

# ***THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST***

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **GREAT BIBLE LESSONS** **“The Whole Armor of God”**

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.* Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:10-11). Welcome to our study of the whole armor of God. Can you imagine what it would be like if a man were to go to war without the proper armor—without a gun, helmet, sword, or clothing? Can you imagine how foolish that would be? If a person were to do that, we would think something was wrong with him. But is it any less foolish for Christians to fight a spiritual battle against the devil in an unprepared fashion? Today we are going to examine some of the armor that Christians are to use for the battle in which they are engaged, and how that if we arm ourselves properly, we can win the fight.

To **win** the battle, we first must realize that we are **in** a battle! There are so many people who approach life flippantly, without realizing that the devil is actively trying to cause them to lose their souls. Think of Job 1 where we learn that Job is a righteous and blameless man. Then Satan comes on the scene, and the Lord asks Satan where he has been. Satan says that he has been going to and fro on the Earth. It seems as though Satan was actively seeking people to cause them to lose their souls. Thus, we must awaken to the fact that everyday we are in a battle for our souls. Look at Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 as he emphasized this battle.

“Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 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.”

It is true that we live a fleshly life. We are human beings who live in a fleshly world that one day will cease to exist. Genesis 2:7 indicates that is the way we were created. God made man out of the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being. But we must realize that our battle is not carnal. We do not take up guns and ammunition to go to a geographical location to fight our battle. That is not the type of battle in which we are engaged. We are in a **spiritual** battle. Paul said in 1 Timothy 1:18, “This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare.” Not only did Paul encourage Timothy in this battle, but he also said in Ephesians 6:12 that we must realize that our battle is against “hosts of wickedness.” He said, “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age.” For this reason, we must take up the whole armor of God that we may overcome our enemy, the devil.

Part of being a good soldier, and part of winning the battle, has to do with the fact that we do not get caught up in the affairs of this life. In 2 Timothy 2:4 Paul reminded Timothy, “No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.” This is a practical point. If a person is in the army, then

it is that person's duty to fulfill the mission of the army. That person cannot become entangled in the affairs of the world, yet be a good soldier at the same time. How true that is in the army of Christ. If we as Christians want to win the battle, we must be committed and dedicated soldiers of Christ. We must "love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength" (Mk. 12:30). As Jesus said in Matthew 6:2, a man "cannot serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other." We "cannot serve God and mammon." Rest assured that in this battle, God knows your heart. You are not going to fool God. If you are "playing like" you are a soldier in God's army one day, yet are out "playing in the world" on another day, God knows that. Acts 1:24 tells us that God knows the hearts of men. Acts 15:8 gets even more specific when it says that God knows **our** hearts. From Luke 16:15 we learn that God "knows our hearts" because He sees all things (Prov. 15:3). There is nothing that is hidden from God because "all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him before whom we must give account" (Heb. 4:13). Thus, if we expect to win the battle, we will have to be entirely devoted to the cause of Christ. Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:15, "Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all."

However, we need to remember who our enemy is in this spiritual battle, and against whom we are fighting. We are fighting against the most powerful, demonic, spiritual enemy you could ever imagine—Satan himself! Look at how Satan is described in 2 Corinthians 4:4, where Paul uses scary language as he speaks of those "whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them." Here, Satan is depicted as "the god of this age." He is the one who is served by evil people who do not follow Christ. The Scriptures describe him as presenting himself as an "angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14). He may look and sound good, but in reality he is merely a wolf in sheep's clothing. Satan is described as a wily and conniving creature. In 1 Timothy 3:7 we are told to beware of "the snare of the devil." In Ephesians 6:11 we are warned against "the wiles of the devil." I often think of Wily Coyote and the roadrunner in the cartoons. Wily always has in mind some plan by which he hopes to trap the roadrunner. He never does catch him, but he always has something going in the background as he tries to ensnare him. That is like "the wiles of the devil." He is always actively trying to pursue us so as to cost us our souls. In John 8:44 Jesus said of the devil, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him." Satan lied to Adam and Eve by adding just one word ("not") to God's command ("You shall **not** surely die"—Gen. 3:4). He caused Cain to become the killer of his brother as murder entered into his heart. Thus, Satan was a liar and murderer from the beginning. But probably the most graphic illustration of Satan is found in 1 Peter 5:8 where Peter said, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." So, we understand that the devil is our great enemy, and Christ is the captain of the Lord's army.

