



3Q 2023 Lesson 12 – The Call to Stand

by Lori Atkins

INTRODUCTION

memory text is from Ephesians 6:10,11 –

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.”

What is armor and why do we need it?

Has anyone here ever served in the military or been deployed in combat?

What is your concept of armor and why did you have it?

How did you use it?

The dictionary definition says armor is a noun that means any covering worn as a defense against weapons, and lists these related words: shield, defense, guard, protection, and security.

Now why in the world would Paul think we need a “defense against weapons”, or a shield or protection in the spiritual realm?

Is there something else going on...maybe behind the scenes that maybe we need to be aware of?



Are there any Bible texts that might help us determine why Paul believes we need to gird ourselves in the “whole armor of God”?

The first chapter in the book of Job when Satan presents himself before the heavenly counsel reveals a larger sin problem outside of humanity and this universe alone.

“For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross” (Col 1:19–20 NIV84).

What about Elishah’s servant, remember him? This story is mentioned in Saturday’s lesson – Elisha’s bleary-eyed servant stumbles out of his tent and sees an alarming sight—a large, well-equipped and hostile army with “troops, horses, and chariots everywhere.” Speaking to the prophet Elisha, he stammers out the news, along with his harried question, “ ‘Oh, sir, what will we do now?’ ” Elisha responds, “ ‘Don’t be afraid! . . . For there are more on our side than on theirs!’ ” a response that fails to register in the face of his servant. Elisha, pulling him close, prays for him: “ ‘O Lord, open his eyes and let him see!’ ” The prophet’s prayer is answered immediately. The servant steps to the ramparts again, but this time the veil between the seen and the unseen lifts. He now sees not one army, but two. “The Lord opened the young man’s eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire” (2 Kings 6:15–17, NLT).



Do we need to pray that the Lord will open our eyes...that the veil between the seen and the unseen be lifted sometimes? Listen to what Mrs. White said on this subject:

“That time will soon come, and we shall have to keep hold of the strong arm of Jehovah; for all these great signs and mighty wonders of the devil are designed to deceive God’s people and overthrow them. Our minds must be stayed upon God, and we must not fear the fear of the wicked, that is, fear what they fear, and reverence what they reverence, but be bold and valiant for the truth. Could our eyes be opened, we should see forms of evil angels around us, trying to invent some new way to annoy and destroy us. And we should also see angels of God guarding us from their power; for God’s watchful eye is ever over Israel for good, and He will protect and save His people, if they put their trust in Him. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him. – {CET 170.1}

What about the next verse of our memory text:

“Put on all the armor that God gives you, so that you will be able to stand up against the Devil’s evil tricks. **For we are not fighting against human beings but against the wicked spiritual forces in the heavenly world, the rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers of this dark age**” (Ephesians 6:11-12 GNT).

“**And there was war in heaven.** Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who



leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him” (Revelation 12:7-9 NIV84).

One of the founders of our church agreed when she wrote this:

“God assembled the angelic host to take measures to avert the threatened evil. It was decided in Heaven's council for angels to visit Eden and warn Adam that he was in danger from the foe. Two angels sped on their way to visit our first parents. The holy pair received them with joyful innocence, expressing their grateful thanks to their Creator for thus surrounding them with such a profusion of his bounty. Everything lovely and attractive was theirs to enjoy, and everything seemed wisely adapted to their wants; and that which they prized above all other blessings, was the society of the Son of God and the heavenly angels, for they had much to relate to them at every visit, of their new discoveries of the beauties of nature in their lovely Eden home, and they had many questions to ask relative to many things which they could but indistinctly comprehend. 1SP 32.3

The angels graciously and lovingly gave them the information they desired. **They also gave them the sad history of Satan's rebellion and fall.** They then distinctly informed them that the tree of knowledge was placed in the garden to be a pledge of their obedience and love to God; that the high and happy estate of the holy angels was to be retained upon condition of obedience; that they were similarly situated; that they could obey the law of God and be inexpressibly happy, or disobey, and lose their high estate, and be plunged into hopeless despair. 1SP 33.1



They told Adam and Eve that **God would not compel them to obey—that he had not removed from them power to go contrary to his will; that they were moral agents, free to obey or disobey.** There was but one prohibition that God had seen fit to lay upon them as yet. If they should transgress the will of God, they would surely die. They told Adam and Eve that the most exalted angel, next in order to Christ, refused obedience to the law of God which he had ordained to govern heavenly beings; **that this rebellion had caused war in Heaven which resulted in the rebellious being expelled therefrom, and every angel was driven out of Heaven who united with him in questioning the authority of the great Jehovah; and that this fallen foe was now an enemy to all that concerned the interest of God and his dear Son.** 1SP 33.2

We're gonna veer off on a small tangent...and it won't be the last one.

