

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

Systematic Theology Series

ANGELOLOGY

The Doctrine of Angels, Demons, and the Spiritual Realm

UNIT 6: SPIRITUAL WARFARE — A SOBER, BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

Lesson 16

The Armor of God — Ephesians 6:10–18

The Believer's Equipment for Standing Firm

Key Texts: Ephesians 6:10–20; 2 Corinthians 10:3–5; Matthew 4:1–11; Romans 13:12–14; 1 Thessalonians 5:8

“Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.”

Ephesians 6:13, NASB 1995

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Introduction

Lesson 15 established the reality and the character of spiritual warfare: that every believer is genuinely, concretely, necessarily engaged in a conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil; that this conflict requires specific, apostolically prescribed resources; and that the appropriate posture for that conflict is neither complacent naturalism nor obsessive dualism but the sober, alert, faith-grounded resistance of those who know that their Lord has already won the decisive battle. This lesson turns to the specific resources Paul has provided for that conflict: the full armor of God in Ephesians 6:10–18.

The armor of God passage is one of the most preached and most misunderstood texts in the entire Pauline corpus. It is preached constantly in the tradition of spiritual warfare teaching, and frequently in ways that miss its deepest theological significance. The armor is not a collection of spiritual techniques that the believer employs against demonic beings; it is a description of the character and resources of the Christian life itself, understood as the life of a person who is in Christ, equipped by God, and standing in the victory that Christ has accomplished. Each piece of armor is not a new thing the believer must acquire by some special spiritual exercise; it is an aspect of the gospel itself, an element of what it means to be in Christ, which the believer is called to put on deliberately, consciously, and consistently as the natural clothing of the justified and sanctified life.

The governing metaphor of the passage, the Roman soldier's armor, was one that Paul's original audience could visualize with perfect clarity. The Roman legionary was the most recognizable and most formidable military presence in the Mediterranean world: heavily armed, precisely equipped, and trained to stand in close formation against the most ferocious assaults. Paul's use of the Roman military as his governing image is not accidental or merely illustrative; it communicates something specific about the character of the spiritual conflict and the nature of the provision the Christian soldier receives. The armor is complete, not partial. The armor is provided by God, not manufactured by the believer. And the primary purpose of the armor, as the passage makes repeatedly clear, is not aggressive assault but firm, resolute standing: "that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm" (Ephesians 6:13, NASB 1995).

This lesson works through each piece of the armor in detail, identifying its theological content, its specific relevance to the forms of demonic opposition the series has described, and its practical expression in the daily life of the believer. The conclusion of the lesson, the pastoral application of Section IX, draws together the implications of the entire armor passage for the theology of the ordinary Christian life: that spiritual warfare, in its biblical presentation, is not exotic or spectacular but is the daily, disciplined, Word-saturated, prayer-soaked life of the faithful Christian who has put on Christ and stands firm in Him.

I. Be Strong in the Lord: The Foundation of the Entire Armor

The Power for Warfare Is Not Ours but God's, Everything Flows from This

Ephesians 6:10 provides the theological foundation for everything that follows in the armor passage: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might” (NASB 1995). The command is not to be strong in oneself, not to cultivate spiritual strength as a personal attribute, not to develop the inner resources of the believer’s own character or will or determination as the basis of the conflict. It is to be strong “in the Lord”, a location rather than a method, a standing rather than an achievement. The strength that Paul commands is not generated by the believer; it is received by the believer from the God who provides it. The phrase “in the strength of His might” (Greek: *en to kratēi tēs ischūs autou*) uses two different Greek words for power, *kratos* (the active exercise of strength) and *ischūs* (the inherent capacity for strength), to communicate the comprehensive, active, personal provision of divine power that the believer is called to receive and inhabit.

The theology of Ephesians 6:10 is the theology of the entire letter to the Ephesians in miniature. The same God whose incomparable greatness of power raised Christ from the dead and seated Him far above every rule and authority (Ephesians 1:19–21) is the God whose power is available to every believer who is “in the Lord.” The connection between Ephesians 1:19–21 and Ephesians 6:10 is explicit and intentional: the power that established the comprehensive Christological supremacy over every demonic power is the same power that the believer is commanded to be strong in. The foundation of the armor is not the believer’s spiritual achievement; it is the believer’s location in the One whose cross and resurrection accomplished the comprehensive defeat that the armor exists to maintain and apply.

II. The Belt of Truth: The Foundation of Every Other Piece

The Foundational Commitment to Truth as the First Defense Against the Father of Lies

The first piece of the armor is the belt of truth: “stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth” (Ephesians 6:14a, NASB 1995). In the Roman legionary’s equipment, the belt was not a minor accessory; it was the foundational piece on which every other element of the armor depended. The belt gathered the tunic and held the breastplate in place; the sword was hung from the belt; the soldier who lost his belt was an encumbered, ineffective fighter. Paul’s placement of truth as the belt, the first and foundational piece, is theologically precise: truth is the foundational reality on which every other dimension of the Christian’s spiritual equipment depends. A life built on falsehood, self-deception, or the systematic avoidance of truth cannot be sustained in the spiritual conflict, because the adversary’s primary weapon is the lie.

