

7. God's POWERFUL Armor Protects You!

Spiritual Warfare: Overcoming Evil

Link to the YouTube video subtitled in 70 languages: <https://youtu.be/yG2qWrWTbsQ>

The War Against All Believers

During this series, we have examined numerous Bible passages that document the reality of a cosmic war occurring in the unseen heavenly realms, right here on Earth—a war that continues to rage, whether people are aware of it or remain oblivious to it. If you walk with Christ, you cannot deny that you are in a spiritual battle. As disciples of Jesus, we are all commissioned to play our part in this battle. It is the battle for the lives of men and women who are deeply loved by God. He does not want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). The good news about this battle is that God prepares you for it. He is with you in your struggles and has given you armor that He Himself has prepared for you. In fact, you may have been fighting against dark powers you are not even aware of, simply through acts of obedience to God. My intention for this series is to help you become increasingly aware not only of the conflict in the spiritual realm but also of your capability through Christ and your ability to walk in victory and freedom. And this is not only for you, but for others who will feel the impact of God's kingdom through you.

None of us is exempt from this holy task of making known the Gospel and promoting the Kingdom of God. If we had a cure for cancer and kept it to ourselves, it would be a crime against humanity. There is an enemy that has propagated a spiritual cancer in our world, and each of us is given the responsibility of bringing healing from the disease of sin to humanity. Not everyone is called to be a Bible teacher or pastor, but we all have a role to play. Your role may involve leading small groups, working with children or youth, engaging in outreach to under-resourced communities, or participating in evangelism. There are countless ways the Lord wants to include us, but the main point is that each of us has a unique task and a distinct calling within the body of Christ. Being part of the forward movement of the Kingdom of God by fulfilling our calling to serve is one of the most effective ways to engage in this spiritual conflict.

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (Ephesians 4:16; emphasis added).

Verse 16 says that God uses servant leaders in the church as ligaments. What do ligaments do? They connect bones and hold organs in place. They are the supporting structure of the Body of Christ, but it is the body that builds itself up in love, with each part doing its work. Paul taught a few verses earlier that God has given various leaders—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers—the assignment of preparing God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up (Ephesians 4:11-12). He expressed the same to the church at Corinth: **“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it” (1 Corinthians 12:27)**. Each of us, as part of the body of Christ, will find ourselves under attack. After all, we have taken on the name of Christ as Christians, and through baptism, we have openly declared our allegiance to Christ.

Our enemy, the devil, hates the Lord Jesus Christ, and because of our union with Him, Satan also hates us. It stands to reason that each of us who is a believer in Christ is a target of the spiritual forces set against Christ and the forward advance of the Kingdom of God. Since Satan opposed

Christ, we can also expect to face opposition. This is the reason many Christians have suffered persecution. Christian leaders will face an even greater opposition because they are on the front lines of the battle, so to speak, working as supporting ligaments in the Body of Christ.

For we wanted to come to you—certainly, I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan stopped us (1 Thessalonians 2:18).

The passage above discusses a time when Paul the Apostle planned to visit the church at Thessalonica. However, for reasons not disclosed to us, Satan hindered his visit and the opportunity to build them up in their faith, leading him to write to them instead. Naturally, not everything that obstructs our spiritual growth can be attributed to the evil one. There are three areas of struggle that we, as Christians, contend with: 1) the world system opposed to God (1 John 2:15), 2) our lower sinful nature (Romans 8:5-11), and 3) our enemy, Satan, along with his demons. We do face the repercussions of poor choices when we yield to the demands of our sinful nature, but there may also be a lack of faithfulness on our part, which can leave us vulnerable. Even so, I believe there are many instances where we have angelic protection that we are unaware of. Someday, when we get to heaven, I think it will be fascinating to see all the ways God protected us, many times when we didn't even realize we were in danger.

As Christians, we seek to live out our lives by walking in the light that God has given us. That light reveals the darkness, and it is here that the conflict arises. The Scripture says that all who seek to live a godly life in Christ Jesus shall be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12). In other words, there is opposition from evil forces toward each of us, to some degree. To counter these attacks, Paul the Apostle wrote a letter to the church at Ephesus about the five forms of defense and the two ways for us to be on the offensive. We will look at the Offensive Weapons of the Believer in a future study. Let's examine what Paul says about our spiritual armor.

The Armor of God

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints (Ephesians 6:10-18).

At the time he was writing these words, Paul was under house arrest in Rome. Most scholars believe that he was chained to a Roman soldier while composing this letter to the church at Ephesus. He used the Roman soldier's shield, armor, and sword as a metaphor for what he wanted

to teach the Ephesians and all who would read his words about overcoming Satan's attacks. When we have spiritual armor to protect us, just as the Roman soldier's armor protected him, we will be strong, not in ourselves, but in the Lord and in His mighty power, which is more than a match for any demonic spirit.

