

WEEK 12
05.22.16

STANDING STRONG IN THE LORD



FOCUS VERSE

Ephesians 6:10

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

LESSON TEXT

Ephesians 6:10–18

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

Ephesians 4:27

27 Neither give place to the devil.

James 4:7–8

7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

Romans 13:13–14

13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.



FOCUS THOUGHT

God allows believers the privilege of standing strong in the power of His might and enjoying the glorious victory He has wrought.



CULTURE CONNECTION

Be Still and Know

I'll admit that I'm not the most patient fellow. I want my tasks done now. I don't like to wait. I especially do not want to cause others to wait on me. I consider deadlines as something to be met or exceeded. I guess that is one reason the Lord continually brings Psalm 46:10 to mind: "Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."

God doesn't often pay attention to my timetable. Since He doesn't, I sometimes get frustrated. I know I hear His voice and cling

to His promises. I get energized and my faith soars in expectation. Then God moves in His time. My faith begins to waver. I question whether I really heard from the Lord. Then I hear Him gently reminding me to "be still, and know" He is God.

When what I have prayed for doesn't come to pass when I expect or when I want, and my faith begins to waver, then I need to remember He is God. His promises are yes and amen. (See II Corinthians 1:20.) It is then I need to stand strong in the Lord.

OUTLINE

- I. PUT ON THE ARMOR OF GOD
- II. OBSERVE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES
 - A. Read and Study the Bible
 - B. Pray
 - C. Fast
 - D. Praise and Worship God
- III. SUBMIT TO THE SPIRIT
- IV. RESIST THE DEVIL
- V. ATTEND CHURCH FAITHFULLY

CONTEMPLATING THE TOPIC

A medieval knight had more than just a sword for defense. He was covered in heavy plate armor from head to toe—or the lighter and more flexible chain mail and scaled armor—and had a shield. He also carried a long—at least twelve feet long—metal-tipped lance for cavalry charges. Mounted on his steed, whose chest and head were also protected by armor, the medieval knight was imposing and deadly.

Paul and James, writers of today's lesson text, would have been more familiar with the Roman soldiers. Compared to the medieval knight's armor, the Roman soldier was ill prepared for battle. However, the Roman army

was the most advanced of its time and enslaved many tribes to create the vast Roman Empire.

For the most part, a Greek or Roman soldier carried a short sword, a spear, and a shield. A steel or bronze helmet protected his head, and a metal breastplate covered his chest and abdominal areas. The steel-plate armor was designed to be flexible enough for the soldier to move, yet it could block the slash of a sword. A long, curved rectangular shield, leather sandals, and a long, red military cloak were also a part of the soldier's uniform.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

I. PUT ON THE ARMOR OF GOD

Paul emphatically stated, "Put on the whole armour of God." He then gave two reasons to be attired in the divine armor.

1. The armor allows us to stand against the wiles of the devil. According to *dictionary.reference.com*, the noun *wile* is defined as "1. a trick, artifice, or stratagem meant to fool, trap, or entice; device. 2. **wiles**, artful or beguiling behavior. 3. deceitful cunning; trickery."

2. We are not fighting a human foe, but our battle is against the powers of darkness, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Since we are fighting a spiritual battle, our

armament and weaponry must be spiritual. To the church at Corinth, Paul wrote: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; and having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled” (II Corinthians 10:3–6).

Belt of truth. As discussed in the lesson for week 6, Paul stated we should have our loins girded about with truth. The Roman soldier’s belt had leather straps that hung down and helped to protect the body from the waist to the lower thighs, while still allowing flexibility.

Many deceptive voices are in our world. The lies of modern philosophies that enshrine sin and belittle the Word of God have deceived countless people. Ideas and practices that once were unthinkable are now becoming accepted and legal, while anyone who stands for righteousness is labeled intolerant.

Our modern culture teaches that truth is what we believe it is—that good and bad are relative and there are no absolutes, only equally valid opinions. However, Paul told the Romans not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. The Bible teaches that God’s Word is truth (John 17:17). God defines what is good and what is bad, and His Word is an eternal and unchangeable absolute, uninfluenced by opinions of today’s—or tomorrow’s—society.

The truths of God’s Word will stand forever. Whatever modern doctrine, or a rehashing of ancient lies, comes our way, we need to compare it to the infallible Word of God. Truth will protect us.

In human anatomy, the area covered by the soldier’s belt included the reproductive organs. That fact would seem to indicate that truth not only protects us, but as we train our children and grandchildren to love God and love the truth, they will be protected also.

We must teach Apostolic truth to our children and grandchildren. Teaching them is not an option. Moses emphasized the importance of communicating truth to the next

generation when he stated: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates” (Deuteronomy 6:4–9).

Living a life of holiness and taking heed to the Word of God will protect our hearts from evil desires.

Breastplate of righteousness. (This piece of armor was discussed more fully in the lesson for week 7.) Paul said to put on the breastplate of righteousness. A Roman breastplate was designed to cover the chest and extended down to the hips, thus protecting the heart and other vital organs. Spiritually, the heart is the center of our emotions and desires.