The truth that serves as the belt of the armor has both an objective and a subjective dimension. Objectively, it is the truth of the gospel, the truth about God, about humanity’s condition before God, about what Christ has accomplished, and about the believer’s standing in Him. This is the truth that the father of lies specifically seeks to undermine: the truth that God is good and His commands are for the

believer's flourishing (cf. Genesis 3:5), the truth that the believer is justified and accepted in Christ and not condemned (Romans 8:1), the truth that the demonic realm is defeated and the outcome of the conflict is certain. The adversary's most fundamental and most pervasive strategy is the lie, and the first defense against the lie is the saturation in truth, the deep, settled, comprehensive knowledge of what is actually true about God, the world, the believer's standing, and the spiritual conflict, that makes the lie recognizable as a lie when it arrives in its most credible disguise.

Subjectively, the belt of truth includes the believer's personal integrity and truthfulness, the commitment to honest self-assessment, honest speech, honest dealing with God and with others that closes the specific doors through which the adversary most readily gains leverage. The person who is living a double life, who is deceiving others about the reality of his spiritual condition, who is engaging in self-deception about the patterns of sin in his own life, has weakened the belt that holds the rest of the armor in place. The spiritual conflict requires not merely intellectual assent to true propositions but the lived integrity of a person who is walking in the truth, whose interior life is consistent with his external profession, whose relationships are characterized by the transparency that makes genuine accountability possible, and whose self-knowledge is honest enough to recognize where the adversary's specific approaches are most likely to find their opening.

III. The Breastplate of Righteousness: Protecting the Heart from Condemnation

The Double Righteousness That Shields the Believer's Vital Center from Every Attack

The second piece of the armor is the breastplate of righteousness: "having put on the breastplate of righteousness" (Ephesians 6:14b, NASB 1995). The Roman legionary's breastplate covered the vital center of the body, the heart, lungs, and major organs whose injury would be fatal. Paul's choice of the breastplate as the image for righteousness is theologically precise: the adversary's most targeted attack on the believer's vital center is the attack of condemnation, the accusation that the believer's sins, failures, and inadequacies disqualify him from standing before God. The breastplate of righteousness is the specific provision that protects the believer's vital center against this attack.

The righteousness that serves as the breastplate has two complementary dimensions that Reformed theology has consistently distinguished without separating. The first is the imputed righteousness of Christ, the alien righteousness that is credited to the believer through faith in Christ, by which the believer is declared righteous before God not on the basis of his own moral achievement but on the basis of Christ's perfect obedience credited to his account. This is the righteousness that renders the adversary's accusation ineffective at its deepest level: the accuser who cries "guilty" finds his accusation answered not by the denial of the sin but by the blood of Christ and the imputed righteousness that covers it. "Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies. Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died" (Romans 8:33–34, NASB 1995). The imputed righteousness of Christ is the breastplate that makes the condemning accusation of the adversary ultimately powerless.

The second dimension is the practical righteousness of the holy life, the ongoing sanctification that closes off the specific footholds through which the adversary gains leverage in the believer's life. Paul in Ephesians 4:27 warns against giving "the devil an opportunity" (Greek: *mē didote topon tō diabolon*, do not give a place to the devil): the specific sins, compromises, and moral inconsistencies of the believer's life create the specific openings that the adversary exploits. The pursuit of practical righteousness is not merely the path to spiritual maturity; it is a dimension of the spiritual conflict itself, closing the specific doors through which the adversary most readily enters. The believer who is actively pursuing holiness in the specific areas of his greatest vulnerability is the believer who is most effectively wearing the breastplate of righteousness in its practical dimension.

"Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies. Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died." **Romans 8:33–34, NASB 1995**

IV. The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace: Standing Firm and Moving Forward

The Gospel as the Ground on Which the Believer Stands and the Message He Carries

The third piece of the armor is the shoes: "having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Ephesians 6:15, NASB 1995). The Roman soldier's *caligae* (sandals) were heavy-soled, studded footwear that gripped the ground and enabled the legionary to stand firm in close formation against the most intense assault. Paul's choice of shoes as the image for "the gospel of peace" is multi-layered in its theological significance. The primary meaning is stability: the gospel of peace, the peace with God that the cross accomplished (Romans 5:1–2) and the peace of God that surpasses all comprehension (Philippians 4:7), is the ground on which the believer stands firm when everything around him is designed to produce anxiety, fear, and spiritual disorientation. The peace that Christ gives (John 14:27) is precisely the peace that the adversary most specifically seeks to disturb, and the shoes of the gospel of peace are the specific provision that enables the believer to stand unmoved when the adversary's attacks are designed to produce the restlessness that makes effective resistance impossible.

The phrase "preparation of the gospel of peace" (Greek: *hetoimasia tou euangeliou tēs eirēnēs*) also carries a secondary meaning of readiness to advance: the shoes that keep the soldier stable on the defensive also enable him to move forward on the offensive. In this sense, the shoes of the gospel of peace are the readiness to proclaim the gospel that advances the kingdom's plundering of the strong man's goods. The believer who is standing firm in the peace of the gospel is also the believer who is ready to carry that gospel into the world, whose stability in the peace of God is not a static posture of withdrawal but a dynamic posture of advance, taking the gospel that has established his own peace into the lives of those who do not yet know it. The shoes enable both standing and moving, both defense and offense, both the firm resistance of the adversary's assault and the forward advance of the gospel proclamation that is the primary instrument of the strong man's continuing plundering.