The Defensive Armor of the Believer

Many years ago, after leaving my commercial fishing job with my father, I began to wonder how I would support my church-planting ministry in England. A friend took me under his wing and taught me the trade of being a painter and decorator. Sometimes we subcontracted with other painters on large building projects in the East End of London. I remember collaborating with two fellow believers. Due to time constraints on the job, we had to sleep in our clothes and continue working the next morning. In the early hours, I observed my two believing friends engaging in a kind of ritual, acting out the putting on of unseen armor while in prayer. If you follow that kind of routine in the morning, I don't want to dissuade you, but I view the armor that Paul describes as character dispositions. The spiritual armor is not something that comes off and is put on again each morning. It's not like in a video game where you buy a weapon or armor when you reach a particular stage. This armor we are discussing is a provision from the Master who has called us to fight.

Let's put it another way. If your nation were to call you up to fight in a war, one of the first things you would do is go to the quartermaster stores and get your uniform. You don't buy it; you don't earn it. It is given to you by the One for whom you are fighting. You don't tell the quartermaster what kind of armor you would like; he has already thought that through for you and constructed it to His specifications to equip you to face and defeat the enemy you are fighting. Battles are often won or lost based on the strength of one's armor or weaponry. It's called the Armor of God for a reason. It is not the armor of self. I don't want to trust a helmet of my own making, for it might let me down when there is a crucial blow to the head. I don't want a shield of my willpower; I need an impartation of the kind of faith that God gives. To fight a spiritual enemy, we must equip ourselves with spiritual armor. With those thoughts in mind, let us now look at this spiritual armor that Paul says we need for the battle:

(1) The Belt of Truth

The Roman soldier's belt secured everything in place. Ancient combat primarily involved hand-to-hand fighting, making loose-fitting clothing a liability. Before a battle, the Roman soldier would tuck in his garments and tighten his belt. In Paul's mind, the truth anchored everything in place in the Christian warrior's life.

[What does Paul mean by the truth, and why is it so important to believers in Christ? What practical benefits does it provide us?](#)

Paul knew that truth is an integral part of spiritual warfare. Without the truth stabilizing us, we come apart when we try to fight against the enemy. There are three ways that we buckle ourselves with the truth. The first is knowing the person of Christ, who is the Truth. Jesus said, **"I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father except through me"** (John 14:6). Jesus

embodies the truth. When we enter a relationship with Him, we encounter truth personified. We are set free in our spirit when we know the person of truth (John 8:32). The second thing that Paul could have had on his mind was that we should equip ourselves with a worldview that comes from Scripture. Paul the Apostle, when he was saying goodbye to the elders of Ephesus, said, ²⁶"Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. ²⁷For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God" (Acts 20:26-27). When we come to grips with knowing the whole truth about who Jesus is and what He has done, Satan has fewer lies and fiery darts to hurl at us. The mature Christian can shrug off the deceptive lying tactics of demons.

The third aspect Paul may have been referring to when he discusses truth as a belt is the absence of deceit among believers. We must be truthful in what we say, living in integrity and alignment with the truth of God's Word. We fall under the condemnation of demons when we are knowingly deceitful. By deliberately choosing to be deceptive, we allow the enemy to ensnare us in a lie before unbelievers and undermine our testimony of God's power. If you find yourself in such a situation, quickly agree with God's Word. The enemy will have no hold over you; there is no condemnation for those who accept God's provision for forgiveness!

(2) The Breastplate of Righteousness

When Paul looked at it, a Roman soldier's breastplate reminded him of how a Christian needs righteousness as a defense for the heart and inner organs. Two possibilities could have been in Paul's mind as he wrote. The first is the need for imputed righteousness. What do we mean by imputed? Imputed means credited to our account, as when God spoke to Abraham, our father in the faith, and told him that he would be a father to a multitude of people, even though he was old and childless.

⁵He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁶Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:5-6).

Abraham believed in God. What was God's response to Abraham's faith? Scripture says that righteousness was credited to his spiritual bank account (Genesis 15:5-6). Imputed righteousness puts us in right standing before God, allowing Him to come and live within us by His Spirit. Our right standing with God is not due to our efforts; it is given as a gift when we believe (Romans 4:1-8). That's why we love Him so! God has been generous and kind toward us by dealing with us in this way. God treats each of us as Christians in the same manner He handled Abraham. The Lord imputes the righteousness of Christ to us as a gift when we believe in the substitutionary work of Jesus on the cross. He died for you and as you. By this, I mean that He hung on the cross for your sins, bearing your sins in His body (1 Peter 2:24). When we believe God's testimony about the finished work of His Son on the cross, He credits righteousness, that is, the righteousness of Christ, to our spiritual bank account:

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).

