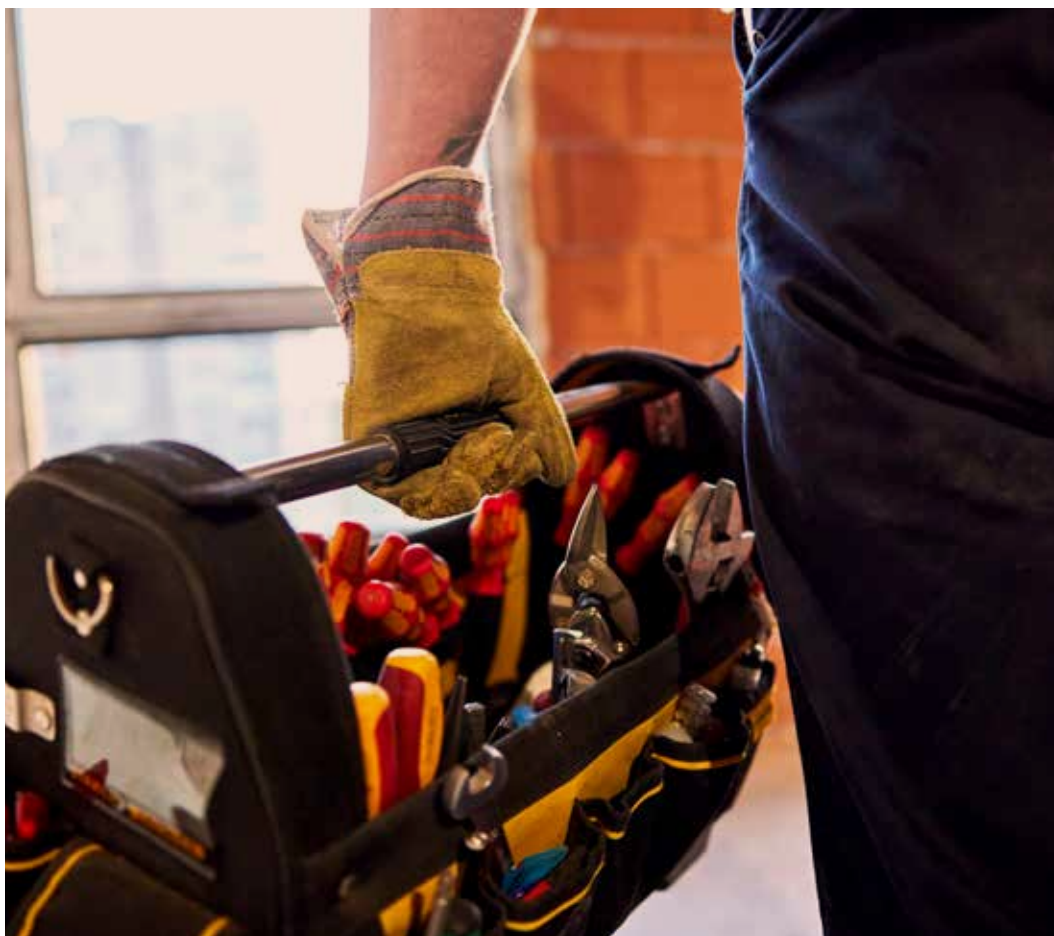


## SESSION 6

# The Strength to Stand Against Temptation



### QUESTION 1:

*When have you felt fully equipped for a task?*

## THE POINT

God equips us to stand our ground against temptation.

## THE PASSAGE

Ephesians 6:10-18

## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

During the closing months of World War II, Nazi Germany became so desperate that they initiated the Volkssturm (the people's army). This was not a part of the regular army, but an attempt to boost their numbers by conscripting males from ages sixteen to sixty to step up and fight. There was no real time to train these men. With continual fighting and a lack of weapons, these untrained soldiers were often only able to familiarize themselves with their equipment while actually engaging their enemy.<sup>1</sup>

Anyone who has ever served in the military can attest to the importance of training and being properly equipped. Knowing how to properly engage the enemy is critical to victory.