When I think of Christ as captain of the Lord's army, I am reminded of Hebrews 2:10 where we are told of how Jesus has forged the way "to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Wouldn't it be wonderful to know that the captain you are following has been through and won the battle, and thereby has made a perfect way for you to win the battle, too? That is the wonderful thing about our Captain. He already has defeated our enemy. Hebrews 2:14 says that Jesus, "destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and released those who through fear of death were all their lifetimes subject to bondage." When Jesus died on the cross, He won the battle. We need to realize what is at stake here. In this battle, we are not battling for land, money, or world domination. The battle concerns the most-important thing ever: **the souls of men**. Jesus taught us in Mark

8:36-37 that nothing is more important than a man's soul. "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" Let's say that you were able to secure everything this world has to offer. You had all the pleasure, all the passion, and all the money, yet you ended up in Hell. What would that have profited you? Your soul is your most-important possession. Christians are told in James 5:20, "Let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a **soul** from death and cover a multitude of sins." What did the rich fool lose in Luke 12:20? Yes, he lost his money, but that was not the most-important thing. He lost his soul. In this battle, the stakes are our souls. We therefore must be aware and alert. To win the battle, we are going to have to put on the whole armor of God. So, let's think for a few moments about this armor as it is described in Ephesians 6:14-17. God has aptly equipped each Christian soldier to win the battle, but what is this "armor" that we are supposed to wear?

First we have the belt of truth, which ties everything else together in this list of armor. Paul said, "Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth." The principle is that if your armor is going to hold, it must be girded by the belt—which in this case is truth. Imagine if you were in a battle, and you have your gun, your helmet, your water, etc. But you forgot your belt. Imagine what that would be like—going through the whole battle constantly pulling up your pants. Or, imagine how embarrassing it would be if your pants fell down in the middle of the battle. It is the belt of truth that holds everything together. It is therefore one of the most-essential parts in the Christian's armor. Someone might ask, "What is truth?" Pilate asked this same question in John 18:38. So many in the world today are skeptical about truth. But in John 17:17, Jesus told us what truth is when He said of God, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." God's Word (the Bible) is our absolute source of truth today. If we do not have ourselves girded with truth, then there is no way for us to win the battle. In fact, knowing the truth is the key to overcoming the enemy. In John 8:32 Jesus said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The truth is what sets men free from sin and the power of Satan. It is not military power with its bombs, missiles, or guns, but the truth of God's Word. In Psalm 119:160 the psalmist said, "The entirety of Your word is truth." We need **all** of God's Word as we live our lives. In Psalm 119:130 we read, "The entrance of Your words gives light." God's Word is the truth that shines light on an evil and ungodly world. The value of truth is found in Proverbs 23:23 where the writer said, "Buy the truth, and sell it not, also wisdom and instruction and understanding." No matter what it costs—even if we have to give up things like our families, our lifestyles, or our financial gains—the truth of the Word of God lived out in our lives is more important and more valuable than anything you could ever imagine. If we do not have truth on our side, there is no way to win the battle against the devil. In fact, without truth we are aligned with him!

Second, Paul says that Christians must not only put on the belt of truth, but also adorn themselves with "the breastplate of righteousness" (Eph. 6:14). The breastplate is what covers the body's main organs (heart, lungs, stomach, intestines, etc.). If those organs are injured during battle, the soldier cannot continue to fight. Having a good breastplate is essential to winning the battle. Righteousness is the attribute of the Christian's armor that can help protect us from the slings and arrows of the evil one. Just as the shield of faith protects us, so our righteousness will not allow the devil to penetrate us with his temptations. Our righteousness and our desire to do right are what protect us from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Here are some passages from the Book of Proverbs that illustrate the value of righteousness. In Proverbs 10:30 we read, "The righteous will never be removed, but the wicked will not inhabit the earth." Proverbs 11:5-6 says, "The righteousness of the blameless will direct his way aright, but the wicked will fall by