When the enemy comes to you with accusations of what you have said and done wrong, we can reply that Jesus cried out from the cross, “It is finished” (John 19:30). The Greek word translated “finished” is an accounting term, meaning *paid in full*. He has paid my debt of sin. There is nothing that can be done to add to the righteousness that Christ imparts to us upon believing. It is not ninety-five percent of Jesus' work and five percent of our work. It is all of Jesus! Christ has fully paid the debt. The believer who understands what Christ has done for them can laugh at the enemy's vain attempt to claim that they are not good enough. Christ is our righteousness.

Paul may also be suggesting that the breastplate of righteousness refers to living a righteous life before God. If this is the interpretation Paul intended, he may have been concerned that the enemy's darts could find a place in a believer's heart if they are not living a life of confession and repentance. We are to walk in the light as He is in the light:

⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. ⁸If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:7-9).

Living in God's forgiveness requires a life of vulnerability before God and others. The enemy's darts of accusation and condemnation cannot take root in the heart if one lives a life of obedience and righteousness before God and fellow believers. However, when we sin, we must be open and vulnerable with God about it and discuss our sin with Him. We should ask Him for forgiveness and, if we have wronged someone else, make amends with that person. Sometimes, restitution is necessary; if so, don't delay in providing it.

I remember one occasion when I was a young believer and still working as a commercial fisherman. I was working alone at night on my father's trawler at a particular area called the Stone Banks, where many fish fed on the abundant worms found there. I towed my nets several times over the Stone Banks before heading home as daylight began to break. As the day dawned, I noticed that someone else's trammel nets had become entangled with the Otter Boards of my trawl net. Someone had laid this long wall of netting across the Stone Banks before dark, unaware that I would be dragging my trawl nets there during the night. The Holy Spirit prompted me to find out who had laid the nets and to compensate them for the new ones. When this thought first came to me, my immediate defensive response to God was to inform the Lord that the trammel net owner did not set lights on his buoys, so I was not liable. I did not need to pay him. However, the Holy Spirit would not let me go, and I could not find peace about it.

Several hours later, I surrendered to the Spirit's promptings and went to see Les Smith, the owner of the nets. I confessed to him that I had accidentally destroyed his nets and gave him the money for brand new ones. I still remember the look on his face at the thought that someone would do such a thing. He realized that his loss was his fault. It was a testament that resonated throughout the fishing community. Other fishermen realized that something unusual had happened to Keith Thomas. You can't imagine the joy I felt in being obedient to the Spirit and making restitution. That joy resulted from my choice to obey the Holy Spirit. Had I chosen differently in that situation, I believe it would have led to a different consequence. I encourage you to be aware of those kinds of promptings that are sometimes not recognized as the Holy Spirit speaking to us.

As our Father, God will at times discipline His people. Through His discipline, we see that we are His children (Hebrews 12:7-8). It will undoubtedly be more comfortable for us if we maintain a short account with God and reflect on the day's affairs before going to bed at night. Be sensitive in keeping your heart clean before God through daily confession and repentance of sin. In some situations, the Spirit of God may require you to be accountable to a close friend in your small group who can help you with a particular habit or sin that challenges you. Being open to others in this way eliminates deception and hypocrisy, serving as a breastplate of righteousness against the enemy's attacks. We are empowered to live a righteous life because we have the right standing with God. Here is what James wrote concerning being vulnerable to other Christians:

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective (James 5:16).

To whom should we confess our sins? How does confessing our sins align us with God? What occurs when a person forgets to make things right not only with God but also with others?

(3) Feet Fitted With the Gospel

Paul next examines the Roman soldier's feet. He observes the caliga, or half-boots, which have nails for a better grip on the ground during combat. Without the studs on the soles, the Roman soldier would slip on the ground while in battle. We cannot stand our ground against our spiritual enemies if we don't have peace with God and the peace of God.

Jesus came as a mediator between God and man. Paul wrote that there is only one mediator between God and man; that person is Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:5). We cannot stand our ground before the enemy without having the peace of God reigning in our hearts. When a man is born again of the Spirit of God (John 3:3), a deep-seated peace with God comes, where the person knows in the depths of his heart that his soul is at rest before God. Paul the apostle said,

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).