If Adam and Eve were not to know evil, then why did God and the angels educate them about the rebellion, the war in heaven, and evil?

Because the issue of “knowing” in the Bible isn't about cognitive awareness, comprehension, or factual understanding, Biblical knowing is when something becomes part of your experience. It is knowing intimately, through experience, not through mere information. It is not knowing *about* something or someone, but actually knowing it or them.

For instance:

- There is a difference between knowing about swimming and knowing how to swim.



- There is a difference between knowing the fact that chocolate and vanilla are different ice cream flavors and knowing the deliciousness of what they actually taste like
- There is a difference between knowing about a famous celebrity and knowing them personally
- There is a difference between knowing about God and knowing God intimately and experientially

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil wasn't a place of theoretical knowledge, cognitive knowledge, or academic knowledge. God and the angels had already informed Adam and Eve about Satan, about evil, and about death being the result of sin. The two had been instructed. Adam and Eve had information, factual knowledge. But having mere facts is not what the tree was about – it was about experience, knowing by experience either good or evil. Choose to trust and believe God and know good – or choose to believe lies, distrust God, and know evil. God told them, “It is at this tree you will have knowledge, so choose well; choose to trust me and not to partake of the fruit and you will know good – you will know love, trust, loyalty, devotion, maturity, integrity, joy, peace, and godliness. All of this will solidify in your character. So please, my precious children, choose to know good! But if you choose to believe lies, distrust me and partake in the fruit, you will know evil – you will know fear, selfishness, insecurity, guilt, shame, distrust, pain, suffering, and death. Please, my precious children, don't choose to know evil.”

God already knew evil – not in His character, but in His heart, as His heavenly home had been fractured. He was already suffering the heartache of betrayal, disaffection, rebellion, being lied about, and the loss of many of His



beloved angels. God did not want humankind to know this kind of pain, suffering, or heartache. He wanted humankind to know only good, but this required them to choose to trust God – to choose the good in order for them to know it.

So God warned them and placed this tree there for their development as free beings, with His goal for them to choose to know good and solidify themselves in loyalty and love to Him and develop their own mature godlike character. Unfortunately, they *chose* to know evil and humanity was plunged into pain, suffering and death, and Jesus stepped in to take this terrible terminal condition upon Himself and overcome it and restore the human species back to God's perfection, eradicating the death causing principles and writing God's law of love, the life causing protocols back into humanity, thus becoming our Savior.

So what was the purpose of placing this tree in the garden? It was for their development and maturity of character. Consider this historic quote:

"God might have created man without the power to transgress His law; He might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit; but in that case man would have been, not a free moral agent, but a mere automation. **Without freedom of choice, his obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced. There could have been no development of character. . . . It would have been unworthy of man as an intelligent being,** and would have sustained Satan's charge of God's arbitrary rule." {CC 13.3}

Is this what you were taught about the tree in the garden?



My own church...my own church school taught me that the taunting tree and the command not to eat the fruit were an arbitrary test of obedience...yet the very founder of that church says that **NOT** having the tree there or intervening to stop them from touching the forbidden fruit is what would have been arbitrary – not giving them the choice to either trust God and perfect their characters...or believe the lie and corrupt their characters...would have been *unworthy* of God's highest most intelligent creation, and would have provided evidence to the onlooking universe that Satan's allegations against God were true.

Let's read Isaiah 9:6 and verse 7...I'm headed off on another little tangent here – we may be on a tangent within a tangent at this point, but I promise we'll end up back right back in a cosmic war:

6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (NKJV)

- What do these verses mean to you?
- What do they say about the divinity of Jesus?
- Who is the Counselor? The Holy Spirit
- Who is the Everlasting Father?
- Who is the Prince of Peace?



- How can all three names/descriptions be said of Jesus?

Does this mean there is only one individuality and Jesus is that one individuality, or rather that the three individualities are so united in perfection of Their character of love that when you see Jesus you see the Father and the Spirit?

What does the idea of “Prince of Peace” and “His government and peace” mean to you?

- In this world today do we need more peace?
- Do we need the kingdom of the Prince of Peace? Is peace a situation? A person? A state of being?

How does one achieve peace? Can we achieve peace through war? Yet the Bible says

“And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.” (Rev 12:7 NIV84)

How do we understand this?