V. The Shield of Faith: Extinguishing Every Flaming Arrow

The Active Trust in God's Promises That Meets and Quenches Every Specific Attack

The fourth piece of armor is the shield of faith: “in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one” (Ephesians 6:16, NASB 1995). Paul’s description of the shield here is the *thureos*, the large Roman oblong shield, approximately four feet tall and two and a half feet wide, designed to protect the soldier from head to toe against a barrage of projectiles. The *thureos* was not the small round buckler used in hand-to-hand combat; it was the large defensive shield designed to protect against the specific ancient weapon that Paul has in mind: the flaming arrow (Greek: *bele ta pepyromena*, the fiery projectiles) that was dipped in pitch and set alight before being fired to create fires that the soldier’s armor alone could not extinguish.

The “flaming arrows of the evil one” are the specific suggestions, doubts, fears, temptations, and accusations that the adversary fires against the believer’s inner life with the aim of producing the specific forms of spiritual damage, the doubt that undermines confidence in God’s word, the fear that paralyzes the will, the accusation that produces despair, the temptation that catches the mind before the will has had time to refuse. The flaming arrows are distinguished from the general background of the adversary’s opposition by their suddenness, their specificity, and their incendiary character: a single flaming thought, lodged in the imagination, can set a fire that the ordinary resources of human willpower cannot extinguish. The shield of faith is the specific provision against this specific form of attack: the active, deliberate, conscious trust in the specific promises of God that meets the flaming arrow in flight and extinguishes it before it can lodge.

Faith in this context is not passive theological assent; it is the active, real-time exercise of trust in specific divine promises against specific satanic suggestions. The flaming arrow of accusation (“You are not really forgiven”) is met by the shield of faith in the specific promise: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9, NASB 1995). The flaming arrow of fear (“This circumstance will destroy you”) is met by the shield of faith in the specific promise: “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5, NASB 1995). The flaming arrow of despair (“You have failed too many times; God has given up on you”) is met by the shield of faith in the specific promise: “He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6, NASB 1995). Each specific flaming arrow requires the specific shield of faith in the specific promise of the God who cannot lie.

VI. The Helmet of Salvation: Protecting the Mind from Despair

The Confident Assurance of Salvation That Guards the Believer’s Thinking

The fifth piece of armor is the helmet of salvation: “and take the helmet of salvation” (Ephesians 6:17a, NASB 1995). The Roman soldier’s helmet (Greek: *perikephalaion*) protected the head, the seat of rational thought and decision-making, from the crushing blows that would disable or destroy the soldier’s capacity

for purposeful action. Paul's choice of the helmet as the image for salvation is theologically precise: the adversary's most debilitating attacks against the believer are often attacks against the mind, attacks designed to produce the confusion, discouragement, hopelessness, and doubt about one's standing before God that disable the believer's capacity for purposeful engagement with the spiritual conflict.

The salvation that serves as the helmet has a specifically eschatological dimension in the parallel armor text of 1 Thessalonians 5:8, where Paul describes the helmet as "the hope of salvation" (Greek: *perikephalaian elpida sōtērias*). The helmet protects not merely the present consciousness of forgiveness but the confident hope of the salvation that is to be consummated at the return of Christ, the specific dimension of the believer's hope that the adversary most persistently attacks through the suggestion that the ultimate outcome is uncertain, that the promises of God may not be fully reliable, that the final judgment may not go as the gospel declares. The helmet of salvation is the settled eschatological confidence of the believer who knows where the story ends, who knows that the God who began a good work will perfect it, that nothing can separate from the love of God in Christ, and that the consummation that the series has been building toward is as certain as the cross that accomplished it.

The pastoral significance of the helmet of salvation is perhaps more directly urgent than any other piece of armor in the present pastoral context. The most common and the most debilitating form of demonic attack that the pastoral ministry encounters is the attack on the believer's assurance of salvation: the persistent suggestion that the believer is not truly saved, that his sins are too severe or too repetitive for genuine forgiveness, that his faith is not genuine enough to secure the promises, that he is an exception to the grace of God. This attack is not a merely theological error to be corrected by a doctrinal lecture; it is a flaming arrow that the adversary fires at the most vulnerable point in the spiritual life, and its effects can be devastating. The helmet of salvation, the settled, grace-grounded, eschatologically confident assurance of the believer's standing in Christ, is the specific apostolic provision for this specific form of attack.

"But let us who are of the day be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation." 1 Thessalonians 5:8, NASB 1995

VII. The Sword of the Spirit: The Only Offensive Weapon

The Word of God as the Weapon Jesus Wielded and the Church Is Given

The sixth piece of armor is the sword of the Spirit: "and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17b, NASB 1995). The sword is the only explicitly offensive weapon in the entire armor, every other piece is primarily defensive, designed to protect the believer against specific forms of attack. The sword is designed to cut, to wound, to overcome, to advance against the adversary. And the sword the Spirit provides is the Word of God, not a vague reference to spiritual inspiration or inner promptings but the specific, particular, written Word of God that the Spirit has inspired and sealed as the authoritative communication of the divine mind to the human mind.

The paradigm for the use of the sword of the Spirit in spiritual conflict is the temptation narrative in Matthew 4:1–11. The adversary came with three specific temptations, each tailored to a specific vulnerability of Jesus' humanity in the specific conditions of the temptation: hunger after forty days of fasting, the weight of the messianic mission and its cost, the desire for the kingdom without the cross. Jesus' response to each was not an emotional declaration, not a dramatic rebuke, not a lengthy argument, it was the specific, precisely applied Word of God: "It is written... It is written... It is written" (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10, NASB 1995). Three times the adversary pressed; three times the Word of God ended the engagement. The sword was sufficient; the wielder needed only to know the Word well enough to apply the specific passage to the specific temptation.

