

An Encouraging Word From Dr. Tim Watson
Series- Armed For Battle #2
“Spiritual Body Armor”

In 1966, a chemist by the name of Stephanie Kwolek, who was a chemist for the Dupont Company, developed a synthetic material called Kevlar™. Kevlar™ is five times stronger than the same weight of steel. Kevlar™, patented by Stephanie Kwolek in 1966, does not rust or corrode and is extremely lightweight. Kevlar™ compounds have been used for things such as underwater cables, brake linings, and building materials. But probably the most famous use of Kevlar™ is bullet-proof vests—body armor used by police officers.

When a handgun bullet strikes body armor, the bullet is caught in a “web” of very strong fibers. These fibers absorb and disperse the impact energy that is transmitted to the vest from the bullet, causing the bullet to deform or “mushroom.” Additional energy is absorbed by each successive layer of material in the vest, until the bullet has been stopped. Many police officers owe their lives to Stephanie Kwolek for developing the material called Kevlar™ that is used in bullet-proof vests and body armor.

In *Ephesians 6*, the Apostle Paul reminds us that as believers in Christ, we are in a spiritual battle. Our enemy is Satan. He is firing spiritual bullets / fiery darts / flaming missiles at us every day. The only way we can be victorious in this spiritual warfare is to put on our spiritual Kevlar™ every morning before we walk out the door, because Satan will be firing spiritual bullets at us all day. But the good news is, we have a body armor that is stronger than Kevlar™: It is **The Armor of God**.

Look in your Bible to *Ephesians 6:10-20*. This morning we are going to be talking about **Spiritual Body Armor**. We need to be reminded that (1) as Christ-followers, we are

engaged in a spiritual battle. We are waging war against the greatest war strategist of all time: Satan. (2) The encouragement we have today is that we have spiritual tools that are available to us in this battle. God has entrusted to us military weapons and spiritual resources to be victorious over Satan. Remember *John 10:10*, “*The thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy. But I have come that you might have life and have it abundantly.*” Satan’s plan is to **steal, kill, and destroy**.

Last Sunday morning we looked at one of the greatest **offensive** weapons we have for waging spiritual battles: **The Sword of the Spirit—the Word of God**. This morning we are going to look at some defensive weapons God has given us in spiritual warfare. The message is “**Spiritual Body Armor.**”

The context and the historical setting for *Ephesians 6* is Paul’s imprisonment in Rome. The Apostle Paul was imprisoned in Rome for preaching and telling people about Jesus, which was a threat to the Roman government. Different Christian historians through the years have written that it was the tradition of that day to have a prisoner like the Apostle Paul guarded closely by a Roman soldier. Some historians have even said that Paul may have spent a large portion of his time in jail chained to a Roman guard. Picture in your mind Paul sitting in jail hour after hour, day after day. We know that while in jail, Paul wrote several of his letters to the various churches where he had preached, and in some cases even started the churches. One of them was the church in Ephesus.

As Paul sits there in that jail cell, he observes first-hand the equipment and the uniform the Roman soldiers were given to fight against their enemies. In *verses 10-20*, Paul begins to describe the Roman armor that each soldier is given to fight their enemies.

Verse 13 – “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.”

It is interesting to note that in our text, the word “stand” is used four times. *Verse 11* says, “stand against the devil’s schemes;” *verse 13* says, “stand your ground;” *verse 13* says, “after you have done everything...stand;” *verse 14* says, “stand firm.” The word stand here is a military phrase meaning, “Hold your ground; hold your position.” You are standing in spiritual battle, opposing Satan with your spiritual body armor. You’re not running, you’re not retreating, you’re standing firm with the armor of God, and you’re not moving. You’re on solid footing.

Paul then instructs the Ephesian Christians to strap on their spiritual body armor that will be essential in the spiritual battle. This morning we are going to look at some **defensive** weapons God has given us for our own protection.

Ephesians 6:10-12 says: “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.”

We are engaged in spiritual battle, and without God’s help, we will lose. There is more to life than meets the eye, more than the materialism with which we so often consume ourselves. Paul says that there is an unseen world that exists around us. This is not the first time he has mentioned it. In *chapter 1*, he talks about every ruler and authority and power and dominion—and his point is that Jesus is superior to every spiritual being that exists. He is the Name above all names, the King above all kings, the Lord above all lords. Jesus Christ is all in all.

Now, He has power over every ruler, authority, and dominion—but we don't. We are engaged in spiritual warfare, and without His help, we are sure to lose.

Some of you may be thinking, "Tim, you're beginning to sound a little bit 'out there.' When you're talking about spiritual warfare—spiritual battle—what exactly are you talking about?"

