

Lost & Found Center Teaching Series



# **ASSESSING YOUR SPIRITUAL DEFENSES**

## Introduction

There is coming a time when we will all need to be spiritually strong in order to survive. Paul tells the Ephesians after he has laid out powerful truths about our hope, inheritance and new life in Christ - that we must be strong. The last thing we need to do is to be strong. Whenever God tells you to do something he's not just being philosophical. He actually thinks we can do it. He doesn't tell us to do things we can't do. Would you do that to your kids? If he tells you to do something, a good place to start is to ask him for help.

This study is about assessing our spiritual defenses. We'll examine our defenses by looking at Ephesians 6. Here's the whole text of our study:

**Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For 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. Therefore 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. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And 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 6:10-19 NIV

The word of God indicates that wearing the armor of God is strength. Can you see it?

First in verse 11 it says:

**Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand...**

And again in verse 13 it says:

**Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground**

Standing is all about strength. Holding firm, not wavering, not being swept along by the circumstances or any type of external pressure is strength. The verses are saying that we need the armor of God in order to be strong. No armor, no strength.

It is also saying we need the “full” armor of God. Some is good, but without all of it, we will not be able to stand. Leave off a piece and we expose ourselves. That is why we need to examine each piece. This is another list. Like I stated in the **Components of Supremacy**. Lists are always there for a reason - to drill in for additional understanding. In this case the list is critical because the requirement is that we put on the “full” armor. The list helps us be prepared.

### **Understanding the Situation**

Before we get started we need to remind ourselves of the situation we operate in.

**For 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.**

The Bible clearly states that our struggles are spiritual not physical. The armor then is spiritual armor. The true enemy is a spiritual enemy. Seems pretty basic, but many of us miss it time and time again. How do we miss it? We think and act like people are the problem. People are not the problem. The spiritual forces that influence them are the problem. These spiritual forces are the enemies of God. When we battle people we show we don't understand the situation. Again our enemies are not people, so we don't desire that God judge or destroy people. Where would we be if that be the case?

**But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** Romans 5:8 NIV

Christ died for us while we were his enemies. People are not our enemy. We pray that they will see the truth, embrace Christ and become like we are.

I once had a dream that I was fighting this creature and I just couldn't stop it. It seemed like I had every weapon at my disposal. I would knock it down and it would just get back up and keep coming after me. After this went on several times, I started getting scared and awoke. Anyway, I remember mentioning the dream to a friend and he said something like this: Do you know why you couldn't stop it? It was because this is not a physical problem you are facing. Nothing you can do physically is going to be successful. This is a spiritual problem you face and you can only defeat it on a spiritual level with the Word of God and prayer. When we don't understand the spiritual environment, we will just be spinning our wheels.

### **Put on the Armor of God**

The Bible says it. People preach it. But how do you do it? How do you put on the armor of God? You've heard when preachers have said to put on the armor and then had

everyone in the audience simulate the action of putting on invisible armor. That is fun preaching. It is beneficial to bring awareness to the subject, but no, it is not putting on your armor. Your armor becomes established as you live. Just like you grow into your calling, your gifts and your destiny, you grow into your armor. Your armor is all about your faith in God and the expression of that faith – your life.

If your armor is the outgrowth in your life, you may be kidding yourself if you think you could put it on like an invisible garment each morning. It's not that easy and it shouldn't be trivialized. The armor is too critical. It is your ability to stand and survive against the enemies of God.

Let's sober up a bit. Why is it important to assess our defenses - because our enemy does just that when devising strategies against us. Let's put it another way. Your armor is obvious. It is on open display. If you could look into the spiritual realm, you'd see your armor. You'd see the conditions of the various pieces, whether strong, weak or nonexistent. The Holy Spirit and the enemy see our condition. The Holy Spirit tries to work with us to strengthen us in the areas we are weak and the enemy tries to attack us there.

Put on the full armor of God then. Secure your entire life. Leave an area undone and that's where you will get attacked. Take a hit anywhere and your destiny, calling and gifts could range from being diminished to almost destroyed. Take a hit and your authority could range from being reduced at best, to taken from you at worst.