The implication for the believer's preparation for the spiritual conflict is unmistakable and demanding. The sword is only effective in the hands of one who knows it, who has spent the time and the discipline necessary to know the Word of God with sufficient depth that the relevant portion can be applied with the precision that the specific situation requires. The believer who comes to the spiritual conflict with a vague and general knowledge of what the Bible is about will be unable to say "It is written" with the specificity that the adversary's specific attacks require. The believer who has read, studied, memorized, and meditated on the Scripture, who has allowed its specific passages to become the default language of his interior life, wields the sword with the competence that the conflict demands. This is the most direct and most compelling argument for the kind of deep, sustained, comprehensive biblical formation that the entire series has been modeling: it is not merely a matter of theological knowledge but of spiritual self-defense and spiritual offense.

VIII. Prayer: The Atmosphere of the Entire Conflict

Not the Seventh Piece of Armor but the Context Within Which All Six Are Worn

After the six pieces of armor, Paul turns to prayer in Ephesians 6:18–20: "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (NASB 1995). The shift from the armor imagery to prayer is theologically instructive: prayer is not listed as the seventh piece of armor, which would place it in the same category as the belt, breastplate, and sword. It is presented as the context, the atmosphere, the pervasive activity within which the entire armor is worn and the entire battle is fought.

The four "alls" of verse 18, "all prayer and petition," "at all times," "all perseverance," "all the saints", communicate the comprehensiveness of the prayer life Paul is describing. It is not specialized prayer for spiritual warfare occasions; it is the continuous, diverse, persistent, community-encompassing prayer life of the whole church. The "at all times" is not a counsel of perpetual formal prayer; it is the New Testament's description of the prayerful orientation of the whole of life, the continuous awareness of dependence on God, the habitual turning to God in every circumstance, that Paul describes elsewhere as "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17, NASB 1995). This is the prayer that must surround and

pervade the entire armor of God for it to function in the spiritual conflict: not the mechanical application of spiritual techniques but the continuous, Spirit-directed, communal intercession of those who know they are dependent on the God who holds the leash and whose sovereign purposes govern the entire conflict.

The specific prayer request with which Paul closes the armor passage is as revealing as it is unexpected: “pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel” (Ephesians 6:19, NASB 1995). The apostle, who has just described the comprehensive spiritual warfare in which every believer is engaged, closes by asking for prayer for gospel proclamation. The juxtaposition is theologically instructive: the ultimate purpose of the armor is not self-protection but gospel advance. The believer who is standing firm in the truth, protected by the righteousness of Christ, grounded in the peace of the gospel, shielded by faith, assured of salvation, wielding the Word, and saturated in prayer is the believer most effectively equipped to advance the gospel, which is itself the primary instrument through which the strong man’s goods are being plundered and the kingdom of God is advancing in the world.

“With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.”

Ephesians 6:18, NASB 1995

IX. The Pastoral Application: The Ordinary Life as Battlefield

Spiritual Warfare Is Not Exotic, It Is the Daily Faithful Life of the Christian Soldier

The pastoral conclusion of the armor passage, and of the entire spiritual warfare theology of this lesson, is one of the most practically significant insights of the entire series: spiritual warfare is not exotic or spectacular. It is the daily, disciplined, Word-saturated, prayer-soaked life of the faithful Christian who has put on Christ and stands firm in Him. The believer who reads the Scripture every morning, prays throughout the day, confesses sin and receives forgiveness with regularity, worships in the community of the church with genuine engagement, and pursues the holiness of a life that gives the adversary no foothold, this believer is engaged in the most effective spiritual warfare available to him, not because these activities are techniques of spiritual combat but because they are the natural expression of a life lived in the full armor of God.

The demythologization of spiritual warfare that the armor passage provides is itself a pastoral gift of the highest order. The congregation that has been taught that genuine spiritual warfare requires specialized knowledge, extraordinary experiences, or elaborated methodologies beyond the apostolic provision has been misled about where the real power lies and has been burdened with expectations and anxieties that the gospel does not require. The congregation that has been taught that the daily, faithful wearing of the armor, the truth, the righteousness, the peace, the faith, the salvation, the Word, and the prayer, is the

most complete and most effective engagement with the spiritual conflict available to any believer in any situation is the congregation that has been equipped with the specific resources the God of the armor has provided and promised to bless.

The armor of God is not the equipment of a spiritual special forces unit; it is the daily clothing of every Christian soldier. The belt of truth is fastened every time the believer chooses honesty over self-deception. The breastplate of righteousness is worn every time the believer rests in the imputed righteousness of Christ rather than the condemnation of his own moral failure. The shoes of peace are laced every time the believer stands firm in the gospel's declaration of peace with God rather than the anxiety of circumstances. The shield of faith is raised every time the believer meets a specific demonic suggestion with a specific divine promise. The helmet of salvation is buckled every time the believer affirms the settled assurance of his standing in Christ against the adversary's suggestion of condemnation. The sword is unsheathed every time the believer opens the Word and allows its specific truth to meet the specific lie, temptation, or deception he is facing. And prayer is the breath of the entire engagement, the continuous, Spirit-directed, community-sustained awareness of dependence on the God who provides the armor, holds the leash, and has already determined the outcome of the conflict. That is the spiritual warfare of the faithful Christian life. That is enough. That is everything.

