**Ephesians 6:10-12**

*10”Finally, be strengthened in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*

Every human being, be they believers or not, is in a constant spiritual war, whether they know it or not. You either oppose God with your sinful living and thus, foolishly, wage war against your own soul or being saved through Christ you have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires and have been taught by the grace of God to deny godlessness and worldly lusts and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age.

 As long as we are of the world and of the flesh and under the sway of the devil, we are enemies of God and stand in stark contrast to his perfect will and his righteous and holy character. Being slaves of sin, we offered the members of our bodies as slaves to impurity, and having a mind-set of the flesh, we were hostile to God because we did not submit to his law nor were we able to do so. “*But now, since* we *have been set free from sin and have become enslaved to God,* we *have* our *fruit, which results in sanctification.* (Romans 6:22).

**A summary of the book of Ephesians (chpt. 1-5)**

After being taught of:

* God’s comprehensive blessings on his people in Christ
* God’s unconditional election of his people in Christ
* God’s redemption through the blood of Christ and forgiveness of our trespasses.
* God’s good pleasure in revealing to us the mystery of his will in Christ.
* God’s granting of the inheritance in Christ
* God sealing his people with the promised Holy Spirit in Christ
* God’s incalculable riches toward us in Christ
* God’s love in Christ that surpasses knowledge.
* God gifting the church with leaders so that the believer might be equipped for the work of ministry and to reach the unity of the faith and knowledge of Christ.

He then proceeds with a list of commands:

* To walk worthy of the calling you have received.
* To no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their thoughts.
* To put off the old way of life and to put on the new self.
* To be imitators of God and to walk in love.
* To not participate in the fruitless work of darkness or partner with those who practice such things.
* To live as wise and not as unwise people – to be filled with the Spirit and not get drunk.
* To love and respect our spouses and raise the children in the training and instruction of the Lord.

He closes this list of imperatives with a final list of other imperatives, which are summed up in:

 **Two Commands that Will Help us to Stand Against and Recognize the Nature of our Enemy**.

1. *Be Strengthened in the Lord (v 10)*
2. *Put on the Full Armor of God (v 11-12)*

1. **Be Strengthened in the Lord**

“Be strengthened in the Lord and in the strength of his might.” What a mighty sentence this is! Be clothed in divine power! At the reading of this alone, one feels that one might become a Samson in the faith; so much so that he can say to that mountain move and it shall move, and that there be nothing too hard for him to do. The devil himself may find, in that believer, more than a match seeing, as he saw in the case of Job, that God has put a hedge around him.

God’s strength is mighty, and He possesses it without limit. Now to be strengthened by the strength of his might eliminates all doubts of ever losing. Who, in heaven or earth, can rival such power? Can the believer not say, “*If God is for us, who is against us?”* (Romans 8:31)

* Our Total Dependency upon the Lord

It is a passive command. You are not the source of this strength. It does not come from you. God is the strength (be strengthened in the Lord). You do not do the strengthening but rather you position yourself in such a place where strength is made available to you. Just like you place yourself outside to be warmed by the sun, so you place yourself in nowhere else other than “in the Lord.” We are totally dependent on the Lord.

* The Wisdom of the Command

*“Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.”* What great wisdom we have in the command of our Lord! Dependency, if it is placed upon the proper source, is a good thing. God has made us dependent upon himself so that he may secure our salvation forever. Dependency upon God is that impregnable fortress whereby the weak is kept unharmed from the strong.

The devil would have you think that you are strong on your own and that you do not need anyone’s protection. He flatters you and makes you think that there is glory in depending upon yourself and that you do not need God’s commands. Satan would have you be proud where God would have you be humble but *“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.”* (Proverbs 16:18). By this scheme, he means to lure you out and so slay you for he knows that as long as you are dependent upon the Lord, his fiery darts will have no effect. For this reason, let the Lord be our strength and let the strength of his might be our armor.

* Weakness Implied in Us

This call, to be strengthened, implies much weakness in us. So much so that in order for a believer to stand, he must be clothed with divine strength. This weakness is most evident in new believers as well as in those believers who, despite being many years in faith, remain immature, who although by this time they ought to be teachers, they need someone to teach them the basic principles of God’s revelation again.