The *KJV Dictionary* defines *righteousness* as “purity of heart and rectitude of life; conformity of heart and life to the divine law. Righteousness . . . is nearly equivalent to holiness, comprehending holy principles and affections of heart. . . . It includes all we call justice, honesty and virtue, with holy affections; in short, it is true religion.”

Living a life of holiness and taking heed to the Word of God will protect our hearts from evil desires. The disciplines of righteous living will keep our hearts and minds focused on God and not on the things of the world. A straightforward definition of righteousness is simply doing what is right.

Sandals of peace. As mentioned in the lesson for week 8, we are to shoe our feet with the gospel of peace. “No soldier can go far without the proper shoes. Even with all his other weapons, a barefoot soldier would soon become immobilized by the rough terrain taking its toll on his feet. . . . A Roman soldier’s *caligae*, or sandals, were constructed of leather and laced up the center of the foot and onto the ankle” (christcenteredmall.com/teachings/armor-of-god-4.htm; accessed February 13, 2014).

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The gospel-of-peace sandals teach (1) we must first be at peace with God ourselves, (2) we must stand in peace, and (3) we must go and preach the gospel to all nations.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only thing that can bring real peace to a troubled soul. Think how peaceful the world would be if everyone had a personal relationship with God. All war and strife would cease.

Shield of faith. The shield of faith will “quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (Ephesians 6:16). (See the lesson for week 9 for a more complete discussion of this piece of armor.) The Roman soldier’s shield was a large (some were over a yard high and nearly as wide), slightly curved rectangular shield featuring at its center a large metal knob called a boss. The sheer size of the shield protected the bearer. The knob on the shield allowed the bearer to give his opponent a stunning shove, momentarily incapacitating him. Because of the curve, the shield deflected the blows of the opponent.

Faith can be used in the sense of right doctrine, which will combat heresy. We also need a strong belief that the Word of God is settled in Heaven and we can rely on the promises

of God. This shield of faith will guard against lies intended to deceive and discourage us. An example of this would be the three Hebrew men who stood before Nebuchadnezzar and said, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king” (Daniel 3:16–17).

Helmet of salvation. As discussed in the lesson for week 10, we are to put on the helmet of salvation. When Paul wrote, he probably thought of Isaiah’s prophecy of Jehovah God: “For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak” (Isaiah 59:17). Paul encouraged the believers to put on the armor in which he pictured God.

The helmet of the Roman soldier was designed to protect his head from attack. Likewise, the helmet of salvation will protect our minds and thoughts from an attack by Satan. People who have experienced genuine salvation have been transformed by the renewing of their minds and “may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2).

“But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do” (1 Thessalonians 5:8–11).

Sword of the Spirit. Paul said to “take . . . the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17). (See the lesson for week 11 for additional information.) The sword is the only offensive weapon Paul named in his catalog of attire for a Roman soldier. Without the sword, the soldier was simply a heavily laden, moving target. With the sword, he could stand and fight.

The sword of the Spirit is a mighty weapon in the hands of Spirit-filled children of God. Someone wisely said, “The Word of God will keep you from the world, or the world will keep you from the Word of God.”

II. OBSERVE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

One of the strengths of a successful army is discipline among the troops. One of the sources of great strength for a child of God is practicing spiritual disciplines. Paul wrote to Titus, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:11–13).

Unlike the thinking of some, God’s grace is not a license to live in any way one chooses. Instead, grace teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lust and instead to live soberly, righteously, and godly. At the same time, we are to live in hope, anticipating the glorious return of Jesus Christ. Use the following spiritual disciplines as guides.

One of the sources of great strength for a child of God is practicing spiritual disciplines.

A. Read and Study the Bible

A child of God who follows Paul’s admonition will be a student of the Word. Bible reading should be a part of the Christian’s daily routine. From time to time, the reading should go beyond mere devotional reading so the student can delve deeper into the Word, perhaps studying a particular topic. The psalmist said, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:11).

B. Pray

Prayer is indispensable to Christians. A prayerless Christian is a powerless Christian.



“The Church, by virtue of her faithful use of prayer, wields the balance of power not only in world affairs but also in the salvation of individual souls. Without violating the free moral responsibility of any individual, the Church, by means of persistent, believing intercession, may so release the Spirit of God upon a soul that he will find it easier to yield to the Spirit’s tender wooing and be saved than to continue his rebellion.

“God will not go over the Church’s head to do things in spite of her because this would abort His plan to bring her to full stature. . . . He will therefore do nothing without her” (Paul Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne*).

Praying is our means of communicating with God. Any close relationship depends on communication, and our relationship with God is no exception.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus gave His listeners some instructions on praying (Matthew 6:5–13). Verses 9–13 contain what we know as the Lord’s Prayer, which we also can use as a pattern when praying.