How is it that we cannot achieve peace by prosecuting war, yet Michael and His angels warred against the devil and Jesus is the Prince of Peace?

What law lens are we understanding this through?

If we understand law and government to be like human governments where law is imposed, injustice must be punished, and war is won through



conquest, through force and might, through power over, through killing one's enemies and forcing submission.

But if we understand design law then we understand that peace is only achieved by destroying the elements that cause division and hostility. How do we do that...what is the **ONLY** way to truly accomplish that? **We destroy lies, fear, and selfishness out of the hearts of intelligent beings.**

Thus, the Bible says:

“3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does [Side note...next week's lesson is entitled “Waging Peace”]. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Cor 10:3–5 NIV84).

What kind of weapons do we use? Those that demolish lies about God and win hearts to love and trust—can you win hearts by force and violence? No – the Law of Liberty prevents it! Only the truth about God's character of Love, His Design Laws, and methods can demolish the lies and win hearts to love and trust.

This all fits perfectly as the word in Revelation 12 translated “war” “there was war in heaven...” is:

πόλεμος [pólemos /pol·em·os/] n m.

From pelomai (to bustle); TDNT 6:502; TDNTA 904; GK



4483; 18 occurrences; AV translates as “war” 12 times, “battle” five times, and “fight” once. 1 a war. 2 a fight, a battle. 3 a dispute, strife, quarrel. 1

1 Strong, J. (1995). Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon. Woodside Bible Fellowship.

In English we get the word polemic which means: “a controversial argument, as one against some opinion, doctrine, etc.”

Are there dangers in taking the “warfare” metaphor and all this military language literally?

History provides the evidence – the Dark Ages, the Crusades, Witch Trials, or current branches of Islam, Judaism, & Christianity, etc. Don’t forget what kind of war we are fighting and what kind of weapons are used. God fights the war with the weapons of truth, love, freedom, evidence, revelation—Satan fights with lies, deception, flattery, coercion, manipulation, propaganda, and violence. Remember...we can never get peace using Satan’s methods—never!

Aaaaand we’re back...toldja I wouldn’t get lost on our tangent(s). I want to dig into our memory verse a bit more by reading and unpacking the verses before and after from *The Remedy*, and then we’ll look at each element of the “armor of God”:

10 Finally, stay strong in your connection and devotion to the Lord and his mighty power. 11 Arm your minds with God's complete set of armor so that you can join the ranks of Christ's soldiers and stand successfully in the face of the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is



not against flesh and blood, with man-made weapons, but against all individuals, entities and powers that misrepresent God and darken minds, and against Satan—the originator of lies about God—and his cohorts who also misrepresent God in the heavenly realms. [does this bring to mind 2Cor 10:35? our weapons have divine power to demolish strongholds, arguments, pretensions...] 13 Therefore arm your minds with God's full set of armor so that when Satan's grand deception comes and it seems the heavens are about to fall, you are able to stand; [Do you typically think of the armor of God as mental armor, arming your mind to not be infected, degraded, discouraged, corrupted?] and when you have done everything to present the truth and expose Satan's lies—don't falter; stand! 14 Stand firm, with the truth of God wrapped around you like a belt; [what truth is the truth that we need? Is it primarily the truth about which day is the Sabbath? If we have that truth but we believe God imposed the day arbitrarily and will punish people for not observing it, then are we worshipping the true God or the false version Satan alleges? So the primary truth is always about God, His character, and His methods of truth, love, and freedom] with a righteous, Christlike character developed within—like a breastplate; [How do we experience a righteous character? Is it passive, only through trust and God does it all? Or is it cooperative, we trust God who provides new desires, motives, insights, wisdom, truths, but we must choose to accept, apply, internalize and identify with God and His truths and do what is right, healthy, and reasonable in governance of ourselves?] 15 and the peace that comes from accepting the good news about God—like track shoes providing good traction and a solid foundation. [Have you found increased peace as you have come to experience God as Designer and Creator and rejected the dictator views?] 16 Also, hold fast the shield of trust, which extinguishes all the



burning fear and insecurity brought by the devil's temptations. [How does trust in God overcome temptation? Are not most temptations related to some fear or insecurity? Does trust reduce fear and insecurity? But can you trust a being whom you believe will hurt you if you don't trust them?] 17 Take with you the helmet of a healed mind—a mind protected from the assaults of Satan; [What heals the mind and also protects against the assaults of Satan? A mind that has developed by practice the ability to tell the right from the wrong (Heb 5:14), a mind that loves and discerns truth] and attack the lies about God with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God—the truth. 18 And talk with God with an enlightened mind, intelligently, on all occasions, about all of your concerns, requests, plans, and issues. With all of this in mind, be alert and always keep praying for God's people.

