

The Book of Ephesians, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 13: The Whole Armor of God

Ephesians 6:10–24

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Paul closes his letter by calling the church to spiritual warfare, and the teacher should help the class feel both the seriousness and the confidence of this final word. The Christian life is genuinely a battle against real spiritual forces of evil, yet it is fought in the Lord's strength, with armor God Himself provides, and from a victory Christ has already won. The repeated command to stand sets the tone: we are not anxiously fighting to secure an uncertain outcome but holding the ground the risen, reigning Christ (chapter 1) has already taken.

The doctrinal points to handle with care concern the nature of the battle and our weapons. First, the enemy is spiritual, not human. Believers go badly astray when they treat people as the real enemy; the struggle is against unseen powers, and it is fought largely through truth, righteousness, faith, and prayer rather than through human conflict. Second, our weapons are God's provision, not worldly means. The one offensive weapon named is the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and the whole effort is bathed in prayer. The teacher should emphasize the sufficiency of God's revealed word; our authority and weapon in this battle is the completed Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16–17), not new revelations, sensational techniques, or fleshly methods. Third, the teacher should steer between two errors that the passage itself guards against: ignoring spiritual warfare altogether, as though the demonic were unreal, and becoming fixated on it in an unhealthy, sensational way. Paul's remedy is sober, prayerful standing in the armor of God, not preoccupation with the powers of darkness.

Formationally, this lesson calls every believer to take the spiritual battle seriously, to draw strength from the Lord rather than self, to identify the true enemy, to stand firm where they are tempted to retreat, and to take up especially the word of God and prayer. As the final lesson, it also offers a fitting moment to look back over the whole letter and ask how the Lord has been forming each student, sending them out clothed in the grace and armor of God.

Question 1

Student Question:

In verses 10 and 11 Paul says to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might, and to put on the whole armor of God. Whose strength is meant to win this battle, and what does it tell us that the armor is called the armor of God rather than our own?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul opens the section with the foundation for everything that follows: be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might (v. 10). Before he names a single piece of armor, he tells us where the strength comes from. The battle is not won by our willpower or natural ability but by the Lord's might at work in us.

This connects directly to chapter 1, where Paul prayed that believers would know the immeasurable greatness of God's power, the same power that raised Christ from the dead. That resurrection power is the strength in which we now stand and fight. We are strong only in the Lord.

Notice that the armor is the armor of God (v. 11). It is His provision, not our manufacture. Every piece, truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, the word, is something God supplies. We do not forge our own weapons; we put on what He gives.

Help the class feel the relief in this. We are not sent into a cosmic battle armed only with ourselves. The strength is the Lord's, and the armor is the Lord's; our task is to rely on Him and put on what He provides.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Strength for the battle found in the Lord, not in self
- The link to the resurrection power of chapter 1
- The armor as God's provision, not our manufacture
- Dependence on God as the foundation of spiritual warfare

Discussion Prompts

- Whose strength is meant to win this battle?
- What does it tell us that the armor is called the armor of God?
- How does relying on the Lord's strength differ from relying on willpower?

Question 2

Student Question:

Paul calls us to fight in the Lord's strength rather than our own. In what area of your spiritual life are you most often trying to fight in your own strength, and what would it look like to draw on the Lord's strength there instead?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question exposes our default self-reliance. Many believers fight their spiritual battles, against temptation, fear, or discouragement, by gritting their teeth and trying harder, and they wonder why they keep losing. Paul says the strength is in the Lord.

Help students locate where they fight alone: a recurring temptation they try to white-knuckle, an anxiety they try to reason away, a weakness they are ashamed to bring to God. Self-reliance often hides behind a veneer of discipline.

Drawing on the Lord's strength means turning to Him in dependence, through prayer, His word, and reliance on His Spirit, rather than trusting our own resolve. Encourage one specific area to be surrendered to the Lord's strength this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Self-reliance as the default in spiritual battle
- White-knuckling temptation versus depending on God
- Turning to prayer, the word, and the Spirit for strength
- Surrendering a specific area to the Lord

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you most often fighting in your own strength?
- How might self-reliance be disguised as discipline?
- What would drawing on the Lord's strength look like there?