his own wickedness. The righteousness of the upright will deliver them, but the unfaithful will be caught by their lust.” Proverbs 12:28 states, “In the way of righteousness is life, and in its pathway there is no death.” Righteousness is one of the most-valuable things we could ever have. It gives us life. It protects us from the evil one by shielding us from some of the devil’s temptations. How do we become righteous people? Psalm 119:172 says that all of God’s commandments are righteousness. We are told in Matthew 6:33 to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” We are told to “be holy as He is holy” (1 Pet. 1:15). So the only way for us to be righteous is for us to look to the character of God, and look to the Scriptures to see what is right in God’s sight. By putting those principles into practice in our lives, we can be righteous people. Righteousness is essential to our being saved. The writer of the Book of Hebrews spoke of righteousness in Hebrews 12:14 when he wrote, “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.” That is how important it is for us to be righteous and holy people. I am not saying that we, on our own merit, are better than anyone else. I am saying that we are trying our best to live up to the standards set forth by God’s character and God’s Word. So, we must put on the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness.

Third, Paul mentions that we must “shod our feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (Eph. 6:15). If you have ever been camping or, if you have ever been in a battle, you know how important a good pair of boots is. Those boots can help your feet stay dry and comfortable. If your feet are wet, or if they hurt because they have bruises and sores on them, you will never make it in any kind of adventure. The same is true in regard to the Christian’s armor. If we do not have feet that are “shod with the Gospel,” and if our lives are not built around the Gospel, then there is no way we are going to make it. The point is that we are to take the Gospel with us everywhere we go. This is important as it relates to knowing and understanding the Gospel. How can we prepare our lives by the Gospel if we do not know the Gospel? In 2 Timothy 2:15 we are told to study so that we **can** know. We are to be like those noble Bereans in Acts 17:11 who were willing to study the Scriptures daily. We are to be ready always to “give a defense to everyone who asks us a reason for the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15). We are to hide God’s Word in our hearts so that we will not sin against Him (Ps. 119:11). We therefore need to ask ourselves whether or not we are living our lives by the Gospel. Have we prepared our way by putting the Gospel into our lives? Do you see how all of these points tie together? We have the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteous, and our Gospel boots.

Fourth, Paul then mentions the shield of faith (Eph. 6:16), which certainly is an essential item. Paul says, “Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.” The history of the shield is an interesting point that comes to us from the Roman era. During battles, the enemy would fire at soldiers arrows that had been soaked in a flammable solution. Anything they hit would catch on fire, and thus destroy an army’s defenses. So, as a way of protecting themselves, armies invented shields that could be coated with leather and soaked in water. As soon as the arrows hit those types of shields, their fire was quenched. This explains Paul’s allusion to the “shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.” It is faith that will help us win the battle. Hebrews 11:6 says that “without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” There is no way we can be pleasing to the Father if we are not willing to have the faith described in Scripture. In 1 John 5:4 we are told, “Whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.” How does a person obtain such faith? How can we prepare ourselves with “the shield of faith”? If faith is obedient trust in God, then that trust is secured by reading about God and learning from the Scriptures of His will for our lives. In fact, that is how

the Bible tells us that we obtain our faith. Romans 10:17 says that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” We cannot obtain faith in God through some nebulous type of “better-felt-than-told” idea. We cannot obtain faith via a “mystical moving in the middle of the night.” Faith comes via Scripture. When we put our trust in God as we read and learn about Him, we build faith. Proverbs 3:5 tells us “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.”

Fifth, we see the helmet of salvation (Eph. 6:17). A helmet protects the part of our body that does our thinking—our brain. It is our brain that keeps our body going and that helps us continue to think clearly. Thus, an extremely important part of the Christian’s armor is the helmet of salvation. What protects us—even if we lose our lives in the battle? It is the fact that the faithful Christian has salvation on his side. One of the greatest tools in our battle against the devil is that no matter how harsh the temptations become (even if they are like those in Job’s day!), no matter how severe the persecutions may be, and no matter how fearful the enemy is, if we will remain faithful to God, we are guaranteed a home in Heaven. We could not possibly find a more-encouraging concept than that. Our soul is what is really important. In Revelation 2:10 we are told, “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.” In Revelation 14:13 we read, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on, that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.” Think of promises like the one found in 1 John 2:25—“This is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life.” No matter what happens, if we remain true to God we will have a home in Heaven awaiting us. You cannot find more comfort or encouragement than that.