* The Nature of the Strength

This strength, being made available to the believer, may be much desired by him but by having a misconception of this strength, he may seek it for purposes that it is not intended. My friend, this strength will neither make you a prophet nor an apostle. It will neither enable you to speak in tongues nor make you a healer. But though it will not make you such things, yet, notwithstanding, it shall make a mighty warrior – even to defy the devil himself.
In this book (Ephesians) we are told about what God has done for us in Christ and who he is, and to follow him. Now we are told to be strengthened in the Lord therefore if we are weak, our weakness lies in the lack of our knowledge about Christ and what he has done for us. This weakness is the danger that the devil exploits and can make a believer miserable by twisting God’s truth. For this reason, Paul states, in chapter 1:15-18 “*This is why, since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I never stop giving thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.”*

In Colossians 1:9-11 Paul says the same thing “*For this reason also, since the day we heard this, we haven’t stopped praying for you. We are asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, so that you may have great endurance and patience…*

He goes on to say “*I want their hearts to be encouraged and joined together in love, so that they may have all the riches of complete understanding and have the knowledge of God’s mystery – Christ. In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”* (Colossians 2:2-3)

Therefore, this great strength consists not so much in mighty acts as in the enlightenment of the eyes of our heart in the knowledge of God. Not so much in having a kind of mystical strength as in the ability to discern between sound doctrine and the doctrine of demons. For this reason, he who knows Christ the best is the strongest and he who knows him the least is the weakest.

Do you desire to be strong in the Lord? Then endeavor to know much about Christ and his work of redemption and his immutable promises. Is not the knowledge of Christ and a dwelling richly of God’s word in ones’ heart a characteristic of those whom you deem to be strong Christians? Do you not expect the pastor to be among the strongest in the church?

1. **Put on the Full Armor of God (v 11:12)**

This second command is a reiteration of the first and it states explicitly how we are to be strengthened in the Lord. We are to be strengthened by putting on the full armor of God.

* The Simple Command

Put on. Simple and clear – “put on.” You are not to lay it aside and look at it from time to time. You are to put on the full armor of God. We are told to do nothing with the armor other than to put it on. By this simple command we are to understand that:

1. That we are to put it on.

We are to put on the armor of God, and we are to do so continuously. We are simply told to put it on. We are not told to put it off at any time. There is not time given to indicate how long we are to put it on for. We are told to put it on, and we shall do nothing else other than to obey and put it on. In other words, put it on no matter what. Don’t you love the simplicity of this command? The devil may tempt you to be “reasonable”. He may say “Certainly, God does not mean for you to put it on all the time. It is not always necessary. Put it on when times are rough but what reason is there to put it on in times when you are doing well and there is no struggle in sight.” Your reply should be “that may be o deceiver, but my God has told me to put it on and nothing more. You’re telling me to go beyond what is written. The simplicity of the command prevents me from entertaining any reasons to do otherwise. No reason, however clever, that seeks to undermine God’s command is nothing short of disobedience, and it is neither safe nor sound.”

1. That we are to put on the full armor.

We are not to pick and choose which parts of the armor of God we are to put on. We are to put on the full armor of God. The Christian is covered head to toe so that the enemy may find no exposed area for his flaming arrows. The devil is sure to strike in those areas which are the weakest and exposed.
Do you doubt God’s salvation, in that you may lose it? As long as you doubt the completeness of Christ’s salvation, the devil will make sure to strike there and make you feel as though you will die in your sins whereas in truth, you are alive through the righteousness of Christ. Once you learn this well and trust completely in the full atonement of Christ, it will be like putting on a helmet whereby you head is protected.
Have you not noticed this? You do not struggle in the areas where you are fully convinced but, in those areas, where your theology is lacking.

Do you struggle doubting God’s character? Then seek to learn of his immutable nature.

Do you fear the thought of dying? Then seek to learn of our immediate transport in the presence of our dear Savior. Your eyes will not be shut in perpetual darkness but have the light of life. Though our body returns to the dust, because Christ lives, we shall live also.

Do not be enamored with only one aspect of theology but seek to know the whole counsel of God. Put on the full armor of God so that when the devil sees all his arrows bounce back at him, he will find it a waste of time to aim at you.

