

Ephesians 6:10-20 (ESV) ¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² 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. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

For years I had the same dream, from my childhood up into adulthood. I was sitting in the living room and a car drove up to the front of our home. The person getting out of the car scared me more than words can express. I turn around in my dream and want to run into the kitchen where I will be safe, but I am frozen in fear and cannot move. Paralyzed in fear I always wake up unable to move until I calm down and the fear dissipates. Analyzing the dream as an adult I know the person getting out of the car represents evil and that evil wants to paralyze me so I cannot do the good that God wants me to do.

Verse ¹³ "Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm." I do not think at all that I need to make the case that we are living in evil days. Evil is the opposite of what God wants. God wants us to love one another as He loves us. Today you sense more hate in the air than love. God tells us to respect our elders and those who have authority over us. That ship sailed away some time ago and there is little or no respect for those in authority. Evil works hard to separate people, to get people to dislike each other and show no respect at all. Evil's purpose is to steal, kill, and destroy. God's purpose is to give life, new life in Christ, abundant and free. Does it not break

your heart to see people grabbing onto a plane flying out of Afghanistan doing their best to get away from the evil Taliban?

Christians, it is time to put on the full armor of God so we can stand tall, stand firm, stand strong in God's mighty strength. On the cross Jesus won the war against Satan, against evil. The war has been won. We are on the winning side. But the battle with evil will continue until the day Jesus comes again and the enemy is thrown into the lake of fire never to be seen again. There will be evil no more.

The good news is we as Christians can shine brighter for Christ more than ever during dark periods of time. Wearing God's protective armor in the war that we are in is absolutely essential. ¹¹*Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.* ¹²*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.* There is a spirit world all around us that we cannot see. Sometimes Christians who have the spiritual gift of discernment can feel the warfare, but we cannot see it. **1 Peter 5:8 (NIV)** ⁸*Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.* There are unseen enemies of God wanting to trip us up and paralyze us from doing the good that God wants us to do. The good news is God is by far more powerful than the evil of our day. I believe God is using this season of darkness so people tire of their sinful ways, repent, and turn to God and to the church. In seasons of darkness, it is wonderful to have friends who are full of light, God's light, the light of Jesus Christ. God knows exactly what He is doing, and God's purposes are still being served whether we see it or not. God's love conquers all. This is why our relationships one to another are more important than ever. We cannot afford to be divided over politics, to wear a mask or not to wear a mask, or any other issue. God calls us to love and support each other even if we disagree over the issues the pandemic has brought out way. The evil in this world wants us to turn

against one another, to hurt one another, and behave in super selfish ways. You can feel it in the air. You can feel it in your bones.

¹¹*Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.* First of all, the armor belongs to God. God is gracious and offers us this armor each and every day so we can stand strong and not wimp out or cave into evil. Evil wants to paralyze us like kryptonite paralyzes superman. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth. The belt of truth is worn so you are always prepared when attacked. We want God's truth to direct our lives. The greatest battlefield is in your mind. The Bible says, "And you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." There is no greater battlefield than in your mind. God asks of us to tuck into our minds tightly God's truth that renews our minds. God will never be defeated by evil, and God's truth taken in through His word and lived out by the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives makes us strong soldiers for Christ. Satan's lies paralyze us. God's truth sets us free to be victorious over evil. Please pray on the belt of truth God's truth.

"and having put on the breastplate of righteousness." The breastplate piece of armor protects the most vital of organs. No Roman soldier would go to battle without it. To do so was to invite death. How does this piece of armor apply to us in spiritual battles or warfare? The vital organ of your heart in Jewish thought represents the mind, the will, and the emotions. Yes the battlefield includes our minds, and it also includes our emotions. Despair is one of the greatest tools of the enemy to defeat us in battle. Our God is a God of hope. Jesus died on the cross, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. Jesus is our King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The resurrection of Jesus gives us reason never to lose hope. We have that resurrection power living within us, namely the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works inside of us producing love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control. To fall into despair is to listen only to the voice of the enemy who knows no truth at all. Lies such as, "You are no good," "God does not love you," "you have done more sin that God can forgive,"

those despairing lives are overcome as we live lives close to God that please God. The righteousness that is mentioned here is holy living, living obedient lives unto the Lord God. When we walk in willful disobedience we take off the shield of righteousness making ourselves easily overcome. Satan wants us to sink into the sea of despair and give up living for God. Walking closely to God we have the Holy Spirit raising us up to new heights in the Lord Jesus Christ.

¹⁵ *and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.*

The armor of the shoes means everywhere we walk we know that God loves us, and we are at peace with God because of the finished work of Jesus on the cross. Only Christians can know God's peace. The nonbeliever is at war with God. The believer has surrendered his or her life to God and knows a peace that passes all human understanding. Wearing these shoes means we are at one with God and every battle that arises belongs to the Lord. God Himself will fight for you for you belong to Him. When God is for you it does not matter who is against you. Nothing can separate you from the love of God.

¹⁶ *In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.* The shield that Paul speaks of here was large enough to protect the entire body of the soldier. The soldiers who carried these shields were on the front lines of battle and stood side by side with their shields together called a phalanx sometimes a mile wide. The word faith here means sincere belief and trust in God. It is of a person who has given his or her entire life to God taking up daily the shield of faith. The flaming darts that come our way are the temptations to fall into sin. The enemy wants to sidetrack us, to lay the shield of faith down and enjoy all the pleasures of sin like all those other people around us who seem to be enjoying life so much. The shield of faith is a shield given to you by God. It is God's shield of protection. The enemy can never overcome or break your shield for God's shield is more powerful than any tool of the enemy. You hold onto to God with all of your might when the reality is God is the one

holding onto you. This sinful world wants to throw everything at you including the kitchen sink. God's protective shield keeps those things from tempting you to lose heart and grow discouraged. The troops walked side by side. God never calls us to war all by ourselves. He always provides fellow troops, armed with faith to overcome the enemy.

“¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation.” The helmet was worn to protect one's head. Satan loves to throw blows at our minds to make us question our security and assurance in knowing Jesus. This leads to discouragement and doubt, Satan's top tools to defeat us. Friends, once God saves you by grace through faith your soul is saved for eternity. It means the final war for your soul has been won. **Isaiah 40:29-31 (NLT2)** ²⁹ He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. ³⁰ Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. ³¹ But those who trust in the LORD will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.

and [take] the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. The Bible tells us everything that God has given to us so this world will never overcome us. In the book of Revelation, the Bible calls us Christians the overcomers. In these dark days the Word of God has all the light that we need. Let's live in it.

Friends, God has already won the war. Yes, there will be battles until the day of Jesus Christ. The Lord God will not leave us in Afghanistan. This world and all the evils will one day be no more. There will be a brand new heaven and a brand new earth. Until then, God has provided protective armor for us to put on, wear, so we can stand tall against the wiles of the enemy. Amen and Amen.