Spirit to speak to your heart]. I ask to cleanse me and fill me with Your Spirit (5:18) so I can live out my new life among my fellow believers (5:19-21), my family (5:22-6:4) and at my workplace (6:5-9).

I put on the **shoes of the gospel of peace**, choosing to be ready to share the gospel as you provide me with opportunities. I ask You to give me (and other Christian leaders and friends) both courage and clarity in communicating the good news about Jesus (6:19-20). I want to be alert and ready to speak for Christ.

I take up the **shield of faith**, declaring I trust that every one of the promises You've made in Your Word. I reject and renounce any agreements I have made with Satan's lies and accusations. I choose to believe You in spite of contrary voices and emotions.

I put on the **helmet of salvation**, thanking you for the lavish mercy you showed when you saved me by grace and through faith (2:4, 8-9). Thank you that my salvation not only forgives all my sins (1:7), but also makes me a member of Your household (2:19-22) and ensures that I will receive the incomparable inheritance with Your children in heaven (1:14; 2:7).

I grip the **sword of the Spirit**, the word of God, committing myself to read, mediate and memorize it. My desire is to fight off the devil's lies and temptations with the word of God (6:17).

I choose to **pray in the Spirit** as I go through this day, asking that you help me (and other believers that are on my heart) to be strong in the Lord and stand firm in spiritual battle (6:10-13, 18). I pray all this in the name of my Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ. May I live to the praise of Your glory (1:6). Amen.

Do you find yourself shaken by what's happening in our world today?

Do you feel the intensity of the spiritual battle around you and inside of you?

Do you long for greater spiritual stability and strength in your life?

Do you want to be able to stand firm?



In the ***Standing Firm Bible Study***, you will explore powerful truth found in Ephesians 6:10-20.

You will discover truth from God's Word that will enable you to "be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power" (Ephesians 6:10).

You will learn how to "Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes" (Ephesians 6:11).

You will gain the strength you need to Stand Firm in Christ Jesus.



The ***Standing Firm Bible Study*** was written by Drs. Rick and Linda Reed. The Reeds serve the Lord at Heritage College and Seminary in Cambridge, Ontario, Canada. Rick is the school's president and Linda directs the Heritage Centre for Women in Ministry. Before coming to Heritage, they spent 14 years in pastoral ministry at the Metropolitan Bible Church, in Ottawa, Canada.