

SPIRIT OF LIFE MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL  
BIBLE SCHOOL THIRD EDITION  
SESSION 22 – SPIRITUAL WARFARE PART 6  
THE ARMOR OF GOD – THE BACKGROUND PART 1



In the book of **Ephesians** Paul writes his letter to the church at Ephesus giving them specific instructions in his absence. Within this letter Paul commands the church to put on the full armor of God. Just what did Paul mean by such a command?

To understand the meaning of Paul's command, we need to see the background of the command. Paul, who was writing from Rome, as a prisoner, wrote the letter. Paul was probably writing this letter in the company of Roman legions who stood guard over him. He would have seen these soldiers with their armor, swords, and shields, as they were present in the city of Rome. Paul is writing this letter about A.D. 60 as a prisoner in Rome awaiting trial before Caesar.

Paul addresses the letter to the saints at Ephesus and the faithful in Jesus Christ. If you recall, from the book of Acts, Paul spent 3 years in the city of Ephesus (**Acts 20:31**). His ministry there was so successful that the silversmiths were losing money because people stopped buying idols. The silversmiths threatened Paul's life because so many turned to Christ. Turning to Christ, they no longer needed the idols of Artemis (Diana) produced by their guild. At this point Paul left the city, eventually returning to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem he was arrested and from there he was sent to Rome.

Paul was imprisoned in Rome for 2 years before his execution. While he was in prison Paul wrote to the church of Ephesus giving them instructions on being successful in their calling. In his concluding remarks Paul commands the church to put on *the whole armor of God*. Ephesus later became a stronghold of Christianity, and the Apostle John is buried in there. Jesus, in Revelation, commends the city for their adherence to doctrine, and their willingness to test those who claim to be disciples in (A.D. 96) (**Rev. 2:1-7**)

Ephesus in many ways was a model city of Spiritual war, which we will examine as we go through the various aspects of the Armor of God.



## The Roman Empire

Paul uses the description of a Roman soldier to illustrate to the Church at Ephesus the need to put on the armor of God. Paul, who was a Roman citizen ([Acts 22:28](#)) by birth, would have been familiar with the Roman legions, their weapons, and authority. He uses this to illustrate a spiritual parallel for the saints (born-again believers). We are literally the army of the Lord occupying the physical world. Paul uses the picture of a Roman soldier to cast the vision of who we are in Christ. We are in every sense a soldier for the kingdom of God.

The success of the Roman Empire was the reflection of the Roman military and the discipline of its army. Paul lived during a time known as the *Pax Romana* or Roman Peace. This peace was the result of Roman military might which established the boundaries of the Empire.

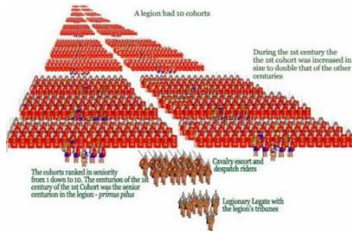
Rome started out as a city-state, in what is known as Italy today, in the year of 753 B.C. By the year 509 B.C. Rome had become a republic as its farmer-soldiers had conquered cities and territories outside of Rome. The Roman military learned to adapt their methods of warfare, improving on what their rivals used, looking for ways to defeat the obstacles.

For example in the *Punic Wars*<sup>[1]</sup>, the wars between Carthage and Rome, Carthage controlled the Mediterranean Sea with its naval ships. Rome captured one of their ships and copied it, building their own navy to counter Carthage. When they realized they could not out sail them they then developed a way of ramming their ships, and locking them together with a grappling device, called a *Corvis (Raven)*, creating a bridge between the ships, this allowed superior Roman forces to board the enemy ship. Soon the advantage of Carthage was lost. This allowed Rome to control the Mediterranean, eventually leading to the conquest of Judea in 64 B.C.

Rome expected a great deal out of their army, and they organized and trained their army composed of Legions for war. By the time Paul was in Rome in A.D. 60, the Roman army was composed of about 30 Legions which numbered about 5,000-6,000 men per Legion. Each Legion was divided into 10 *Cohorts*, composed of 480 men and each Cohort had 6 *centuries* of 80 men, headed by a *centurion*.

The training and discipline required of the Roman legions is remarkable by even today's standards. The main pre-requisite for a member of the Roman Army was fitness, given the long distances they were expected to march.

They most commonly were trained by running, chopping down trees, and doing obstacle courses. Three times a month a legionary had to do an 18-mile route march with 60 pounds of equipment, armour, and weapons to carry.



It was common practice for a legion being readied for deployment, to spend the previous weeks in long field training drills, some of which required that they build three field camps a day.