Not only does a Christian have peace with God, but he also receives the peace of God: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you" (John 14:27). When a believer in Christ faces life-threatening danger, he experiences a deep, settled peace that surpasses all understanding.

Eric Barker was a missionary from Great Britain who spent over fifty years in Portugal preaching the gospel, often under adverse conditions. During World War II, the situation became so critical that he decided to send his wife and eight children to England for safety. His sister and her three children were evacuated on the same ship. Barker remained behind to conclude some mission matters. The Sunday after Barker's loved ones had left, he stood before the congregation and said, "I've just received word that all my family has arrived safely home." He then proceeded with the service as usual. Later, the full meaning of his words became known to the people. He had received a telegram just before the meeting, informing him that a submarine had torpedoed the ship, and everyone on board had drowned. Despite his overwhelming grief, Barker knew that all on board were believers, and the knowledge that his family was enjoying the bliss of heaven enabled him to

live above his circumstances. God does not promise us a life free from all hardship, but He does promise that our times are in His hands (Psalm 31:15). The true miracle in this story is that God gave him peace at such a time.

Everyone is searching for peace, which is becoming increasingly elusive. People often come to Christ when they observe the peace a Christian has during challenging circumstances. Everyone longs for this kind of peace, which is very evident when you possess it in your life, especially during troubled times.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7).

Do you have a specific strategy for overcoming or countering anxious or worrisome thoughts? Do you have a story of finding peace amid trying circumstances?

(4) The Shield of Faith

The Roman shield that Paul was viewing in the room with him was the scutum, a sizable door-sized shield behind which a Roman soldier could fit his whole body when arrows, darts, and spears were directed toward him. The shield measured approximately 4 feet high and 2.5 feet wide. It consisted of two layers of laminated wood and was overlaid with animal hide, linen, and iron. When a fiery dart or arrow pierced the shield, it was extinguished as it embedded itself within. Paul pictures the Christian's faith as a spiritual shield. When the enemy fires a dart of accusation, temptation, guilt, or any other sin from his quiver, the Christian responds with faith in God. What is faith? It is **"being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see"** (Hebrews 11:1).

We cannot see the heavenly resources that are at our disposal, but we are confident, by faith, that God is with us, and He has promised that He will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). When we understand the truth of that promise, we can endure all the challenges that the enemy throws at us. Our faith protects us from the lies and discouragement that can so easily wound us. It changes our perspective and colors everything we view, filtering it all through the shield of faith, removing the poisonous darts before they can settle in our hearts and infect us.

Another thing that may have been on Paul's mind was how the Roman soldiers utilized their shields. They moved as a unified unit and interlocked their shields to cover all sides, so they remained protected from arrows as they advanced. In the same way, we should look out for each other. When we engage in the fight of faith, we all benefit one another. Watch out for your brother and sister in Christ by speaking the truth in love and caring for one another. We are to **"Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn"** (Romans 12:15). As we support one another in this way, we enhance each other's effectiveness in the spiritual battle we face together. We are not just an "army of one;" we are an army composed of many members, with one Captain of our salvation.

(5) The Helmet of Salvation

The fifth piece of armor that Paul mentions is the Roman helmet. He describes it as a helmet of salvation. Perhaps Paul is considering that the enemy primarily targets the mind in spiritual warfare. His attack, particularly on a young, immature believer, typically aims to deny the very existence of God. Doubts fly like a sword striking the head. At that moment, you would not want a bag over your head instead of a helmet provided by the heavenly quartermaster. The assurance of salvation serves as protection for the mind. The inner witness of the Spirit that we are God's children safeguards a person's mind just as a helmet protects the head: **“The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children” (Romans 8:16)**. We can confront every demonic attack knowing that nothing can separate us from God's love. Regardless of any trial or hardship, persecution, famine, danger, or sword that life presents to us, we know that we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us. Paul writes:

³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).

When we know, deep down, that nothing can separate us from God's love—not even demonic powers, angels, or demons—our minds are firmly secure in the Lord. Our minds represent the most significant battleground, which is why it is essential for us to triumph in the battle over our thoughts. To cover and protect our minds with the helmet of salvation, we immerse ourselves in the truth of God's Word: our salvation is complete and does not rely on us. It is a finished work that God has accomplished for us.

As we conclude our study, I would like you to consider which part of your spiritual defensive armor you most need to strengthen at this time. For those of you at home watching the video, you may want to break up into groups of two or three and pray for one another after being open about your spiritual needs.

Prayer: Father, come again to Your children who read these words today. Protect them from the evil one. Grant them a fresh filling by Your Spirit today. Help Your children find their place of service in the Body of Christ, supporting and upholding one another. Enable us to forgive others as You have forgiven us. Amen.

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