1. That we are to put on the full armor of God.
* The Source of the Armor

This phrase “armor of God” expresses the idea that God is the source of this armor. It is He that provides it. This phrase also implies exclusivity and by it we understand that the believer must put on this very armor. He must not endeavor to seek it elsewhere nor fashion one himself.

* The Quality of the Armor

Such precious material cannot be found on earth for its origin and craftmanship is a heavenly one. The great Blacksmith, the Creator himself, has forged it by his own wisdom. Such an armor is so complete and so strong that the one who wears it, is made invincible by it. So much so that he is able to stand in the fiercest of battles and against the cruelest of enemies.

No other armor would be suited against such an enemy as the devil. Any armor we fashion, whether it is self-made religion, philosophy of men or self-abasement is but like the armor that Saul gave to David. It was neither suitable for him nor effective for combat.

We cannot look to ourselves when combating such an enemy for the devil is way more experienced in the art if deceit. We are but a youth in comparison to him whereas he has been a warrior in the art of scheming from his youth. We should not depend in our own means but like David, we should recall God’s salvation from enemies stronger than us and trust that the armor he provides will enable us to stand even now.

**The Purpose of the Armor** (…so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil.)

Now we have talked about the need to be strengthened in the Lord and to put the full armor of God. We touched a little bit about the nature of this strength and armor, which has to do with the knowledge of Christ but that was a mere inference whereas here, in this purpose statement, we have and explicit explanation of the purpose of this armor and hence what this armor looks like.

* So that You will Be Able to Stand Against the Schemes of the Devil

This armor is useful for defense and particularly defense against the schemes of the devil. The armor is not for binding the devil but for standing against his schemes. It is not used offensively but defensively. Let no believer think that there is ever a time where he can cease from standing. Once you became a believer, a spiritual war began that shall not cease as long as you live. You are a soldier, enlisted under the banner of Christ for life. A soldier does not get entangled in the concerns of civilian life.

It is a sure thing that if we put on the full armor of God, we will be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. The obedience to the commands of God is the difference between standing or falling and whoever disregards the command to put on the full armor of God can be sure to fall. “*Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”* (James 4:7). There is not standing or resisting against the devil apart from humble submission to God.

* The Schemes of the Devil

How does the devil attack us? It is by scheming. This is the Greek word (μεθοδεία) where we get the word “method.” It is a scheming, a plan used to outwit an opponent. It is a systematic plan to attain a particular object or putting a particular idea in to effect.

What is the call of the believer after salvation? If we have been raised with Christ, what are we to do? “*So if you have been raised with Christ, Seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”* (Col. 3:1-2).

Think about this my friends. The devil stands against us and would try his best to prevent us from our heavenly destination. He would have us give up spiritual discipline in exchange for material gain. He would make us think, as it was with Lot, that the green plains of Sodom are far better than the company of godly Abraham. But that got Lot in trouble and if it wasn’t for God’s mercy, Lot would have been destroyed along Sodom and Gomorrah.
Nothing, in this world, if preferred above the grace and commands of God, would ever be of any real, substantial benefit.

The devil’s attack is by scheming and distorting God’s truth. It is by making us think that God’s ways are not the best for us. If his attack is a distortion of word of God then our defense is knowledge, belief and submission to the word of God.

* Biblical Examples of How to Stand – a Putting on of the Armor.
* Allegiance to the word of God - Paul charges Timothy to preach the word in season and out of season – that is when it is popular and when it is hated. Paul tells him to do the work of an evangelist and gives himself as an example by saying “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” (2 Tim. 4:7) This is the fighting. This is the standing – that we do not compromise the precious word of God but stand loyal to it through faith.
* Humble submission to God – “Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7)
* Taking of every thought captive to the obedience of Christ – “We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” (2 Cor. 10:5)
* Knowledge of Christ – “…to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, growing into maturity with the stature measured by Christ’s fullness. Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into him who is the head - Christ (Eph. 4:12-16)
* Obedience to God’s command
	+ Forgiveness – “But one whom you forgive anything I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ, so that no advantage would be take of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.” (2 Cor, 2:10-11)
	+ Brooding – “do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity.” (Eph. 4:26-27)