The goal of this study remains consistent with all my studies, to tune your thoughts and prayers accordingly. When the Word of God tells us what to do and where to go, we ask for help in the doing and in the going. Okay, so let's look at the armor.

## **1. Belt of Truth**

**Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist,**

This will be one of the few times that I take issue with the translations. It seems that the NIV has tried to sanitize this scripture. The word they translated "waist" does not convey the true meaning of this verse. The King James Version translates this verse as follows:

**Stand therefore having your loins girt about with truth**

Ephesians 6:14 King James Version

The NIV chose to use "waist" while the King James used "loins." The use of loins is more appropriate because it more clearly represents the meaning of the verse. The word

translated “loins” describes an area around the hip that includes the reproductive area. Think loincloth. Get the idea?

The belt of truth around the reproductive area is all about personal purity. The reason this may be listed first may have had to do with the state of the Ephesians and the religious practices they were coming out of.

If this is a weakness you know it, the enemy knows it and one day he’ll launch an attack. We’ve seen effective preachers who were doing the work of God take a hit in this area. But this is your assessment. Take a hit below the belt so to speak and you defile yourself.

**Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.** 1 Corinthians 6:18 NIV

Taking a hit in this area will diminish you, cause you to lose freedom and bring feelings of guilt and condemnation.

How do develop the belt of truth? By eating the right spiritual foods. By feeding yourself with the Word of God. By actively seeking the help of the Holy Spirit in your weaknesses.

**How can a young man keep his way pure?**

**By living according to your word.**

**I seek you with all my heart;**

**do not let me stray from your commands.**

**I have hidden your word in my heart**

**that I might not sin against you.** Psalm 119:9-11 NIV

All behavior, whether words, deeds or thoughts are a product of the heart. Feed the heart bad things and bad things come out. Feed the heart good things, things of God, and good things come out. The Lord has made us holy. We have been purified by the blood of Jesus. We develop the belt of truth as we understand and are convinced of our identity in Christ, what he has done for us and whom he has made us.

## **2. Breastplate of Righteousness**

**...with the breastplate of righteousness in place**

The breastplate of righteousness covers one of your most critical areas, your heart. Just like the belt of truth was about personal purity, the breastplate of righteousness is about your personal devotion and love for the Lord. Your heart is so central to your being and can be affected in many more ways.

A key principle to understanding the armor of God is to understand the area that it protects. Once you see that, the understanding becomes clear. The breastplate of righteousness protects your heart, from which flow so many things. Take a hit here and the outcome should be expected. Your love could grow cold. You could lose a sense of commitment to the Lord. You could feel diminished passion in your love for the Lord and for others. You could experience a sense of dryness in prayer or the word or in worship. You could be dealing with unforgiveness or bitterness or pride or fear. The heart is a complex organ. It affects all the fruit of the spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. It affects your spiritual progress and your gifts.

That is why the word says this:

**Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.** Proverbs 4:23

Not operating out of love is to take off your breastplate. Not operating out of love is to be ineffective in the kingdom. The Bible teaches us that only things motivated by love have value in the kingdom of God.

We build our breastplate as we grow in our love and commitment to the Lord. We build our breastplate as we grow in appreciation and understanding in what he has done for us. We develop our breastplate as we discover how much he truly loves us.

Paul prays this very thing, that the Ephesians would grasp the immensity of Christ' love. This builds our breastplate of righteousness.

**And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.** Ephesians 3:17-19 NIV

### **3. Shoes of Readiness**

**...your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.**

Readiness is all about our willingness or our inclination to serve. Readiness is about how eager we are to follow or to do the will of God. A good definition of readiness I found on dictionary.com in relation to children was the “capacity to receive instruction.” How open are you to instruction or training or preparation? Readiness is about our easy consent. How easy is it for you to do his will? Do you have to be prodded? How willing are you?

The Bible says:

**Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.** Galatians 5:25 NIV

Your feet are about responding, acting, getting things done. Take a shot in the feet and you won't be getting much done. You won't be able to accomplish anything. With your feet you stand and move. Take a hit in the feet and your life may be okay, you're just not doing anything for God. Does it seem that we have whole churches or even complete denominations that seem to have taken hits in their feet. How about you?

We develop our readiness by preparing ourselves and being ready to do any good work.