Theological Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
Belt of Truth (Aletheia)	Greek: truth. The first piece of the armor of God (Ephesians 6:14a), identified as the foundational piece on which every other element of the armor depends. Like the Roman soldier's belt that gathered the tunic, held the breastplate in place, and carried the sword, truth is the foundational reality on which every other dimension of the spiritual life depends. The belt of truth has an objective dimension (the truth of the gospel, the truth about God, the believer's standing in Christ, and the certain outcome of the conflict) and a subjective dimension (the believer's personal integrity, honest self-assessment, and commitment to truthful living that closes off the specific footholds the adversary exploits through self-deception and dishonesty).
Breastplate of Righteousness (Dikaïosynē)	Greek: righteousness, justice. The second piece of the armor of God (Ephesians 6:14b). The breastplate covers the vital center of the body (heart, lungs, major organs) against fatal injury. The righteousness that serves as the breastplate has two complementary dimensions: (1) the imputed righteousness of Christ, the alien righteousness credited to the believer through faith, which renders the adversary's accusation and condemnation ineffective (Romans 8:33–34); and (2) the practical righteousness of the holy life, the ongoing sanctification that closes off the specific footholds (Ephesians 4:27) through which the adversary gains leverage in the believer's daily experience.
Shoes of the Gospel of Peace (Hetoimasia Euangeliou)	Greek: preparation (readiness) of the gospel of peace. The third piece of the armor of God (Ephesians 6:15). The Roman soldier's studded sandals (caligae) gripped the ground and enabled him to stand firm against the most intense assault. The gospel of peace, the peace with God accomplished by the cross (Romans 5:1–2) and the peace of God that surpasses all comprehension (Philippians 4:7), is the ground on which the believer stands firm when the adversary's attacks are designed to produce anxiety and spiritual disorientation. The secondary meaning of readiness to advance communicates the gospel-proclaiming dimension of the shoes: stability in the peace of God is also the posture from which the believer moves forward to carry that gospel to others.
Shield of Faith (Thureos Pisteōs)	Greek: the large oblong shield (thureos) of faith (pistis). The fourth piece of the armor of God (Ephesians 6:16). The thureos was the large Roman shield (approximately four feet tall) designed to protect the soldier from head to toe against the flaming arrows (bele ta pepyromena) of the enemy. The shield of faith is the active, real-time exercise of trust in specific divine promises against specific satanic suggestions, doubts, fears, and accusations. Each specific flaming arrow requires the specific shield of faith in the specific promise of the

Term	Definition
	God who cannot lie: the accusation of condemnation is met by Romans 8:1, the fear of abandonment by Hebrews 13:5, the despair of persistent failure by Philippians 1:6.
Helmet of Salvation (Perikephalaian Sōtērias)	Greek: the helmet (perikephalaion) of salvation (sōtēria). The fifth piece of the armor of God (Ephesians 6:17a). The Roman helmet protected the head, the seat of rational thought and decision, from crushing blows. The adversary's most debilitating attacks are often attacks against the believer's mind through confusion, hopelessness, and doubt about salvation. The helmet of salvation is the settled assurance of the believer's standing in Christ, reinforced in 1 Thessalonians 5:8 as "the hope of salvation", with an eschatological dimension that includes the confident hope of the salvation to be consummated at Christ's return.
Sword of the Spirit (Machairan Pneumatos)	Greek: the sword (machaira) of the Spirit. The sixth piece of the armor of God (Ephesians 6:17b), and the only explicitly offensive weapon in the entire armor. The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God (Greek: rhema theou, the spoken, applied word of God), specifically the particular, written Word of God that the Spirit has inspired. The paradigm for its use is Matthew 4:1–11, where Jesus responds to three specific demonic temptations with three specific applications of the written Word: "It is written... It is written... It is written." The sword is only effective in the hands of one who knows it, whose deep, sustained, comprehensive knowledge of the Scripture enables the specific application of the specific Word to the specific attack.
Prayer (Proseuchē kai Deēsis)	Greek: prayer and petition. The atmosphere of the entire armor of God (Ephesians 6:18–20), not the seventh piece of armor but the context within which all six are worn and all the battle is fought. The four "alls" of Ephesians 6:18 ("all prayer and petition," "at all times," "all perseverance," "all the saints") communicate the comprehensive, continuous, community-encompassing character of the prayer life that surrounds the spiritual conflict. Prayer is not a technique for spiritual warfare but the continuous expression of the community of faith's dependence on the God who provides the armor, governs the adversary, and has already determined the outcome of the conflict.
Imputed Righteousness	The righteousness of Christ that is credited (imputed) to the believer through faith alone, apart from the believer's own moral achievement. The foundational doctrine of justification in the Reformed tradition (Romans 3:21–26; 4:1–8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9). In the theology of the armor of God, imputed righteousness is the dimension of the breastplate of righteousness that protects the believer's vital center against the adversary's attacks of accusation and condemnation. The believer who rests in the imputed righteousness of Christ

Term	Definition
	cannot be ultimately condemned, because the One in whom he stands has already borne the condemnation his sins deserved. The accuser's charge is answered not by the denial of the sin but by the blood of the Lamb.
Flaming Arrows (Bele Ta Pepyromena)	Greek: the fiery arrows or burning projectiles (Ephesians 6:16). The ancient military tactic of dipping arrows in pitch or other flammable material, setting them alight, and firing them into enemy formations to create fires that conventional armor could not extinguish. Paul uses this image for the specific suggestions, doubts, fears, temptations, and accusations that the adversary fires against the believer's inner life: sudden thoughts of doubt, unexpected fears, accusatory suggestions about the believer's standing before God, or specific temptations calibrated to the believer's particular vulnerabilities. The flaming arrows are distinguished by their suddenness, their specificity, and their incendiary character, a single flaming thought can set a fire that ordinary willpower cannot extinguish.
Rhema Theou	Greek: the word of God, the spoken or applied word of God. The specific term used in Ephesians 6:17 for the Word of God that constitutes the sword of the Spirit, distinguished from the broader logos (word in general) by its sense of the spoken, specific, applied utterance. In the context of the armor passage, rhema theou points to the specific application of the Scripture to the specific situation of the conflict: not a vague appeal to the general authority of the Bible but the precise deployment of the particular passage that addresses the particular form of the adversary's attack. The rhema is effective in the conflict because it is the Spirit's own word, wielded by the Spirit's own sword through the Spirit-equipped believer who knows it and applies it.