The Christian life is a battle. In Ephesians 6:10-18, the apostle Paul pointed to the equipment God provides to His followers. Like an experienced general, Paul pointed to the spiritual armor God has provided for the spiritual battle we face. Our enemy, the devil, is vicious, but in Christ, our victory is sure. The battle against temptation means we must be strong, suit up, and stand firm.

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## Ephesians 6:10-13

**10** Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

**11** Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

**12** For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

**13** Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Because of our tendency to desire ease and comfort, we need to be reminded that the Christian life is a spiritual battle. But the good news is that we do not fight in our own strength. That's why, before Paul said anything else about this spiritual battle, he reminded the Ephesians to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Paul stated this in the passive voice, meaning we do not strengthen ourselves, but the Lord is the One who strengthens us. And what a strengthening it is! "The power of his might" is the same strength we see earlier in the book of Ephesians: "the working of his mighty power" which God exercised "when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:19-20). The same power by which God raised Jesus from the dead is in our lives to help us stand strong.

God strengthens us as we make use of the resources He has already provided us: "the whole armour of God." We don't suit up in our own armor or try to engage the enemy with our own resources. We suit up in the armor that the King of kings put on to save His people and judge His enemies.

His arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak (Isa. 59:16-17).

We need this armor because, without it, we cannot “stand against the wiles of the devil.” Take note: This is not a physical battle, but a spiritual one. Our enemy is the devil first and foremost. When Paul referred to “powers . . . the rulers of the darkness of this world . . . spiritual wickedness in high place” he was referring to the demonic realm. But we need not live in fear, because God has exalted Jesus far above these evil cosmic powers and made Him ruler over all things (Eph. 1:20-21).

#### **QUESTION 2:**

***What have you been taught about spiritual warfare?***

When we think about spiritual warfare, we don’t think about the kinds of things that happen in novels or horror movies. Our battle is the daily war we call the Christian life. Each day we are engaged in any number of “fire fights” against a real and vicious enemy who wants to destroy us through deception and temptation. For this reason, we must prepare for battle, not in our strength, but in the strength of the Lord, the One who has already won the victory. He is already on the throne, ruling over these evil cosmic powers. We engage in this daily battle by putting on His armor.

#### **QUESTION 3:**

***What do you find challenging about standing firm against temptation?***

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## Ephesians 6:14-16

**14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;**

**15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;**

**16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.**

It is interesting that in this passage about spiritual battle, we're not called to defeat the enemy; Jesus has already done that. We're called to stand firm, not losing any ground to him. We can stand firm when we put on the armor God provides.

- ▶ **The belt of truth.** We stand firm against the schemes of the devil by girding ourselves with the truth of the gospel. Satan is a liar; he is the father of lies. He attacks through deception. The belt secured the rest of the soldier's armor and held his weapons. Everything we do is held in place when we accept and trust in God's Word. We stand firm when we rest secure in the truth of our faith as revealed in Scripture. This means that our personal devotions and Bible study are war time activities. Speaking the truth in love, gathering with the church to hear, sing, read, and preach the word are war-time activities.
- ▶ **The breastplate of righteousness.** Our battle is not just about knowing the truth; we must live it out. We also stand firm against the devil's schemes by walking in righteousness. A breastplate protects the heart. We protect our hearts not by our own righteousness, but by the righteousness we have in Christ. We are a new creation, "created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24). Satan will seek to accuse us, but he has no grounds for his accusations because we have been forgiven, and we rest in the righteousness of Christ.

- ▶ **Feet sandaled with readiness.** Roman soldiers were issued quality footwear: studded boots that allowed them to travel great distances and yet stand firmly in the heat of battle. We can stand firm or move forward because of His gospel of peace. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). Our standing is secure because of what Christ has done for us.

The image of “feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace” comes from Isaiah 52:7: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!” This is what Jesus did—“came and preached peace” (Eph. 2:17). This is one of the ways we do battle against the enemy. We seek to defeat the work of the enemy by proclaiming to others the gospel of peace. This means that evangelism and missions are war-time activities. Jesus’s Great Commission contains our marching orders (Matt. 28:18-20). We stand firm against the devil by sharing the gospel in the strength of the Lord.

