Ephesians 6:10-13

God’s Provision for Protective Co-submission

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For 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. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

## Finally

Wrapping up the main theological topics of this letter, which circle around unity in the Lord, Paul closes with a passage of loving in unity as a spiritual body, submitting to one another, in Christ. There’s a touch more after the armor, but this is the closing theological thrust.

# Be Strong in the Lord and the Strength of His Might

*Why does Paul want the body to be strong in the strength of God’s might?*

Paul has multiple times in Ephesians encouraged to the believers to recognize God’s power, strength and might in their lives (c.f. Ephesians 1:18-22; Ephesians 3:16, 20). The word translated ‘be strong’ can be elongated to ‘be strengthened’ as it is present imperative passive. We’re strengthened ‘in’ the Lord. Just as we’re to be in Christ, our strength is also in Him! If we’re bringing strength it is limited, if God is bringing strength, in Christ, then it is infinite and perfect.

## Standing Together Against Schemes

Most often missed in studying this passage is the second person plural nature of Paul’s writing in the Greek. He is challenging the body together to be putting on the full armor (or taking it up in vs 13) so that we would be continuing together as one, in Christ, to stand.

## Put on the Full Armor of God

*What does it mean to put on the full armor of God?*

The Greek word for ‘put on’ here can also be translated ‘clothe yourselves.’ Consider clothing yourselves (2nd person plural) with complete armor that is of God’s making and furnishing. Earthly armor at the time would have been better than nothing, but was not remarkable by today’s standards. Paul’s focus is not on the earthly nature of the armor, but specifically the opposite of that: the analogy of armor that is of God is armor that doesn’t falter, doesn’t give at a point of weakness; it doesn’t have chinks, holes or gaps; and it doesn’t have technological variance. God’s armor is perfect armor, provided for our every need, and it is armor that is detailed as being appropriate for every saint. Paul’s admonition to put on the armor, or to put on Christ or similar is not alone here in the scriptures (c.f. “Putting on the Armor”: Romans 13:12, 14; 1 Thessalonians 5:8; “Putting on Christ” and Similar Concepts: 1 Corinthians 15:54; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10-12).

The armor described here in the broader context of Ephesians 6:10-17 is the armor of the Roman testudo (tortoise) formation [see photo[[1]](#endnote-1)] which would have been a formation with maximum defense, required cooperation and practice, and offered protection from arrows. Attackers would be able to come at the formation with high energy (frenzied battle state), but have very little impact due to the coverage of shields and armor.

Figure - See Endnote for attribution

### So That You Will Be Able to Stand Firm Against the Schemes of the Devil

*Why does the enemy want a group of soldiers to break formation?*

The soldiers’ footwear was called caligae and they were cleated with nails that would have allowed the soldier to stand firm. An onrushing attacker would not merely be able to slam into a soldier because 1) they footwear held them firmly in place, but 2) their fellow soldiers were behind them holding formation and stabilizing one another. In addition, the believers are able to:

* Do the works prepared for us (Ephesians 2:10)
* Love one another (Ephesians 3:17-19)
* Be united (Ephesians 4:1-6)
* Equip one another (Ephesians 4:11-16)
* Be wise so as to be a light (Ephesians 5:1-17)
* Walk in the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18-20)
* Submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21-6:9)

Paul’s interest in establishing the church in Ephesus long term had to do with making sure they were not falling apart. He did not want them divided, but instead wanted them “leaning in” and coming together in the unity of Christ.

#### Schemes

*Whose schemes are these, and should we be afraid of them?*

These schemes were plots and plans by the devil to deceive! Paul warned the Ephesians in 4:14 that there were plots of crafty men, but here he warns of the additional plotting of the devil (the father of those who are not believers c.f. John 8:44). What we need to recognize is that the scheming is not a physical attack. There are a lot of people afraid of a one-on-one combat situation with the devil, and this is not Paul’s concern.

*How does the devil scheme? What are his tactics?*

From the beginning (c.f. Genesis 3:1-6) ­Satan’s interaction with mankind involved misrepresenting God and misrepresenting reality and the truth. God, who is full of wisdom and insight, presents truth [c.f. Exodus 31:3; 1 Kings 5:12; Proverbs 2:6, 3:9; **10:23**; Romans 11:33], and Satan corrupts it in an attempt to cause fear, uncertainty and doubt [cf. Matthew 4:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 3:5; Revelation 12:9].