Every time you are presented with the opportunity to entertain a lustful thought, you have entered a spiritual battlefield. Every time you have the chance to do something vindictive, you are on the battlefield. Every time you have the chance to say something harsh and hurtful, you are in the midst of battle. Every time you toy with the notion that you're just a little bit better than most of the people you know, you are surrounded by enemy fire. Every time you encounter a person in need, you are engaged in combat.

Life is a spiritual battlefield, and there is a force at work in this world that does not want you to do good. There is a force at work in this world that does not want you to live for Jesus. There is a force at work in this world that does not want you to minister to others in his name. There is a force at work in this world that does not want you to reflect God's love and mercy. And that force will do whatever it takes to make sure you don't do it.

Now, let me make this perfectly clear. Our enemy might be strong, but our Savior is stronger. Don't get the impression that a fight between God and the devil is a close match. The devil has been defeated. Beaten. Stomped. Humiliated. He has no power in your life, so you don't have to moan and groan about how oppressive the devil is. All you have to do is put on the full armor of God and you will win the battle. *James 4:7* says, "*Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*" 4

Isn't that a great idea? Wouldn't you like to see all the opposing forces in your life pack up and take off running in the other direction? Wouldn't that be great? You resist the devil by putting on the full armor of God. Listen to how Paul describes it in *Ephesians 6:13-17*, "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."

At the time he was writing this letter, Paul was in prison and he was probably chained to a Roman soldier. So, when he began to think of spiritual warfare, he looked at the man next to him and noticed that in the same way this soldier's armor protected him in battle, God has provided strength to protect us in battle. Each item on the list parallels a behavior—something we are to do in order to experience the fullness of God's strength. The emphasis is not on the item of armor and all it symbolizes. The emphasis is on the behavior Paul is challenging us to emulate. I don't want us to get sidetracked on the symbolism of the belt and breastplate and helmet; I want us to stay focused on what Paul is telling us to do. Let's take a look.

In our spiritual body armor:

I. We are to wear the belt of truth (v. 14).

Verse 14 (NIV) – "Stand firm, then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist."

Verse 14 (NASB) – "Gird your loins with truth." 5

The belt was always the first piece of armor the soldier put on. The Jews of New Testament times believed the waist was the center of a person's strength and power. Exercise and fitness experts tell us if we want to be healthy, we need to work what they call "**core muscles**"— muscles like your abdominal muscles, muscles that run from your neck to your lower back. The stronger our core muscles are in our trunk and torso section, the stronger we will be physically. The Jews believed the waist was the center of a person's strength and power. As the belt encircled the waist and held everything together, Paul says we must make sure that our lives are encircled with the belt of God's truth. We must make sure our spiritual core is strong. We must make sure we live surrounded by God's truth because the world around us is full of lies disguising themselves as truth.

John 8:44 reminds us that "*Satan is the father of lies and he cannot speak the truth.*" Now, another way to understand the importance of wearing the belt of truth every day is intentionally striving to be a person of truthfulness in every situation. In other words, Paul is talking about our behavior. He is talking about truthful living, truthful thinking, truthful speaking. He is talking about not being deceptive, but being truthful and honest. A soldier's belt did two things: (1) Protected his mid-section, and (2) gave him freedom of movement. When we make a commitment to speak the truth and live the truth, there is great freedom and liberty in our lives.

Illustration: **Mother and the "Missing Dish."**

Jesus said, "*You shall know the truth and the truth will set you free*" (*John 8:32*). When Paul says to have the belt of truth buckled around our waist, he is calling us to live truthful lives according to God's truth. A commitment to living truthfully protects us and gives us freedom. So, we are to wear the belt of truth—live truthfully. 6

In our spiritual body armor:

II. We are to wear the breastplate of righteousness (v. 14).

“Guard your heart” (Proverbs 4:23).

“Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place” (Ephesians 6:14).

The breastplate’s role was to serve like a bullet-proof vest. If Kevlar had been invented in Roman times, the Roman guards would have been wearing them. The breastplate was designed to protect the body’s vital organs—heart, lungs, and lower abdomen. In this context, Paul says *“Everyday, put on a breastplate that is made of righteousness, goodness, purity, uprightness.”* How do we as imperfect, sinful people get this breastplate of righteousness? We receive our breastplate of righteousness when we place our faith in Christ. He gives us His righteousness! Now, when God looks at us, instead of seeing us as imperfect, sinful people, God looks at us and sees Christ’s goodness, Christ’s righteousness. His righteousness is our bullet-proof vest; it is our breastplate. If we keep it on, we will protect our hearts from being shot with the bullets of jealousy, lying, lusting, stealing, and anger. When we strap on the breastplate of righteousness, we are guarding and protecting our hearts from the enemy’s fire. *Proverbs 4:23 (NASB)* says, *“Watch over your heart with all diligence for from it flows the springs of life.”*

In our spiritual body armor:

III. We are to have feet that are ready to move on God’s opportunities.

“Be ready with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace” (Ephesians 6:15).