Requirements for non-legionary troops were not as severe. Roman Legions in Imperial Rome were known to march with 66-100 lbs. of equipment per legionary at an average pace of at least 4.5 miles/hour for 5 hours and then building a fort for the night. The next morning they would take it down and start all over again and even possibly were engaged in fighting in the same day.<sup>[2]</sup>

A new enlistee was known as a *Tirones*. The first six months of their military life was used to get them into the condition needed to be a part of the Roman army. The 4th Century A.D. Roman historian *Vegetius* recorded what was required of new recruits to the legions.

"The first thing the soldiers are to be taught is the military step, which can only be acquired by constant practice of marching quick and together..." *Tirones* also did exercises in running, jumping, and swimming, carrying heavy packs and entrenching camps. We are informed by the writings of the ancients that among their other exercises, they had more at the post. They gave their recruits round bucklers (shields) woven with willows, twice as heavy as those used on real service, and wooden swords double the weight of the common ones. They exercised with these at the post both morning and afternoon." Other weapons used in training at this time also included the javelin, bow, throwing stone, sling and '*martioarbuli*' - usually reconstructed as weighted darts or small javelins. *Tirones* were also taught to vault into the saddle."

Along with fitness, the Roman soldiers trained to use their weapons and armor in combat. Repeatedly they trained from 6:00 AM until Midnight. Before battles they would spend weeks training, getting ready for the war. This is the disciplined fighter of the physical realms that Paul uses for the church to help us understand how we are to be engaged in the Spiritual realms. We need to take the spiritual life as seriously as the Roman soldier took the physical military life.

### The Military Imagery

Military imagery is not new in the New Testament. The Old Testament is filled with military imagery also. The Lord is called the Lord of Hosts in the Old Testament. The Hebrew word for hosts is ***Tsaba***, meaning an army or host for military combat. Israel, in the Old Testament, was literally God's army on earth. In the battle of Jericho, we see the Lord appear to Joshua as commander of Israel's forces which are about to take the city of Jericho.

**Joshua 5:13-15** *"<sup>13</sup>And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?" <sup>14</sup>So He said, "No, but as*

***Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, 'What does my Lord say to His servant?' <sup>15</sup>Then the Commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, 'Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy.' And Joshua did so."***

The war we are in is very real. It is not a metaphorical exercise because the war we are in is taking place in the spiritual realms all around us. Throughout the scripture this point is emphasized repeatedly. We see Elisha surrounded and protected by the army of the Lord as the Syrian army tries to take him captive. David typifies this relationship between God's people and their position as God's army. God used David, a shepherd boy, who went in the power of the Lord as an example for all of us.



David went to visit his brothers, who were part of Israel's army. They were facing the "Pagan" Philistines and their champion Goliath. Day after day, for 40 days, Goliath would taunt the armies of Israel daring someone to challenge him. No one in the army of Israel had the courage to fight such an awesome specimen of humanity. Goliath, described as being a warrior from his youth, stood 9 feet 9 inches tall.

***1 Samuel 17:4-8 "4And a champion went out from the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, from Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. 5 He had a bronze helmet on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. 6 And he had bronze armor on his legs and a bronze javelin between his shoulders. 7 Now the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his iron spearhead weighed six hundred shekels; and a shield-bearer went before him. 8 Then he stood and cried out to the armies of Israel, and said to them, "Why have you come out to line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and you the servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me." (NKJV)***

David does not understand how this can happen. How can someone just challenge the people of God for 40-days and nothing was being done. You can hear the astonishment in his voice.

***1 Samuel 17:26b "For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"***

David's words get to Saul's ear and David is called before Saul. David, a shepherd boy, wants to reassure the King and the armies of Israel not to fear because he, David, will answer the challenge of the giant armored man and he will fight him. ***(1 Samuel 17:32)*** David says this to Saul with confidence. *It was not confidence in himself, but confidence in the Lord's ability.*

***"Let no man's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." (NKJV)***

David saw Israel as the Lord's army, and he saw himself as a warrior in the Lord's army. David trusted in the Lord's ability to deliver the Philistine into his hand. David then convinces Saul how he, a shepherd boy, will fight the Philistine. Saul is convinced and tells David to go.

**I Samuel 17:36-37** ***"36 Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God." 37 Moreover David said, "The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the Lord be with you!" (NKJV)***

Saul then fits his armor on David, and after trying it on, David rejects Saul's armor, and instead he relies on the Lord's ability. David is wearing the "armor of God," and he does not need the armor of Saul. After David collects five stones from the river, he confronts Goliath who is indignant with David's appearance. How dare Israel match him with a boy? Don't they know he is Goliath! Goliath understood the battle and he invoked the names of his Philistine gods against David. David then replied for all believers who wear the armor of God versus the armor of this world. God does not need the weapons and armor of this world for his battle.