Practical Application

A. *For the Mind: What Must We Believe?*

We must believe that the armor of God is not a collection of specialized spiritual warfare techniques available to the advanced believer but the natural, daily clothing of every Christian soldier, the description of what the ordinary faithful Christian life looks like when it is understood in the context of the spiritual conflict in which it is set. Each piece of armor is not something the believer must manufacture or acquire through extraordinary spiritual effort; it is an aspect of the gospel itself, an element of what it means to be in Christ, that the believer is called to put on with the deliberate, conscious intentionality of a soldier who knows he is going into battle.

We must also believe that the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, is the only offensive weapon in the armor, and that this designation is not accidental but theologically precise. The primary instrument for advancing the kingdom, demolishing the strongholds of the adversary, and plundering the strong man's goods is not a specialized spiritual warfare technique but the specific, particular, precisely applied Word of God that the Spirit has inspired and sealed. The believer who is deeply saturated in the Scripture is the believer most effectively armed for the spiritual conflict; the believer who is Scripturally shallow will find the sword unavailable when the specific attack comes and the specific response is needed.

B. *For the Heart: What Must We Feel and Desire?*

Let the breastplate of righteousness produce the specific form of spiritual freedom that the imputed righteousness of Christ makes possible. The adversary's most persistent and most debilitating attack is the accusation of condemnation; the breastplate of righteousness is the specific apostolic provision against it. The believer who rests in the righteousness of Christ, who knows that his standing before God is not based on his own moral performance but on the alien righteousness that covers every failure, is the believer who can hear the adversary's accusation and answer it with Romans 8:33–34 rather than with defensive self-justification or despairing self-condemnation. The freedom that the imputed righteousness produces is not the freedom of moral complacency but the freedom of those who are liberated from the anxious, exhausting project of earning a standing they already have in Christ.

Desire the kind of Word-saturated life that makes the sword of the Spirit genuinely available in the moment of specific attack. The way to prepare for the specific flaming arrow of a specific temptation or accusation or doubt is not to wait for the attack and then scramble for the relevant passage; it is to have invested the time and discipline in advance so that the relevant passage is already part of the furniture of the mind, already available in the moment of need. Desire the deep engagement with Scripture that produces that kind of readiness, not as a spiritual discipline for its own sake but as the specific preparation for the conflict that is already underway.

C. *For the Hands: What Must We Do?*

- **Work through each piece of the armor in personal application.** For each piece, identify: (1) the specific form of adversarial attack it is designed to resist; (2) the specific dimension of the Christian life it represents; (3) the specific way in which you are most consistently wearing or failing to wear that piece of armor in your own spiritual life. The belt of truth: where are you most prone to self-deception or dishonesty? The breastplate of righteousness: where do you most struggle to rest in imputed righteousness vs. producing condemned anxiety? The shoes: where do you find the peace of the gospel most unstable? The shield: which specific flaming arrows are most consistently effective against you, and which specific promises most effectively extinguish them? The helmet: how settled is your assurance of salvation? And the sword: how deep is your knowledge of the Scripture?
- **Read Matthew 4:1–11 as the paradigm case of the sword of the Spirit in action.** For each of the three temptations, identify: (1) the specific form of the adversary's attack; (2) the specific vulnerability it targeted (hunger, messianic ambition, the cost of obedience); and (3) the specific Deuteronomy passage Jesus applied and how it addressed the specific attack. Then identify the three or four specific forms of temptation or accusation that you personally face most consistently, and identify the specific scriptural promises that most directly and specifically address each one. The goal is not to produce a list of Bible verses but to practice the specific engagement of the sword: "It is written..." applied with precision to the specific attack.
- **Develop a structured intercessory prayer practice based on Ephesians 6:18–20's "all the saints."** The armor is worn in community: "all prayer... for all the saints." Identify the specific members of your congregation who are currently under the most intense forms of the specific attacks this lesson has described: the flaming arrow of accusation (pray specifically for the shield of faith in specific promises), the attack on assurance (pray specifically for the helmet of salvation), the temptation that is most persistently effective (pray for the sword of the Spirit in the specific passage). The intercessory use of the armor metaphor, praying specifically that a specific person would have the specific piece of armor most needed in their specific situation, is both theologically precise and pastorally rich.
- **Preach or teach Ephesians 6:10–20 as a sustained exposition, working through each piece of the armor in the theological and practical detail this lesson has modeled.** The armor passage is among the most preached texts in the New Testament and among the most superficially treated: a brief identification of each piece followed by a general application, without the theological depth that gives each piece its specific protective function. The congregation that receives the armor passage in its full theological depth, understanding the specific adversarial attack each piece resists, the specific dimension of the gospel each piece represents, and the specific practical expression each piece requires in the daily Christian life, is the congregation most effectively equipped with the provision that the God of the armor has made available.
- **Develop the discipline of beginning each day by deliberately putting on the armor.** This is not a superstitious ritual; it is the deliberate cultivation of the theological consciousness that the armor passage is designed to produce: the awareness that the new day is a day in a spiritual conflict, that the resources provided by God are comprehensive and sufficient, and that the believer's standing in Christ is the ground from which everything else flows. A brief, specific,

scripturally grounded morning prayer, affirming the truth of the gospel, resting in the righteousness of Christ, receiving the peace of the gospel, trusting the specific promises of God, affirming the assurance of salvation, committing to the Word, and committing the day to Spirit-directed prayer, is the daily act of putting on the whole armor that the passage commands.