Question 3

Student Question:

In verse 12 Paul says we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against rulers, authorities, and spiritual forces of evil. Who is the real enemy in the Christian's battle, and how does misidentifying the enemy lead us astray?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul makes the crucial identification in verse 12: 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. The real enemy is spiritual, not human.

This is one of the most practically important truths in the passage. When we forget it, we treat people, a difficult spouse, a hostile coworker, an opposing group, as the enemy to be defeated, and we pour our energy into the wrong battle with the wrong weapons.

Paul wants us to see that behind visible conflicts lies an unseen struggle, and that our true adversary is the devil and his powers, who delight to turn people against one another. This does not excuse human sin, but it reframes our response: we fight the spiritual battle through spiritual means, and we treat people as those to be loved and won, not destroyed.

Help the class grasp how this reorders their reactions. The person who frustrates them is not the enemy; they may even be a fellow captive the enemy is using. The real war is spiritual, and it is fought on a different field.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The real enemy as spiritual, not human
- Misidentifying people as the enemy and fighting the wrong battle
- Unseen spiritual conflict behind visible struggles
- Loving and winning people rather than destroying them

Discussion Prompts

- Who is the real enemy in the Christian's battle?
- How does misidentifying the enemy lead us astray?
- How should seeing the true enemy change the way we treat people?

Question 4

Student Question:

It is easy to treat other people as our enemy rather than seeing the spiritual battle behind our conflicts. Where have you been fighting a person when the real struggle was deeper, and how would seeing the true enemy change the way you respond?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question applies the truth of verse 12 to real relationships. Most of us can name a person we have treated as an enemy, in anger, resentment, or the determination to win, when the deeper struggle was spiritual.

Help students reflect on a specific conflict where they fought the person rather than the real battle. Often the enemy's strategy is precisely to get us fighting each other, exhausting ourselves on the wrong front while the true struggle goes unaddressed.

Seeing the true enemy changes our weapons: from retaliation to prayer, from contempt to compassion, from trying to defeat a person to seeking their good and resisting the spiritual forces at work. Encourage one relationship to be reframed and prayed over this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Treating people as the enemy in real conflicts
- The enemy's strategy of turning believers against each other
- Trading retaliation for prayer and compassion
- Reframing a relationship in light of the true battle

Discussion Prompts

- Where have you been fighting a person when the real struggle was deeper?
- How might the enemy use conflict to distract you from the true battle?
- How would seeing the real enemy change your response?

Question 5

Student Question:

In verses 13 through 15 Paul repeatedly tells us to stand and to stand firm, clothed with the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and the gospel of peace. Why do you think Paul emphasizes standing rather than advancing, and what does it mean to stand firm in the evil day?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Four times in this passage Paul commands believers to stand: stand against the schemes of the devil (v. 11), withstand in the evil day (v. 13), having done all, to stand (v. 13), and stand therefore (v. 14). The repeated word is significant. Our posture is not primarily to advance and conquer but to hold our ground.

This is because the decisive victory has already been won. Christ defeated the powers of darkness at the cross and was raised and enthroned above them (chapters 1 and 2; Colossians 2:15). We do not fight to win the war; we stand in the triumph Christ secured. The enemy's aim is to dislodge us from that ground; our task is to refuse to be moved.

Paul names the first pieces of armor for this standing: the belt of truth (integrity and the truth of the gospel that holds everything together), the breastplate of righteousness (the right standing and right living that guard the heart), and the gospel of peace as shoes (a firm footing in the good news, ready to stand and to move).

Help the class feel both the realism and the confidence. The evil day will come, seasons of intense pressure and temptation, but the believer who is clothed in God's armor and standing in Christ's victory can hold firm and, having done all, still be standing when the assault is over.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The repeated command to stand, not merely advance
- Standing in the victory Christ has already won (Colossians 2:15)
- The belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, and gospel shoes
- Confidence and realism in facing the evil day

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Paul emphasize standing rather than advancing?
- What does it mean to stand firm in the evil day?