**I Samuel 17:45-47** ***"45 Then David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.' 46 This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. 47 Then all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands." (NKJV)***

One point among many here is to rely on the power of God and not the power of man. David was someone who trusted in the Lord's power and strength. He understood the battle was not his but the Lord's. He, David, was only a faithful warrior.

**Let's ask ourselves the questions:**

1. Do we rely on man?
2. Do we rely on the powers of this world?
3. Do we wait for the things of this world?

## Paul in Ephesus

Paul in many ways was like David. The people of the world, because of his physical stature and appearance, underestimated him (2 Cor. 10:10). Paul saw himself as the Lord's warrior, who was fighting giants; he was advancing the kingdom of God on enemy territory. Paul staked out territory in the area of Ephesus to war against the enemies of God. When Paul is rejected by the synagogue at Ephesus, he turns to the gentiles and pours himself into 12 men at first. (Acts 19:7). He spent the next two to three years teaching and disciplining the people of Ephesus. Paul, like David, understood the battle was the Lord's. He also understood God did not need a military force to win the battle. Paul writes:

**II Corinthians 10:3-6** *"3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, 6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled."* (NKJV)

Goliath defeated the minds of Israel. They looked on his outward appearance while David looked to the Lord. David knew the battle was the Lord's and it had nothing to do with appearance. Paul looked at it the same way at the city of Ephesus. The battle was not of physical weapons, but spiritual. Paul was at war in the heavenly (spiritual) realm. Paul, in the power of the Lord, was pulling down spiritual strongholds.



**Did it work?** Was Paul able to battle the demonic realms which controlled the city? How did the people respond? The people stopped buying the idols and they burned their occult books. People's lives were being affected as the Gospel spread through the city.

**(Acts 19:23-38)** *<sup>19</sup>Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. <sup>20</sup>So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.* (NKJV)

**Acts 19:19-20:** Ephesus was not just an ordinary city, it was the Roman capital of Asia. Paul established a strategic base of operations for the Gospel. Paul was occupying enemy territory. Paul looked weak but he was a warrior fighting a giant.

Encyclopedia Britannica writes regarding Ephesus at this time. *“Ephesus became under Augustus the first city of the Roman province of Asia. The geographer Strabo wrote of its importance as a commercial center in the 1st century BC. The triumphal arch of 3 BC and the aqueduct of AD 4–14 initiated that long series of public buildings, ornamental and useful, that make Ephesus the most impressive example in Greek lands of a city of imperial times.”*<sup>[3]</sup>

Paul was strategic in his warfare. He understood his battle was against spiritual powers because the physical was merely the result of the spiritual. The same was with Goliath. The battle was not physical but spiritual. Goliath was not challenging men but God. Goliath’s force was spiritual and demonic as he called out to his gods cursing David and the people of Israel. Israel was the army of the Lord. David did not understand how no one could see what he saw. Why were they so fearful? David had something the others did not have. *He had the Spirit of God, dwelling in him, just like Paul, and like us who know the Lord.*

**I Samuel 16:13** *“13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So, Samuel arose and went to Ramah.”*

Paul, when he is writing to the Ephesians, was awaiting trial in Rome. He writes the church, this group of people who came to know the Lord, about their spiritual battle. Using the example of the legions and military of Rome, Paul wants to cast a vision of the battle that they, the church of Ephesus, are engaged in. The Holy Spirit, through Paul’s letter, instructs all believers to put on the armor of God, to prepare for battle.

### **Putting on the Armor of God**

Paul, who fights against the demonic realms, gives a command to the church as to what they need to do. In writing his concluding remarks to the saints at Ephesus, Paul’s final instructions for them are: *“put on the whole or full armor of God.”*

**Ephesians 6:10-12** *“10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*

**v. 10 Finally:** Paul is concluding his message to the Church at Ephesus. The epistle (letter) to Ephesus is divided into two parts. In the first part (Chapters 1-3), *Paul instructs the church where they stand in Christ.*

The Holy Spirit is God's down payment (earnest) of their salvation, which guarantees their redemption in Christ (Eph 1:13-14). Paul declares who we are in Christ: His blood saves us because we have received the gift of salvation (Eph. 2:8-9).

In the second part (Chapters 4-6) Paul instructs the saints, *how to apply their position in Christ*. They are not to be passive believers; they are to walk in the spirit (Gal. 5:16). When we walk, we move forward, and we are not static. So it is in the Christian faith; we are to move forward, advancing in our walk. Our walk is based on the presence of God's Spirit who dwells in us because of our conversion. Therefore, we are to be followers (imitators) of God. (Eph. 5:1). All that said, Paul concludes with a command to this Church which he birthed in Ephesus. He tells them if they are to be successful, they need to be "In the Lord." Being in the Lord means we need to wear the armor of God. David was in the Lord because he was wearing the armor of God against Goliath.