Study and Discussion Questions

Opening Question

- Before engaging the discussion questions, identify which piece of the armor of God you feel you are most consistently wearing in your current spiritual life, and which piece you feel you are most consistently failing to put on. What does the identification of the weakest piece reveal about the specific form of the adversary's most effective attack in your life right now? And what specific provision from the armor addresses that specific vulnerability?

Observation Questions (What Do the Texts Say?)

- Read Ephesians 6:10–20 carefully as a complete unit. What is the theological foundation of the entire armor passage (v. 10)? What is the stated purpose of the armor (v. 11)? What is the nature of the opposition that necessitates the armor (v. 12)? How many times does Paul use the word “stand” or “stand firm” in verses 11–14, and what does this repetition suggest about the primary purpose of the armor? How is prayer related to the armor in verses 18–20, and what is the specific content of Paul's prayer request for himself?
- Read Matthew 4:1–11 carefully. Identify the specific form of each of the three temptations and the specific vulnerability each targeted. What was Jesus' response to each, and what specific passage from Deuteronomy did He apply? What is the significance of the fact that Jesus answered each temptation with a written scriptural text rather than a directly spoken divine command or a miraculous demonstration of power? And what does this pattern reveal about the nature of the sword of the Spirit and its appropriate use in spiritual conflict?
- Read Romans 8:31–34 alongside Ephesians 6:14b (the breastplate of righteousness). How does Paul's rhetorical question “Who will bring a charge against God's elect?” (v. 33) and “Who is the one who condemns?” (v. 34) function as the theological explanation of what the breastplate of righteousness protects against? What specific answer does Paul provide to the adversary's accusation, and how does that answer relate to both the imputed righteousness of Christ (justification) and the continuing intercession of Christ (Romans 8:34)?
- Read 1 Thessalonians 5:6–8. How does Paul's description of the armor in this passage differ from Ephesians 6? What does the addition of “the hope of salvation” as the helmet communicate about the eschatological dimension of the helmet that Ephesians 6:17a alone does not specify? And how does the eschatological framework of 1 Thessalonians 5:1–9 (the day of the Lord) shape the meaning of the armor in that context?
- Read 2 Corinthians 10:3–5 and Ephesians 6:10–18 side by side. What are the similarities in the spiritual warfare vocabulary of the two passages? What are the differences? How does the specific description of the weapons in 2 Corinthians 10:4–5 (“divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses”; demolishing “speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God”; taking “captive every thought to the obedience of Christ”) complement and deepen the armor imagery of Ephesians 6?

Interpretation Questions (What Does It Mean?)

- The lesson argues that the armor of God is not a collection of specialized spiritual warfare techniques but the natural, daily clothing of every Christian soldier, the description of what the ordinary faithful Christian life looks like when understood in the context of the conflict in which it is set. What is the theological basis for this claim? And how does this understanding challenge both the congregation that dismisses the armor passage as relevant only to unusual spiritual crises and the congregation that treats it as the exclusive domain of specialized spiritual warfare practitioners?
- The lesson distinguishes two dimensions of the breastplate of righteousness: imputed righteousness (justification) and practical righteousness (sanctification). How do these two dimensions relate to each other in the protective function of the breastplate? Is there a tension between the two, does the assurance of imputed righteousness undermine the motivation for practical righteousness? Or do they reinforce each other, and if so, how?
- The lesson identifies prayer not as the seventh piece of armor but as the atmosphere within which the entire armor is worn. What is the theological significance of this distinction? How does prayer function differently from the armor pieces if it is not itself a piece of armor? And what are the specific pastoral implications of the four “alls” of Ephesians 6:18 for the corporate prayer life of the congregation?
- The lesson presents the sword of the Spirit as the only explicitly offensive weapon in the armor, and identifies the paradigm for its use as Jesus’ “It is written” responses in Matthew 4. What does this paradigm reveal about the character of the sword’s effective use, specifically, about the depth of scriptural knowledge required and the precision of application needed? And what does it reveal about the adversary’s vulnerability to the specific, precisely applied Word of God?
- The lesson closes its final section (Section IX) with the claim that the daily, faithful wearing of the armor is “enough; that is everything.” Is this claim potentially complacent? Does it leave any room for the more intense, focused, specific engagement with the demonic realm that some New Testament passages seem to describe (e.g., Paul’s extended encounters with demonic beings in Acts 16:16–18)? Or does the ordinary armor of the faithful Christian life encompass even those more intense encounters?

Application Questions (What Does It Demand of Us?)

- The lesson identifies the shield of faith as the active, real-time exercise of trust in specific divine promises against specific satanic suggestions. For each of the following specific flaming arrows, identify the specific shield, the specific divine promise, that most effectively extinguishes it: the accusation that your persistent sin has exhausted God’s patience; the suggestion that your current circumstances prove that God has abandoned you; the temptation to pursue a specific sinful course of action through the suggestion that it will produce a genuinely good outcome; and the doubt that the gospel is actually true in the way you believe it is. Is your knowledge of the Scripture specific enough to provide the specific shield for each specific arrow?