- ▶ **The shield of faith.** Each soldier carried a large shield; a company of soldiers could interlock their shields and form a solid wall as they moved forward. Our shield is comprised of our faith—our trust in the promises and power of God. The Christian life is one of faith from beginning to end. We are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8); it is through faith we have access to the Father (3:12); and Christ dwells in our hearts through faith (3:17). It is that faith that protects us. When we trust and believe Jesus, the devil’s arrows will have no effect. The enemy can fire his arrows of lies, doubts, accusations, and temptations at us, but our faith in God keeps us from falling prey to such attacks.

## QUESTION 4:

*How do we practically take up the full armor of God?*

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## Ephesians 6:17-18

**17** And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

**18** Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

To complete the armor God provides us to help us stand firm, we are to use these additional elements.

- ▶ **The helmet of salvation.** We also stand firm against the schemes of the devil by remembering our salvation. Satan tempts us by getting us to doubt our salvation or despair over our sin. But we have been united with Christ and have received all the spiritual blessings in Him (Eph. 1:3). We fight temptation by remembering the great salvation God has accomplished for us in Christ. Because we are forgiven through His blood, there is nothing Satan can hold against us. We are free of guilt and shame. Because we are adopted into God's family, nothing can separate us from the love God has for us in Jesus.
- ▶ **The sword of the Spirit.** God has not just given us defensive armor, we also have an offensive weapon: "the sword of the Spirit—which is the word of God." This weapon is both offensive and defensive. We rest in the promises in God's Word to defend us, and we apply Scripture to specific situations to resist the enemy's attacks and send him running. We combat Satan and fight temptation, not only by standing firm on the Word but also by remembering and speaking the Word to



ourselves and to one another. Look back to the way Jesus battled Satan in the wilderness. He used the sword of the Spirit (Matt. 4:1-11).

Even as we speak the truth of Scripture to ourselves, we also help one another. The Christian life is not meant to be lived alone, and since the Christian life is war, we are not meant to fight alone. We are a band of brothers and sisters helping one another fight the enemy with the Word of God.

This spiritual battle also calls for prayer. Prayer is not a part of the armor, but it undergirds the armor. John Piper equated prayer with a walkie-talkie.<sup>2</sup> In the heat of the battle, we use that walkie-talkie to talk to our commander and seek His help and guidance. Notice how we are to pray:

- ▶ **At all times.** Our prayer life reveals our dependence on God. We need to remain in constant contact with Him, looking to Him in the heat of battle. “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17).
- ▶ **In the Spirit.** We fight in the strength of the Lord, and we rely on His Holy Spirit as we pray. Even when we feel inadequate in our prayers, we rely on the Holy Spirit who intercedes for us. “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom. 8:26).
- ▶ **With every prayer and request.** Dependency on God means we bring every need and request to Him.
- ▶ **Alert and persevering.** We don’t fall asleep on duty! We need to be vigilant.

Paul gave us a good example of how we can pray for ourselves and others in a prayer he prayed for the Ephesians.



For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen (Eph. 3:14-21).

**QUESTION 5:**

***How can our group help one another in spiritual battle?***

**ENGAGE**

***Soldiers suit up before the conflict begins. Once the battle starts, it's too late to start putting on their gear. This holds true for spiritual warfare.***

Which piece of armor do you need to put on before the battle begins?

Develop a strategy to wear this piece of armor daily. Record the steps here.

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## LIVE IT OUT

You are to be strengthened in the Lord's strength, to suit up with God's armor, and to stand firm against the devil's schemes. Are you ready for battle?

- ▶ **Take your stand.** Through prayer, commit yourself anew to standing firm in the strength of the Lord in spiritual battle.
- ▶ **Identify.** Make a list of temptations Satan often uses against you. Identify Scripture passages that will help you do battle against these specific temptations. Over the next few weeks, commit these verses to memory.
- ▶ **Stand together.** Even as Roman soldiers would often stand back-to-back in battle, you can do the same with other believers. Discuss ways to support and encourage each other in the spiritual battles you face.



### END NOTES

1. <https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/Volkssturm>
2. [desiringgod.org/messages/prayer-the-work-of-missions](https://desiringgod.org/messages/prayer-the-work-of-missions)