Following Paul’s discussion of the spiritual armor, he said, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel” (Ephesians 6:18–19). Some other verses of Scripture concerning prayer are Philippians 4:6; I Thessalonians 5:17; I Timothy 2:1–2; James 5:16; and Jude 20.

C. Fast

Fasting is another Christian discipline taught in Scripture. Someone said fasting is talked about more than it is practiced. That would not be surprising considering how difficult many of us find it to deny our flesh.

Fasting humbles us before God and puts us in a position to learn His will and His way.

D. Praise and Worship God

Another discipline similar to prayer is praise and worship.

Psalms 68 begins, "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him." How do we allow God to arise to defeat His enemies? The answer is in verses 3-4: "Let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice. Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him." When we praise God, somehow we release the powers of Heaven, and the strength and majesty of the Lord can be revealed.

Praise is so effective because it focuses the believer's attention on the might and majesty of God.

Consider David. His life was anything but easy. From the dangers of tending sheep, to facing a giant, to running away from Saul and his army, to ruling a nation, to dealing with the trouble of a dysfunctional family, David faced many trials. However, David realized the power in praising God.

In Psalm 34:1, David said, "I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth." David voiced these words as he was in the camp of the Philistines, pretending to be insane before Abimelech. In spite of his circumstances, David praised God and was victorious.

Praise is so effective because it focuses the believer's attention on the might and majesty of God. Earthly problems seem so small when compared to the omnipotence of God. Praise automatically raises one's faith. Throughout the Book of Psalms, Jehovah God is glorified.

Incorporating these verses into your prayer is a great way to defeat the devil.

III. SUBMIT TO THE SPIRIT

Paul wrote to the Romans, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). In other words, submit to the will and purpose of God for your life.

Submission is an act of the will. Someone may be forced to act against his or her will without being submissive in heart. Undoubtedly, we all can think of times in our childhood when we obeyed out of fear of punishment while our spirit was still rebellious. Who has not heard the story of the child who told his mother in church, "I'm sitting down, but in my heart I'm standing up!"

Submitting to the Spirit is willingly relinquishing control of our personal desires and ambitions and conforming to the will of God. This is crucifying our flesh and allowing the Holy Ghost to be in control. When we submit to the Spirit, we walk in the Spirit and do not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

IV. RESIST THE DEVIL

James instructed the believers to resist the devil (James 4:7). However, he first said to submit to God. Resisting the devil begins when we submit to the will of God. As we submit to God, we gain strength to resist temptations that may come our way. We learn to say no to the devil and yes to Jesus.

Paul wrote, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:14). What are some ways we can resist the devil by not making "provision for the flesh," or how can we avoid setting ourselves up for temptation?

- *Make ourselves accountable to someone.* We should find someone who will quiz us on what we have been reading, watching, and attending. This person could be our spouse or a close friend in the church. Naturally, this implies we will read, watch, and attend only things that are wholesome and uplifting.

- *Use a filter on the computer.* Even though we may feel strong enough to avoid

pornography and other vices on the Internet, we do not always have control of pop-ups. And innocent-looking links can lead to surprising sites we never intended to visit.

- *Use the computer in a family-centered area where other members of the family can see what we see.*

- *Share our passwords with our spouse so he or she can read our emails.*

- *Guard our minds.* If need be, we should take a different route home to avoid seeing a suggestive or enticing billboard.

- *Do not place ourselves in compromising positions at work or other social activities.* This writer recently read of an affair that started when a man innocently helped a woman to her car during a snowstorm.

- *Stay full of the Holy Ghost.* Paul stated that if we walk in the Spirit, then we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16).

When we come together, the body can function as a whole and members can minister to each other.

V. ATTEND CHURCH FAITHFULLY

The writer of Hebrews penned, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25).

REFLECTIONS

- Discuss which article of the armor of God seems most important and why.
- How can we clothe ourselves in the armor of God?
- Why is faithfully attending church important?
- How can we personally resist the wiles of the devil? Cite an example.
- How does one walk in the Spirit?
- How does an individual submit to God, as instructed by James?

John was alone on the Isle of Patmos when he received the Book of Revelation. However, living a Christian life in solitude is not the norm. Christians need the fellowship of one another. We need to come together for collective worship. We need to be strengthened by the anointed preaching of the Word. When we come together, the body can function as a whole and members can minister to each other.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

We are in a battle for our own souls and the souls of family members, neighbors, friends, and people around the world whom we may never meet. We must realize our adversary is bent on our spiritual destruction and will do everything in his power to defeat us. That is why we must clothe ourselves with the whole armor of God.

As we pray each morning, we should put on the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, and the other pieces of armor. We should pray that the sandals of the gospel of peace would lead us to someone needing to hear the gospel. We should pray to handle the sword of the Spirit skillfully to repel the attacks of Satan and not as a tool to wound and hurt others.

Above all, we must discipline ourselves to follow a life of holiness—to do the things we know we should do and to avoid the works of the flesh. To do this, we must be filled with the Spirit of God, allowing Him to lead and direct our paths.

We must stand strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, clothed with the whole armor of God. ■