Sixth and last we see the “sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17). No soldier goes into battle without some kind of weapon. Our weapon as Christians is “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” God’s Word is our spiritual tool, and is what we use to defeat the devil. We cannot have a better tool than the Word of God. Romans 1:16 says that it is “God’s power of salvation.” It is “living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). The Word of God is able to pierce right through us to see what we’re made of. In Ephesians 4:15 we are told to “speak the truth in love.” So how do we overcome Satan? We must understand that we are in a battle. We must put on “the whole armor of God.” And we must utilize our spiritual-victory plan.

That plan is laid out for the child of God in Revelation 12:11 where John wrote, “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.” Look at those things. “The blood of the Lamb” is Jesus’ sacrifice. “The word of their testimony” is what we today recognize as the Scriptures. “And they did not love their lives to the death” is self-sacrifice. So today we can overcome Satan “by the blood of the Lamb.” The lamb that was slain in the Old Testament era was a symbol of something pure and perfect that took the place of sinners. John the Baptist once saw Jesus approaching and said, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” Hebrews 10:4 tells us that “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.” Hebrews 10:12 says that Jesus, “after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.” His sacrifice, being perfect (Heb. 4:15), was able to completely remove the guilt and stain of sin for those who obey Him.

There also is “the word of their testimony,” which to us is the Scriptures. Those Scriptures are our spiritual lifeline. They, as it were, turn on a flashlight for us in a world of spiritual darkness (Ps. 119:105). The Scriptures are what make us spiritually clean. “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word” (Ps. 119:9). The Scriptures help us prevent sin in our lives. We hide God’s Word in our hearts so that we will not sin against Him (Ps. 119:11).

The third aspect in our spiritual-victory plan has to do with the fact that we must be willing “not to love our lives to the death.” This means that we must be willing to sacrifice ourselves for the cause of Christ. We are not talking, of course, about a person going out and doing something foolish that would intentionally harm his body in the name of Jesus. What we are talking about is being willing every single day to give our lives to Christ, and being willing to submit our will to God’s will. The Scriptures teach in Romans 12:1 that we are “living sacrifices.” We are to consider ourselves “crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20). We are to “deny ourselves and take up our cross daily” (Lk. 9:23). The Scriptures teach us that the love of God ought to cause us to die to self daily in order to live for Jesus.

Are you in the battle today **to win**? Are you aware that Satan is trying to cause you to lose your soul? If so, have you put on the whole armor of God? Are you prepared spiritually to go to battle against the devil? Are you taking advantage of the spiritual-victory plan? Have you put its principles to work in your life so that you can overcome the devil? If you are not a Christian, you can become one by obeying the Gospel. Do what Jesus said in Mark 16:16—“He who believes and is baptized will be saved.” If you are a Christian, our encouragement to you today is to never give up. Always remain true to God, and fight the good fight of faith.

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD”

1. What does Ephesians 6:10 urge Christians to do?
2. What does Ephesians 6:11 urge Christians to do?
3. What is discussed in Ephesians 6:14-17?
4. In 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, the apostle Paul used a small, three-letter word to discuss something in which all Christians are engaged. What is that three-letter word?
5. In 1 Timothy 1:18, what did Paul urge Timothy to wage?
6. Against whom, according to Ephesians 6:12, are Christians fighting?
7. According to 2 Timothy 2:4, if Christians expect to succeed in their quest, what can they **not** afford to do?
8. What principle is discussed in Matthew 6:2 that also relates to a Christian's warfare against the devil?
9. How is Satan described in 2 Corinthians 4:4?
10. What warning did Paul give Timothy In 1 Timothy 3:7?
11. What warning is found in Ephesians 6:11?
12. How is the devil described in John 8:44?
13. What warning about the devil is found in 1 Peter 5:8?
14. According to Hebrews 2:14, who did Jesus defeat through His death on the cross?
15. According to Jesus' statement in John 17:17, what is truth?
16. What, according to Proverbs 12:28, does righteousness give us?
17. With what, according to Ephesians 6:15, are we to “shod our feet”?
18. According to Ephesians 6:16, against what does “the shield of faith” protect us?
19. According to Ephesians 6:17, what, exactly, is “the sword of the Spirit”?
20. Whence, according to Romans 10:17, does faith originate?
21. In Ephesians 6:17 Paul spoke of “the helmet of salvation.” What is the faithful Christian promised, according to 1 John 2:25, that relates to that “helmet of salvation”?
22. Revelation 12:11 sets forth a “spiritual-victory plan.” What are the three elements of that plan?