- The helmet of salvation is described as protecting the believer's mind from the adversary's most debilitating attacks against assurance. Have you encountered people in your pastoral ministry whose experience of persistent doubt about their salvation appears to reflect a specific satanic attack rather than a merely intellectual theological uncertainty? How do you distinguish between the two? And what specific pastoral approach, what specific pieces of the armor, would you deploy for someone who appears to be under the specific attack on assurance that the helmet is designed to resist?
- The lesson recommends the daily practice of deliberately putting on the armor as a structured morning act of theological consciousness. Design a specific, brief, scripturally grounded morning prayer that works through each piece of the armor in a way that is theologically substantive without being mechanically repetitive. What specific scriptural affirmation corresponds to each piece? And how does the practice of this prayer change the character of the day that follows?
- The lesson identifies the sword of the Spirit as requiring the deep, sustained, comprehensive biblical knowledge that makes the specific application of the specific Word to the specific attack possible. Evaluate your own current level of scriptural knowledge honestly. Are there specific dimensions of the adversary's attack against you, specific recurring temptations, specific patterns of accusation, specific areas of doctrinal uncertainty, for which you consistently lack the specific scriptural provision because you do not know the relevant passage well enough to apply it? And what specific commitments to Scripture engagement would most effectively address those gaps?
- This lesson is the penultimate lesson of the Angelology series. Lesson 17 will address common errors in spiritual warfare teaching and the eschatological consummation. As you prepare for that final lesson, what single truth from the armor of God passage in this lesson do you most want to carry into your congregation's engagement with the practical and eschatological dimensions that Lesson 17 will address? And how has the full armor passage, received in the theological depth this lesson has provided, changed the way you understand and will practice the ordinary faithful Christian life?

Prayer Focus

Open this lesson's prayer time by actually putting on the armor of God, not as a metaphysical ritual but as the deliberate, specific, scripturally grounded act of Christological consciousness that the passage prescribes. Work through each piece slowly and intentionally, allowing the theological content of each piece to shape the character of the prayer.

Begin with Ephesians 6:10: "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." Before any piece of armor is mentioned, the foundation is declared: the power for this conflict is not yours. Acknowledge that explicitly. Name the specific areas of your life and ministry in which you have most consistently tried to fight in your own strength, and surrender them to the One who said "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Receive the strength that is in the Lord, not in yourself.

Fasten the belt of truth. Affirm, specifically and deliberately, the truths that the adversary most persistently attacks in your life: the truth about God's character and the reliability of His word; the truth about your standing in Christ and the sufficiency of His atonement; the truth about the certain outcome of the conflict and the certainty of the consummation. Name the specific lies, the specific distortions of truth, that you most consistently find the adversary pressing against you. Pray for the specific truth that answers each specific lie, and ask for the personal integrity that prevents the adversary from finding the foothold of self-deception.

Put on the breastplate of righteousness. Rest explicitly in the imputed righteousness of Christ, the righteousness that is yours not because of what you have done but because of what He has done. Bring before God the specific failures, the specific patterns of sin, the specific moral inadequacies that the adversary most consistently uses to produce condemnation and discouragement, and receive the specific answer: "Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies." Let the breastplate cover the vital center. And then pray for the practical righteousness of the holy life that gives the adversary no foothold, for the specific sanctification that is most needed in the specific areas of greatest vulnerability.

Lace the shoes of the gospel of peace. Stand explicitly in the peace that the cross accomplished, the peace with God that is the ground of every other peace. Bring before God the specific anxieties, the specific relational conflicts, the specific circumstances that are most effectively producing the spiritual disorientation that the adversary intends. Receive the peace that surpasses all comprehension, the peace that the world cannot give and cannot take away. And then pray for the readiness to advance, for the specific evangelistic opportunities, the specific gospel conversations, the specific situations where the shoes of the gospel of peace are called to move forward as well as to stand firm.

Raise the shield of faith. Name the specific flaming arrows that are most consistently effective against you and those you pastor. Then name the specific promises that most directly extinguish each one: the accusation of condemnation answered by Romans 8:1; the fear of abandonment answered by Hebrews

13:5; the despair of persistent failure answered by Philippians 1:6; the doubt about God's goodness answered by Romans 8:28. Pray with the expectation that the shield raised in faith is the shield the Spirit provides and the shield that cannot fail. Put on the helmet of salvation. Affirm the assurance of your standing in Christ and pray for its specific renewal in those in your congregation who are under the attack on assurance that the helmet is designed to resist. Take up the sword of the Spirit by closing the prayer with a sustained engagement with a specific passage, not a proof text but a sustained text whose specific content addresses the specific situation of the conflict you are engaged in. And then pray the atmosphere: "with all prayer and petition... at all times in the Spirit... with all perseverance... for all the saints."

"Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore."

Ephesians 6:13–14, NASB 1995

Key Texts: *Ephesians 6:10–20; 1 Thessalonians 5:6–8; 2 Corinthians 10:3–5; Matthew 4:1–11; Romans 8:1, 31–39; 1 John 1:9; Hebrews 13:5; Philippians 1:6; John 14:27; Romans 5:1–2; Ephesians 4:27*

Soli Deo Gloria

To God Alone Be the Glory

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

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