

Coach House Church

BEACONS

IM STILL STANDING

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Ephesians 6 famously tells us to 'put on the armour of God' to protect us against spiritual attack. However, once we've put the armour on, what do we do with it? Keep listening to find out how Christians battle lies and discouragement with the tools God has provided.

Our key verse is Ephesians 6:13: "Therefore put on the full armour 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." The previous verses tell us to be strong in God's power and prepare to resist the Devil; then the next few verses tell us what the armour of God is. Imagine you're enlisted as a fresh recruit during wartime, and because the situation's an emergency, you're told what your gear is, loaded up with it and sent out to the battlefield for a merry fight. Obviously you'll look down at your gun, look around at your surroundings and have no idea what to do next. It's not enough to know that we must put on the armour of God, but what actions must we take while wearing this armour?

Before we get to that, it's interesting to see what's not included in our set of armour. In verses 13-17 we have the breastplate of righteousness, belt of truth, helmet of salvation, shoes of Good News, the shield of faith and the sword of the spirit, but we don't have the heavy backpack of self-sufficiency. That is to say, this passage is all about what God has enabled us to use and access as a gift of grace rather than how we can survive it alone. But why do we need this battle gear? We are given the equipment we need to combat a particular kind of enemy – 'spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places'. These forces operate as a rival kingdom and as an exact opposite of God. The Holy Spirit brings (amongst many things) new desire and power to obey God along with encouragement and understanding of the truth. On the other hand, the Devil is described as a 'liar' and a 'slanderer'. He brings his power against us through discouragement and lies trying to do the

exact opposite of the Spirit. God's goal is to regenerate us as his children, the Devil's aim is to degenerate us down to his level.

The excerpt from Ephesians 6 we read at the beginning tells us to be prepared for 'when the day of evil come'. By God's grace we may have many days where we are not being brought spiritually low and feel like we're in a spiritual battle. That's great! However, the passage warns us that this day will come as an inevitable part of life lived in the world. So apart from putting on our armour – representing the good things we have received through from God through our faith in Jesus – what else should we do?

There are two points:

1. Stand.
2. Fight.

Let's look at the first point. Ephesians 6 mentions standing 3 times and twice it's seen in our passage. We are to "put on the full armour of God, so that [...] you may be able to stand your ground" which is the action we are familiar with. That is what enables us to stand against these spiritual forces. And then "after you have done everything, to stand". We are equipped so that we can stand, and after that, our active responsibility, our act of faith, is "to stand". What does this mean? It means that all the equipment that God has given us will protect us from spiritual attack, but will we actually trust it? As I mentioned before, we are not strong because of our own credentials and righteousness, we are strong because of who God has made us and what he has given us. These are hinted at in the pieces of armour: salvation, truth, faith, the Good News, righteousness, the Spirit. Equipped with these things, and trusting God to protect us means we will be kept safe from lies and discouragement.

What does standing firm look like practically? Perhaps we're fighting off thoughts like "I'm too unrighteous and God could never forgive me." As Christians, the objective truth is that we are clothed with God's righteousness because of what Jesus has done for us. As Ephesians says, we have the breastplate of righteousness. However, we are still faced with a choice. Will we give into our discouraging feelings and believe the lies? Or will we believe that we have been made righteous by God and stand firm? Let's believe what God is saying about us. Now let's look at the second point. The odd-one-out in the armour of God is an offensive weapon: the sword of the Spirit. It tells us what to do with it in Ephesians 6:17-18 "17 Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the

word of God. ¹⁸ Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints." Verse 18 is often marked out as the beginning of a new section, but I think the 'sword of the spirit' and 'praying in the spirit' are closely connected and form part of our offensive strategy against lies and discouragement we encounter.

We are told to stand firm, but it's hard to stand for very long if you're not defending yourself and cutting down the lies and discouragement coming at you. The sword of the spirit is explicitly described as the 'word of God'. What God says about us in the Bible is definitive, and nothing else gets behind it. If he says you are loved, you are loved, end of story. If he says you need repent and turn in a new direction, you need to do it. The more you know about what God says, the sharper your sword in cutting down lies from the Devil and any falsehood at all.

Equally, verse 18 also connects to prayer. We can probably take 'pray in the spirit' to mean 'in line with the spirit's desires' (which are identical to God the Father's desires, outlined in the Bible). This means our offensive strategy is to pray with God's words in mind against the lies and falsehoods we encounter. That will help us to stand firm. Let's build on our earlier case study.

So, if you're a Christian and you hear: "I'm too unrighteous and God could never forgive me", you stand firm because you know that's not true, but you also actively encounter it with the truth, for example 1 John 1:9 which says: "⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." There is one final dimension to mention at the end of verse 18 " ... To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints." We're not like Viking berserkers on the battlefield standing alone in our own little world wildly swinging at every enemy that comes nearby. Instead, we need to recognise that we're in the battle alongside Christians who share our battle and need our help. Let's also pray for each other and help each other along because we're not meant to fight alone.



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