- How does Christ's finished victory shape the way we fight?

Question 6

Student Question:

Standing firm means refusing to give ground to the enemy where we are tempted to retreat. Where are you most tempted to give ground right now, and what would standing firm look like in that specific area?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question makes standing firm concrete. The enemy probes for the place where we are most likely to give ground, a besetting temptation, a discouragement, a fear, a relationship under strain. Standing firm means refusing to retreat there.

Help students identify their current pressure point, the area where they feel most tempted to compromise, quit, or despair. Naming it brings it into the light and into the realm of deliberate resistance.

Standing firm is not passive; it is active resistance in God's strength, holding to truth, doing what is right, trusting the gospel, and refusing the enemy's lie. Encourage one specific resolve to hold the line this week, clothed in the armor God provides.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The enemy probing for the place we will give ground
- Identifying the current point of pressure
- Active resistance in God's strength
- Refusing the enemy's lie and holding the line

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you most tempted to give ground right now?
- What would standing firm look like in that specific area?
- What truth or promise could you hold to as you stand?

Question 7

Student Question:

In verses 16 and 17 Paul names the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. What do these pieces, especially faith and the word of God, contribute to the believer's defense and to the one offensive weapon in the list?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul names three more pieces: the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; the helmet of salvation; and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (vv. 16–17). Each plays a distinct role.

The shield of faith is raised against the enemy's flaming darts, his accusations, doubts, temptations, and lies. Faith, active trust in God and His promises, catches and quenches these attacks before they can lodge. When the enemy hurls I am worthless or God has abandoned me, faith holds up the shield of what God has said.

The helmet of salvation guards the mind with the assurance of salvation. A believer confident of their salvation in Christ is protected from the discouragement and despair the enemy loves to sow. The certainty of belonging to God steadies the head in battle.

The sword of the Spirit, the word of God, is the only offensive weapon in the list. With it we both defend ourselves and push back the enemy, exactly as Jesus did in the wilderness, answering each temptation with it is written (Matthew 4). Faith and the word work together: faith trusts what the word says. Help the class see that a believer who knows the Scriptures and trusts them is formidably equipped.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The shield of faith extinguishing the enemy's flaming darts
- The helmet of salvation guarding the mind from despair
- The word of God as the one offensive weapon
- Faith and the word working together, as in Jesus' temptation

Discussion Prompts

- How does the shield of faith quench the enemy's attacks?
- Why is the word of God called the sword of the Spirit?
- How do faith and the word work together in the battle?

Question 8

Student Question:

Paul calls the word of God the sword of the Spirit, our one weapon of attack. How well do you actually know and use the Scriptures in your daily battles, and what is one step toward taking up that sword more skillfully?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question presses the use of the sword. The word of God is our one offensive weapon, yet many believers carry it unused, knowing little of the Scriptures and rarely wielding them against temptation and lies.

Help students assess honestly how well they know and use the word. When the enemy attacks with a lie or a temptation, do they have the truth ready, as Jesus did? A sword left in its sheath wins no battles.

Encourage one concrete step toward taking up the sword more skillfully: a habit of regular reading, memorizing key passages, or learning to answer specific temptations with specific truths. The word is most useful when it is hidden in the heart, ready for the moment of need (Psalm 119:11).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The word of God as an unused weapon for many believers
- Knowing the Scriptures well enough to use them in battle
- Following Jesus' example of answering temptation with the word
- Hiding the word in the heart for the moment of need

Discussion Prompts

- How well do you actually know and use the Scriptures in daily battles?
- What lie or temptation could you answer with a specific truth?
- What is one step toward taking up the sword more skillfully?

Question 9

Student Question:

Taking verses 10 through 18 as a whole, Paul describes a real spiritual battle fought in the Lord's strength, against spiritual rather than human foes, with the armor God provides, including the word of God and prayer. How should a Christian engage in spiritual warfare rightly, avoiding both the error of ignoring the battle entirely and the error of becoming fixated on the demonic, and what does it mean that our chief weapons are God's word and prayer rather than worldly means or new revelations?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal center of the final lesson, and the teacher should aim for a balanced, sober understanding of spiritual warfare. Paul teaches that the battle is real, that it is spiritual rather than merely human, that it is fought in the Lord's strength, and that it is waged with the armor and weapons God provides, climaxing in the word of God and prayer (vv. 10–18).