**The Reason/Explanation for Putting on the Armor.**

*12For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

* We have a Dangerous Enemy

The reason given here, as Mathew Henry says “is to show what our danger is. The combat for which we are to be prepared is not against ordinary human enemies, not barely against men compounded of *flesh and blood*, nor against our own corrupt natures singly considered, but against the several ranks of devils, who have a government which they exercise in this world.” He continues to say that the enemy is:

1. Subtle – he uses scheming.
2. Powerful – our fight is against rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers.
3. Spiritual – our fight is against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens.
* To Identify who our Real Enemy is

The saying *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood”* is helpful. Why does Paul add this piece of information? He could have very well said “put on the full armor of God for our struggle is against rulers, against authorities against the cosmic/world powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens, but he didn’t. He added this to remind us that the enemy, being subtle, often attacks us indirectly so that we would think that our struggle is not against him but against those poor souls whom he is using to oppose us. By this he means that flesh and blood will be involved and used in the struggle, but our struggle is not against it.

*“Don’t confuse prisoners of war with the enemy. Sometimes in the heat of battle we might lose perspective on who the real enemy is. Ephesians 6:12 reminds us that our struggle isn’t against sinful people, but against the evil system and the supernatural forces that influence their attitudes and actions.”* (McArthur, Commentary on Ephesians 6)

The saying *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood”* is helpful because the schemes of the devil are planted in the hearts of men whereby unregenerate people walk according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient.
It is helpful because flesh and blood being used as a means of his scheming, for they are held captive to do his will, may be wrongly viewed as our main opponent.

We are told to stand or resist against the schemes of the devil, not to stand against the schemes of men, although we should. But the point here is that this war is spiritual; that it is these evil spiritual forces that are pulling the strings behind the scenes. They manipulate people as a string puppet in order to oppose God and accomplish their evil agenda.
I said “manipulate” to emphasize that people are responsible but, due to their deadness in sins and trespasses, the devil and his demonic horde has free reign in them. So inclined are they to evil that the devil has only to provide them the idea and on they follow gladly. People do not need the devil to be evil. They are evil in and of themselves. The devil but teaches them to excel in it. Therefore, our fight ought to be with the source, which is spiritual, not with those affected by the source, which is flesh and blood. It ought to be against the schemer not with those entangled in his schemes.

“*In his assault on the kingdom of God, Satan has assembled a highly organized army of fallen angels. Paul categorized them as “rulers . . . powers . . . world forces of this darkness . . . spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).
That isn’t a detailed description of Satan’s hierarchy but simply a general indication of its power and sophistication. Apparently “rulers” and “powers” are high- ranking demons. “World forces of this darkness” are possibly demons who infiltrate various political systems of the world, attempting to direct human leaders to oppose God’s plans. An example is a demon called “the prince of the kingdom of Persia” in Daniel 10:13. He withstood God’s angelic messenger to Daniel until Michael the archangel came to the rescue*.” (McArthur)

We are to keep this in mind when people oppose, hate or persecute us. We are to say of them as our Lord did *“they do not know what they are doing.”* It is in line with their nature to do what they do yet they do it without understanding for they are darkened in their understanding (Eph 4:18). Regarding the condition of an unbeliever, James is on point when he says “*and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed.” (Jude 10)*

**In Light of this Reason, How Should Our Spiritual Warfare Unfold?**

Towards the devil and his ranks – Resist him (Eph. 4:26-27; 6:11; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:9). The context of these passages shows that putting on the armor means submission to God’s word, especially unity in the church and obedience to church authority. It is the Spirit of God in us that prevents us from walking in the flesh so that the devil may not take advantage of us. Therefore, if we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit thus creating adversity for the devil and not giving him an opportunity for we are not ignorant of his schemes. (Gal. 5:26; 1 Cor. 2:11)

Toward people (flesh and blood) – in putting on the armor, let us not forget to stand with our feet sandaled with the readiness for the gospel of peace. (Eph 6:15).

– We are not to forget that we were once like them. *“Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone. At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures.” (Titus 3:1-3)*

* We are to be like our Father in Heaven – *“But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.”*
* We are to instruct with gentleness – *“with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,**and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive [*[*l*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Timothy%202&version=NASB#fen-NASB-29841l)*]by him to do his will.” (2 Tim. 2:25-26)*.