**V. 10 Be Strong in the Lord:** Our strength does not come from the world. We are to be strong in the Lord. How is one strong in the Lord? Our strength in the Lord comes through spiritual training and learning to trust the Lord. David was strong in the Lord because he had God's Spirit. David fought a lion and a bear before he fought Goliath. He knew God's power. Like David, unless we move forward with our faith, we cannot be strong. The Christian faith requires action for growth and training. Paul in Ephesians tells the saints to "walk in love," "walk as children of light," and to "walk circumspectly." To be strong means to walk and move forward in our faith. Joshua instructs the Lord's army, Israel, to be strong by knowing the Law (The Bible).

**Joshua 1:8-9** *"**8This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. 9Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."***

**To be Strong in the Lord means to:**

1. To walk in His word,
2. To know his Word
3. To trust His Word.

Committing the Lord's word to memory and doing what scripture says, not just reading the words, is how we become strong in the Lord. Notice the progression in Joshua 1:8, *meditate. ...night and day* cause one to observe what is written "*For then*, what follows? A prosperous way and good success, which is to be strong (vs. 9). Scripture training is the way to spiritual strength.



**V 10 In the power of his might:** Paul on the outward appearance was seen as weak; David on the outward appearance was a shepherd boy without armor. All throughout scripture, we see weak people do extraordinary things.

**Abraham** an old childless man became the forefather of nations.

**Gideon**, a farm boy, defeats the armies of Midian (**Judges 8:4**).

**Joseph**, the slave becomes second in command under Pharaoh over all Egypt.

**Daniel**, the Babylonian hostage becomes a ruler in Babylon and Persia.

**Peter**, a fisherman becomes a leader in the church.

**Paul** a murderer, an enemy of Christ, becomes the apostle to the Gentiles. What did all these people have in common?

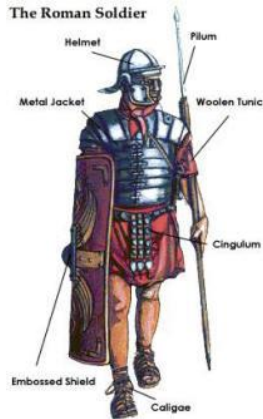
They all operated in the power of **his** might. Through their weakness they learned to trust in the Lord's might. Many times, God is prevented from working in our lives because we rely on our might, our wisdom, and our strength.

God, on the other hand, loves to use what is despised in the world because He is glorified through it. We need to learn to move in the power of his might, not our own.

**I Corinthians 1:25-29** *"25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence."*

When we are in the Lord, and in his power, we then allow God to operate. We need to learn to get out of God's way.

## V. 11: Put on the whole armor of God:



Paul, who was in Rome, surrounded by Roman soldiers, commands the church to put on God's armor. The Greek word here is *Enduo*, which means to sink into, to clothe oneself. We are to be complete in God's armor as opposed to being strong in one aspect and weak in others. We are not to just learn the shield, and not the sword. The armor is complete; we are to sink into God's armor. Why? **That you may be able to stand.**

If we fail to put on the armor, we will not be able to stand in battle. Satan, the devil, wants to exploit our weaknesses and he looks for areas to take us down so we cannot stand. A legionnaire might have a sword, and be very good with it, but without his shield and helmet, he is open to the darts and arrows, which will stop him from standing. Therefore, we as warriors have to learn that we need to put on the full armor of God and become proficient in our ability to use the weapons. Each piece of equipment had a purpose as we shall see.

The word for stand is *Histemi*, which means to make firm, fix, establish. We are to hold our ground against Satan and his attacks. Satan does not want the Christian to stand, but to fall. Satan has strategies to do just that. He has devices, plans, stratagems for each person who knows the Lord.

**V 11 - Against the wiles of the devil:** Why do we need to wear the full armor of God? So, we can stand against the wiles or schemes of Satan. The word for wiles is *Methodoi*, meaning cunning arts, deceit, craft, trickery. Satan has a method. He is not just idle; his goal is to keep those who are lost as lost. Secondly, his goal is to take authority away from the saved by making them fall.



A fallen disabled saint is one less person Satan has to worry about. If we fail to put on the armor, Satan will exploit our weakness, looking for our holes, setting a trap. The image of Satan is not a person walking around in red leotards, but a lion, looking for pray.

<sup>[1]</sup> Punic Wars were a series of wars between Rome and Carthage between 264-146 B.C. Punic is the Latin word for Phoenicians.

<sup>[2]</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman\\_army#Training](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_army#Training)

<sup>[3]</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica 2004, Ephesus article