First, the battle is real and must not be ignored. Some modern believers live as practical skeptics, dismissing any notion of an unseen enemy. Paul will not allow it; there are genuine spiritual forces of evil, and the schemes of the devil are real. To pretend otherwise is to be caught off guard.

Second, the battle must not be sensationalized. Paul does not encourage a fearful preoccupation with the demonic, the cataloguing of evil spirits, or dramatic techniques. His remedy is strikingly ordinary and sturdy: put on truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, the word, and pray. The Christian resists the devil not by sensational confrontation but by godly character, sound faith, the word of God, and persistent prayer (compare James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8–9). The teacher should steer the class between the ditch of skepticism and the ditch of obsession.

Third, our weapons are God's provision, not worldly means or new revelations. The one offensive weapon named is the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and the whole effort is carried on in prayer at all times in the Spirit (v. 18). This underscores the sufficiency of God's revealed word. Our authority and our weapon in this battle is the completed Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16–17), not fresh revelations, not human cleverness, not the weapons of the flesh (2 Corinthians 10:3–5). The believer who wields the word and prays is fully equipped; nothing more exotic is needed.

Finally, all of this is done from victory, not for it. Christ has already triumphed over the powers (Colossians 2:15) and reigns above them now (Ephesians 1:20–22). We stand in His victory, in His strength, clothed in His armor. Teach the class to take the battle seriously, to rely wholly on the Lord, to wield the word and prayer, and to stand without fear, because the outcome was settled at the cross and the empty tomb.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The reality of spiritual warfare, against practical skepticism
- Avoiding an unhealthy fixation on the demonic
- Resisting the devil through godly character, faith, the word, and prayer (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8–9)
- The sufficiency of God's word as our weapon (2 Timothy 3:16–17), not new revelations
- Spiritual, not fleshly, weapons (2 Corinthians 10:3–5)
- Fighting from Christ's finished victory, not for an uncertain outcome

Discussion Prompts

- How do we take spiritual warfare seriously without becoming fixated on the demonic?
- Why does it matter that our chief weapons are God's word and prayer?
- How does Christ's finished victory shape the way we engage the battle?

Question 10

Student Question:

In verses 18 through 20 Paul urges praying at all times in the Spirit, with perseverance, for all the saints. Looking back over this whole passage, and indeed over the entire letter to the Ephesians, name one specific way the Lord has been forming you through this study, and one piece of God's armor you most need to take up as you go forward.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone draws on verses 18 through 20, where Paul, having described the armor, turns to prayer: praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication, keeping alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints. Prayer is not a separate piece of armor but the atmosphere in which the whole battle is fought. The fully armed Christian is a praying Christian.

Note that Paul, the great apostle, asks for prayer for himself, that words may be given to him to proclaim the gospel boldly (vv. 19–20). Even he depended on the prayers of ordinary believers. This models humility and the shared nature of the battle; we stand together, praying for one another and for all the saints.

As this is the final lesson, invite the class to look back over the whole letter. From every spiritual blessing in chapter 1, through grace and the one new humanity, the prayers, the new walk, the household, and now the armor, Paul has been forming a people who know who they are in Christ and how to live it. Ask each student to name one way the Lord has used this study to form them.

Then ask for one piece of God's armor they most need to take up going forward, truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, the word, or prayer. Send them out not as anxious soldiers but as those clothed in the armor of God, standing in the victory of the risen Christ, with grace, as Paul's closing benediction says, upon all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Prayer as the atmosphere of the whole battle
- Even Paul depending on the prayers of the saints
- Looking back over the whole letter and its formation
- Going forward clothed in God's armor, standing in Christ's victory

Discussion Prompts

- Why is prayer essential to wearing the whole armor of God?
- How has the Lord used this study of Ephesians to form you?
- Which piece of God's armor do you most need to take up going forward?