Having been created in God’s image [c.d. Genesis 1:26-28; Matthew 22:17-21] mankind thinks. Thinking is a present activity, but the way the brain works we can create neurological impacts that lead us into various future actions. The deceiver tries to impact our understanding so that our thinking is tainted with error, fear, or at the very least anything but unity with God and the body – which is why the Spirit draws us to unity in Ephesians 4:1-6. Paul’s admonishment to be setting our minds on things above (c.f. Colossians 3:1-3) is in part because our minds are influenced by what we think.

##### Fear, Uncertainty and Doubt

Within charismatic circles (and various other places where it sneaks in) a lot of ‘binding of Satan’ happens. Believers, uncertain as to what the cause of their trials are, or what evil plan may be unfolding, gather in prayer meetings or go on prayer walks and drives binding Satan, praying hedges of protection, reminding him his head is crushed, and generally trying to engage in random ways: in confused “spiritual warfare.” Their uncertainty of how the devil works leads them to fear, doubt, and confused contrivances. Paul’s admonition here is that believers stand. Paul’s focus is on God’s revealed truth being a solid ground on which we can stand. Wisdom and truth are what Christ responded to Satan with in the wilderness, and are what we should be standing on ourselves [c.f. Ephesians 1:13, 4:21, 4:24; 2 Timothy 2:15, 4:1-5].

#### Worldly Misrepresentations of Satan

By misrepresenting himself within the world Satan has caused mankind to not be afraid of the deception, or at least not afraid of the darkness that really faces them. By being afraid of a red monster with a pitchfork or denying Satan’s existence the world has deluded itself to be wise in its own eyes and it mocks those who concern themselves with spiritual truth regarding Satan’s existence and schemes.

### For Our Struggle is Not Against Flesh and Blood

Is Paul referring to the flesh (AKA sin nature) here?

Paul is tackling the earthy battles that are easy to focus on. Conflict between the Jews and gentiles, barbarians, and other gentile nations were easy to see. In modern times we see wars as a reality and our concern over earthly wars can distract us from the root cause: the deceiver keeping us from spiritual and eternal peace.

### But Against the Rulers, Powers, the World Forces of This Darkness, the Spiritual Forces of Wickedness in the Heavenly Places

A lot of effort has been put forth by various theologians and teachers to identify specific examples of each of these forces we’re facing. While there are reasons to have an understanding them, the thrust of Paul’s writing is the provision of God against them. God has dominion over all things as was His right as creator [c.f. 1 Chronicles 29:11; Job 25:2;Psalm 103:22, 145:13; Daniel 4:3; Ephesians 1:21]. When Satan came to ask for permission to touch Job he had to ask permissions. Earthly spiritual dominions recorded like in Ephesians 2:2 are a representation of authority that is not ultimate.

## God is the Solution

God’s armor is given as an ultimate authority, ultimate protective armor. No matter which scope we understand or see God’s provision is ultimate.

### Therefore, Take Up the Full Armor of God

As we will see in further detail in the rest of Ephesians 6:14-17 the armor is of God in every way. Paul urges the believers to ‘take up’ the full armor as an imperative active direction [2nd person plural]. A body with only some believers prepared to stand presents a lot of room for attack as well as vulnerability.

#### The Full Armor

The full armor is armor that touches on core of man at the soul [righteousness] and mind [truth, helmet of salvation], resurrection [the gospel], belief [the shield of faith], and the response by the Spirit. If our thoughts and our faith rest in who we are in Christ then the distractions, lies, deceptions and temporary persecutions cease to carry weight into eternity.

### So That You Will Be Able to Resist in the Evil Day, and Having Done Everything, To Stand Firm.

The believer who understands that this is the day the Lord has made [Psalm 118:24] knows that the day itself is not evil [it was created by God c.f. Genesis 1:5], but that the world and the flesh are constantly challenging them (along with the devil’s schemes) to move toward evil. In Galatians 5:16 we see that it is only by the Holy Spirit that the believer is able to resist these desires. Since the Holy Spirit is part of the full armor we know that God had provided for this resistance.

God’s provision is for us to stand firm. We’re not moving; we know what is truth; we know where our life is hidden; we know our purpose on the earth; we have righteousness, truth, faith, and love!

1. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ncarey/144042243/> Photo by Neil and/or Kathy Carey; Used under Creative Commons License 2.0. Photo was cropped and made grey scale for easier photocopying. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)