**In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.** 2 Timothy 2:20-21 NIV

We develop our readiness by being open to instruction and correction.

#### **4. Shield of Faith**

**In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.**

Shield of faith is your first line of defense. The flaming arrows will come, but how will you react. The shield protects your armor. It blocks the arrows targeted at your critical areas. It creates a buffer of protection. Your trust in God keeps you from succumbing to the schemes of the enemy. Develop your faith and it's hard to get anything through to you. As you trust in God more and more, the schemes of the enemy don't reach you. The events in your life can be used to take you down. Whether the events are large or small, what matters most is how they affect you. Your trust in God is your only defense.

Trusting in anything else weakens or removes your shield. As you grow in your trust in the Lord, fewer and fewer things will affect you and your shield will become stronger and stronger.

My favorite example of this is the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abendego who responded to the king's threat of being burned if they didn't worship him:

**If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." Daniel 3:17-18 NIV**

**Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever.** Psalm 125:1 NIV

This is where we desire to live, where nothing that occurs will shake our trust in God.

## **5. Helmet of Salvation**

### **Take the helmet of salvation**

The helmet of salvation protects your head and your mind. This is your knowledge and your understanding of salvation and the things of God. You put on the helmet by being grounded in the principles of trust in the deity, the death and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. You put on the helmet by being grounded in the word of God and in basics of the faith, like salvation by the grace of God and not as a result of works.

Get hit in the head and what do you think happens to you spiritually - the same thing that happens physically. You can become dizzy and disoriented. Paul writes of the importance of being mature in the knowledge and faith in the Son of God so that we will be stable.

**Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.** Ephesians 3:14 NIV

Get hit in the head and you fall into confusion, you become unsure in what you know for sure. You become very troubled with the constant challenges of the faith. You may be unsure if God still loves or if you are still a Christian. You may start believing some errant teaching. But with our helmet firmly in place:

**We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.** 2 Corinthians 10:5 NIV

## **6. Sword of the Spirit**

**and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**

Lastly, take up the sword of the spirit. This is the only offensive weapon that is at our disposal and it is enough.

The presence of a sword means the Lord wants us not only to stand but also fight. I often talk about the subtle differences between strength and power. The armor is to hold, the

sword is to take. The Lord calls us to take. Armor is about strength but the sword is about power.

In the spiritual realm we use words to fight. We don't use our own words. We use God's words. In the spiritual realm, the word of God is a weapon. It is the most powerful weapon.

All things were created with words.

**And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.** Genesis 1:3 NIV

All things are sustained with words.

**The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.** Hebrews 1:3 NIV

The word of God is like a sword.

**For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.** Hebrews 4:12 NIV

Paul compels Timothy to learn how to handle the word of God.

**Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.**

2 Timothy 2:15 NIV

We handle the word of God by learning it like we are now. We handle it by meditating on it. The word of God can become a weapon when we use it to help clear up our thinking. When we use it to establish the principles that we live by it becomes a weapon for us. When we use it to evaluate truth whether in dreams or in Bible studies like this one it becomes a weapon. When we speak it and when we use it to structure our prayers it becomes a weapon.

Our passage ends with prayer.

**Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And 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.**

The word of God is saying here to take up armor so you can stand, and then take up the sword with which you can fight and do what – pray.

## **Conclusion**

There's good news and bad news here. The bad news is you must prepare to survive. The good news is the Holy Spirit has laid out how we need to prepare. The Bible says to put on the "full" armor of God. If you don't have all the armor on you're just not prepared to fight. If you go into a fight without being prepared then you guarantee the outcome.

The goal of the preparation is that we can hold our ground. The word says here that after you've completed your preparation, your job is to be tenacious. The promise of the Lord is that the armor works. Do things God's way and you will be able to stand.

**Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. 2 Timothy 1:14**

We must stand, but we get help in our standing from God. Or to say it another way:

**Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, 2 Corinthians 1:21**

Assess where you need help and pray accordingly. There should be no reason for you to be caught off guard.

Notes

For Questions or Comments please respond to [lostandfoundcenter@yahoo.com](mailto:lostandfoundcenter@yahoo.com) and visit [www.lostandfoundcenter.org](http://www.lostandfoundcenter.org) for additional information.

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