Do you remember at the end of the *Beverly Hillbillies*, they sang the song about having us back next week to “have a heaping helping of our hospitality”? And he said, “Sit down a spell, take your shoes off....” The idea is to relax, make yourself at home, take it easy, and do nothing for awhile.

Paul is saying the opposite. He’s saying, “Put your shoes on. Get busy.” He’s talking about our behavior: Be ready to go. Be ready to move. Be ready to work. Be ready to serve. Put your shoes on.

That means when God places opportunities before us, we are not to sit around with our shoes off and do nothing. No, when God says, “Help that homeless person,” you do it. When God says, “I’m opening a door for you to share Christ,” you go through that door and share your story. When God gives you the opportunity to serve in a specific role and you know it’s God’s will, you do it. When God gives you the opportunity to be involved in a local mission project or go on a mission trip, you do it. **We are to have feet that are ready to move on opportunities.**

In our spiritual body armor:

IV. We are to wear the 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” (Ephesians 6:16).



Roman soldiers used two kinds of shields: A small one in hand-to-hand combat, and a large one—four and a half feet tall by two feet wide—for use when the army was advancing. Each soldier would stand side-by-side, holding up his shield, and the enemy would be faced with a solid wall of shields—row after row after row. This made the army impenetrable. 8

That's what faith does. It makes you impenetrable, especially when you're marching side-by-side with your fellow soldiers. Paul is talking about our behavior again. He's not referring to a mere creed that you acknowledge with your intellect; he is talking about faithfulness—faith in action.

He makes reference to fiery darts. These Roman shields were covered with leather and were often soaked before battle so that the shield would quickly absorb and snuff out the flaming arrows that were shot at them.

Your faith gives you the same protection. When you continue to advance side-by-side with your fellow soldiers, your faith protects from anything the enemy throws your way.

Satan Fires Fiery Darts, Fiery Arrows, Flaming Missiles:

Gossip, unkind words, uncontrollable tongue.

Impure thoughts, thoughts of things in the past for which you cannot forgive yourself.

An addiction – alcohol, drugs, pornography, eating disorder.

Spiritual laziness – don't pray, don't read the Word, aren't consistent in worship, don't serve, don't give (you can't trust God for your finances).

Satan is shooting fiery darts at you. But the shield of faith, faith in Christ you put in action day by day, will help you to overcome anything the enemy throws your way.

In our spiritual body armor:

V. We are to wear the helmet of salvation (v. 17).

“Take [or ‘Put on’] the helmet of salvation.”

A helmet covers the head, which is the center of our thoughts and our attitudes. Whenever the enemy seeks to strike a blow of doubt or temptation, the helmet wards it off. Perhaps the ultimate blow of Satan is trying to get us to doubt God’s love and acceptance of us.

Our helmet, His great salvation, forever keeps Satan from striking that disastrous blow. The Scripture tells us we **are** loved. We **are** accepted. Keep the helmet on. His salvation guards our minds.

In our spiritual body armor:

VI. We are to take up the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

We are to study, meditate, and internalize the Word of God.

In our spiritual body armor:

VII. Our greatest weapon in spiritual warfare is prayer.

Paul says in verse 18, “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.”

Paul’s strategy for prayer is quite simple: Pray for everything and everyone. All occasions, he says. All kinds of prayers and requests, he says. For all the saints, he says: Pray

I challenge you this week to make prayer your “first resort.” Before you do anything, pray. When you get up in the morning, before you interact with your family, pray just a quick prayer: “God help me help them get their day off to a great start.” When you walk into your workplace, pray a quick prayer: “God help me do your work today for your glory. And help me treat my co-workers with dignity and respect.” Before you make a phone call, before you speak to a client, before you go to a meeting, pray. In traffic, pray. In stressful situations, pray. In every event throughout the day, pray. On

all occasions with all kinds of prayers, pray.

This is the greatest weapon in spiritual warfare. Why? Because when you pray, you are submitting to God. Remember the verse from *James 4:7*, “*Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*”

Conclusion

Life is a war zone, and every day we're on the battlefield. The only way you can win this battle is through the strength of God. But to receive God's strength, you must act. Put on the belt of truth: live truthfully. Put on the breastplate of righteousness; do good works. Put your shoes on and be ready to go where God sends you. Take up the shield of faith, and be ready to live by faith. Take the helmet of salvation, and fill your mind with thoughts about all that God's salvation means to you. Get into the Word and listen to God's voice, so that He can speak specific words into your life. And most of all, pray—on all occasions, all kinds of prayers, for everyone. Do this, Paul says, and you will stand your ground, and when the battle is over, you will remain standing...for the glory of God.

