

The Full Armor of God: Are You Ready for Battle?

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“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

Ephesians 6:12

Rocket science must be complicated because I’m constantly reminded of things that *aren’t* rocket science. It’s complicated because there are so many variables that could potentially affect a rocket’s flight. What if a hypothetical rocket scientist forgot to take into account an important variable such as gravity? That would be disastrous.

Even a superficial reading of Scripture shows that the unseen realm is a significant variable in earthly events. We are biased toward the physical realm, though. It’s what slaps us in the face every morning and dominates our thoughts until our eyes close at night. The physical is *here and now*, the spiritual seems *somewhere and sometime*. But the Bible paints a spiritual realm that is just as real (if not *more* real) than the physical. When enemy troops were attacking and hope was running low, Elisha could see a reality that was invisible to his servant...

He said, “Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” Then Elisha prayed and said, “O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see.” So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha (2 Kings 6:16-17).

Suddenly, the servant could see the vast supernatural army that was standing by, ready to intervene in the earthly battle. In the New Testament, Paul speaks of the same reality. At the end of a list of very practical, “earthly” teachings, he adds another item...

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:10-12).

Paul doesn’t imply a transition in thought here. In the apostle’s mind, a typical day involves visible, earthly activities intertwined with the invisible supernatural. His admonition indicates that God expects us to view the physical world in the context of the larger spiritual realm. The terms

“armor,” “schemes,” and “wrestle” imply serious business. A battle rages whether we choose to acknowledge it or not. Moreover, the unseen is actually of greater concern since the true struggle is *not* with the “flesh and blood” of this world. Observable, physical events sometimes emanate from “darkness,” “cosmic powers,” and “spiritual forces of evil.”

Is this too disturbing? I was confronted by a good Christian lady once who told me “The Christian life is supposed to be peaceful and joyous. From what you’re saying, I would be scared to get out of bed every morning!”

It’s unfortunately true that the idea of demonic spirits sneaking around, spreading mischief in the physical realm is an anachronism to liberal theology. Many would prefer to leave these images on the frescos of some medieval cathedral. There’s no doubt that the popular message from most pulpits is strictly one of peace and joy. I don’t deny that these are the ultimate fruits of the Spirit’s work in believers’ lives. Yet the Bible unwaveringly demands that an understanding of reality *must* include an understanding of the realm beyond our earthly perceptions. The formula must address all the variables. Our worldview is incomplete when data are limited to our material, fishbowl world, and the unseen enemy has free rein to engage us from outside.

Let me be very clear before going further. I do NOT believe there is a demon behind every bush (although there is very likely a bush in front of every demon). I have no intention of sensationalizing the “dark side” in a paranoid witch-hunt. Even though the struggle is real, the outcome is already decided. The command to “be strong in the Lord” assumes that we *can* win. *If* we “put on the full armor of God,” we *will* “stand against the devil’s schemes.” Paul’s words are as much encouragement as they are warning.

You may be thinking “The devil is such a powerful enemy! How could I ever stop him?” Not to worry! God’s Word has a clear strategy for standing against Satan’s lies. It encourages us to put on “armor” to protect against the devil’s deceptions. Just as a soldier would wear coverings to stop arrows and swords, we are told to put on *spiritual armor* to deflect Satan’s “arrows” of deception.¹

In Ephesians chapter 6, Paul describes several pieces of this spiritual armor...

Helmet of Salvation – Satan tries to make Christians doubt that their sins are forgiven and that they are children of God. He whispers lies telling believers that they need to do more to be saved and that surely God won’t forgive all their sins. However, since our salvation depends only on Jesus, the “helmet” is the Bible’s promise that Jesus has forgiven our sins and saved us, period!

Shield of Faith – Paul says that Satan’s lies are like fiery arrows. But our trust in God and what Jesus has done for us blocks these arrows. For every lie that Satan might tell, there is a promise from God that exposes that lie.

Shoes of the Gospel of Peace – A soldier’s shoes were very important. If he couldn’t hold his position firmly then the other parts of his armor wouldn’t work. Christians are at peace with God. He has forgiven our sins and stands beside us. This truth gives us firm footing while we stand against the devil.

¹ Romans 6

Belt of Truth – When an early soldier went into battle, he would pull up the folds of his tunic and hold them inside his belt. When we believe the truths of Scripture, it makes us battle-ready. We aren't bothered by little troubles that Satan throws in our way.

Chest Plate of Righteousness – This piece of armor covered the soldier's heart—a vital organ. Even though the Christian has been forgiven of their sins in general, there are still sins that pop up continually, all the time, every day. Believers must constantly turn away from those daily sins and ask for forgiveness. When I don't live in obedience, dealing with daily sins quickly, my relationship with God suffers. I'm still His child, but I'm not as dependent on God as I should be. My heart is no longer protected, and the devil is able to attack.

Sword of the Spirit – In the Bible, a sword represents God's Word. Notice that this is the only weapon mentioned in the spiritual armor. The weapon that works against Satan is not some magical cross or holy water—it's the Scripture that God has given us. And this doesn't mean it's like a magic phrase we repeat, and the devil runs away. The real truth expressed in the Bible defeats the lies that Satan tells. When he attacks us with a specific lie, there is a specific principle in God's Word that exposes the lie and destroys it. This is a good reason to study the Bible often and know God's promises. Scripture tells us to "hide God's Word in our heart" so that it's available at a moment's notice. Who wants to go searching for their sword in the middle of a battle!

Did you notice a common idea running through these armor symbols? A good soldier *prepares* for the battle. If an attack is coming, why would he wait for the first arrow before putting on the armor? Wearing spiritual armor doesn't mean being obsessed with worrying about the battle.

But it *does* mean getting in the habit of what we call *spiritual discipline*. As Christ's return draws nearer, our need for preparation increases. Spiritual soldiers should have regular and consistent times for reading the Bible and understanding God's truth. We should pray often and ask for wisdom and understanding. We should learn from others who teach us God's Word. And above all, we should live in obedience to what Scripture teaches, turning away from sin and asking God to forgive us. As Paul says, a good soldier stays ready.

We have a presentation on the "Full Armor" described in Ephesians 6. Contact us if you would like to schedule this for your church or group. See ThinkingAboutTheBible.com.