

Fact Sheet for **“Be Strong in the Lord”**
Ephesians 6:10-24

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As you head south on I-5 there is a small ice cream stand just before you go up rice hill. When our boys were young and we were traveling that direction I would sometimes ask, “Would you like to get some ice cream?” The answer would always be, “Yes!” That “yes” came easily and required little effort on their part. But when my son now asks if I would like to climb a mountain with him, that answer comes with a lot more commitment, and the promise of a lot of effort on my part. Unfortunately when I have asked young people if they really love the Lord they have often answered “yes” but with an ice cream commitment. Being strong in the Lord is not for wimps. It’s an ongoing act of your will. You can be strong or grow slack. Do you want to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength? Paul tells us how in Ephesians 6:10-20. But it will require much more than an ice cream commitment.

We have a great salvation in God through Jesus Christ! And God has made some great resources available for us so that we can live victorious lives for him. Today we are going to be looking at the Armor of God and what is required of us to put it on.

¹⁰ ¶ **Finally, be strong** (*imperative*) **in the Lord and in the strength of his might.** “Be strong” is actually “be strengthened”. What follows is how you stand strong.

¹¹ **Put on** (*imperative*) **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** (*imperative*) **the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.**

But it is up to us if we are going to wear that armor.

Ephesians 6:14-20 is the premier passage of the Bible that describes the armor of God. However, before we get into them, I want to bring up two other passages that use the same imagery, but in different ways (1 Thessalonians 5:8 and Isaiah 59:17). In 1 Thessalonians Paul wrote about the breastplate of faith and love, while in Ephesians 6 he wrote about the breastplate of righteousness, and the *shield* of faith. He then described the helmet as the hope of salvation. In other words this is the sure and certain hope we have of eternal life. In Ephesians 6 he just mentioned the helmet of salvation with no further description. In Isaiah’s context “he” is God himself. Isaiah describes God as putting on righteousness as a breastplate. Obviously this is a description of the righteousness that God always had, and does not mean that God “became” righteous when he had not been righteous. God is described as putting on the helmet of salvation. Again this obviously does not mean that God somehow became saved when earlier he was not. Instead it can only be a clear statement that salvation is with God. He also put on garments of vengeance, and the cloak of zeal, two things that Paul did not mention in either 1 Thessalonians or Ephesians.

Here’s the point. Paul would have been well aware of the Isaiah passage and would use that same *general* imagery. Be careful of over-applying the description of the armor of God in Ephesians 6. Pay more attention to the qualities of character than you do to which piece of armor they are. Now let’s get into Ephesians 6:14-20

The first imperative (to be followed by four participles): ¹⁴ **Stand therefore,**

This carries the sense of urgency. As with any imperative it also carries the possibility that we could fall short. It calls for an act of our will.

Participle 1. The Belt of Truth: having fastened on the belt of truth,

This is not a description of God's truth. Instead it describes qualities of truth we should possess, such as honesty, integrity and faithfulness (compare Psalm 51:6).

Participle 2. The Breastplate of Righteousness: and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

Again this does not refer to justification by faith, but to the righteousness practiced in a believer's life.

Participle 3. The Shoes of the Gospel: ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

This does not speak of evangelism because Christians are pictured in verses 10-16 as standing, not advancing. Instead it speaks of a believer's surefootedness from the gospel that gives them peace.

Participle 4. The Shield of Faith: ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up (*taking up*) the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;

This refers to a resolute faith in the Lord that can extinguish Satan's fiery attacks.

The second imperative (followed by two nouns): ¹⁷ and take

The word "take" is really the word "receive" or "accept".

Noun 1. The Helmet of Salvation: the helmet of salvation,

I understand this to be a reference to the Christian's sure and certain hope of eternal life, just as in 1 Thessalonians 5:8.

Noun 2. The Sword of the Spirit: and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

"Word" here is not "logos", the written Word of God) but "rhema", the spoken word of God (Matthew 4:4; Romans 10:8, 17; 1 Peter 1:24-25). In Matthew Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 to defeat the devil's tactics. Here's the point. Just owning or carrying a Bible is not taking up the sword of the Spirit. But, as Jesus used the words of Scripture to defeat the devil, so too must Christians know and use the words the Spirit has inspired.

Two More Participles

Participle 1. Praying Yourself

¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.

The neglect of prayer in the power of the Holy Spirit creates an opportunity for the devil in your life.

Participle 2. Keeping Alert for Others

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.

Do you want to put on the whole armor of God? Do you want to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength? It's not the time for an ice cream commitment! God has given us some great resources so that we can stand firm, but we need to make the decision always to wear his armor.

Finishing Words

²¹ ¶ So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. ²² I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.

²³ ¶ Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁴ Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.

Again, do you want to put on the full armor of God?