What beautiful promises and instruction given to us by Paul, right? Note that he first tells us what the warfare is and why the armor is important in verses 10-13, and then he explains what each element of that armor is:

Belt = Truth:

Truth eradicates the lies that are part of our DNA.

Breastplate = Righteousness:

Heart transformation yields Righteousness – Christ weaves His character into ours, i.e., “covered with the robe of righteousness”, “we live His life”...doing that which is Right, because it IS right.

Shoes = Gospel of Peace:

True conversion cannot happen without our wanting to share our experience.



Note it's a gospel of "Peace" NOT the "wrath of the Lamb".

Shield = Faith:

Trust based on EVIDENCE – not a blind faith. What happens when we lose trust?

Helmet = Salvation:

Conscious understanding & cooperation with God's methods, principles, & government yields healing or Salvation. Level 7 – Friend of God.

Sword of the Spirit = Word of God [see Heb. 4: 12]

This is not a "God said it, I believe it, that settles it" use of the Word of God, nor is it an actual weapon to beat others over the head with. Again, it's a Level 7 "Friend of God" approach, where He no longer calls us servants He calls us friends and we understand God's Word is LIFE itself, because He designed it to function in perfect harmony with His Character of Love.

SUNDAY

Battle Speech

When one sincere, Spirit-filled, devoted Christian stands up for Christ, the whole world changes. Also, Luther did not make his defense loudly or unnaturally. He took his stand in faith. He did not speak based on his own power or schemes; he went to Worms as one already condemned to death. But Luther spoke as Christ's soldier, covered in the armor of God. The battle he went to fight was not his battle. It was God's battle. All he needed to say was "Here I stand," and God changed the course of the great controversy forever.



Battle exhortations in the Old Testament (see, for instance, Deut. 20:2–4; Judges 7:15–18; 2 Chron. 20:13–20; 2 Chron. 32:6–8; Neh. 4:14, 19, 20) underline the idea that Israel’s success in battle does not depend on the superiority of its own weapons or an army that outnumbered its foes. Rather, victory results from depending on the presence and power of God. The key to the Israelites’ success was not confidence in themselves but firm trust in God’s power and His provision for their success. Paul makes bold use of these themes to exhort believers to be:

- (1) active in pursuing the church’s mission;
- (2) attentive to the unseen dimensions that impact their lives and witness;
- (3) cognizant of the divine provision for their success; and
- (4) always alert to the importance of unity and collaboration among believers

WEDNESDAY

Standing on the Ancient Battlefield

Battle speeches included in the writings of Thucydides, one of the great classical authors of battle literature, highlight three successive actions that must occur if a side is to be victorious:

- (1) soldiers must “close with the enemy,” which means they must march to meet their foes; then,
- (2) they must attack and “stand fast,” or “stand our ground,” fighting hand-to-hand with their foes; and finally,
- (3) they must “beat back the enemy” (see Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* [New York: E. P. Dutton, 1910], 4.10.1–5).



The key moment of an ancient battle occurred with the second of these three actions, when the two opposing phalanxes came crashing together in

“a terrible cacophony of smashed bronze, wood, and flesh,” which ancient author Xenophon refers to as that “ ‘awful crash.’ ”—Victor Davis Hanson, *The Western Way of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 152, 153.

Standing firm, holding one’s ground at this strategic moment, was the great challenge of ancient battle. In the close combat that would ensue, each side would seek momentum for “the push.” This is no relaxed stance! To “stand,” then, is to be vigorously engaged in battle, employing every weapon in close-order combat, a point obvious from the military imagery in Paul’s earlier exhortation to be found “standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel” (Phil. 1:27, ESV).

THURSDAY

Wrestling Against Evil Powers

“Satan has come down with great power to work with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish. The powers of deception are working upon minds in every country to gain a foothold. Satan is seeking to hedge up our way in this country. [Hedge up our way means to restrict our liberties, to have our churches closed, to restrict visitations, to close our schools, to interfere with free assembly and association and free speech and to censor ideas that disagree with the lies of Satan. Do we see that happening today? And have you seen many in the church supporting these dark movements of Satan?] The



night of trial, the night of weeping, the night of persecution for the truth's sake, is not far distant. **[Are we entering this time, is it about to break upon us?]** It is through much tribulation that we shall stand as faithful sentinels for God, not swerving one hair from truth and righteousness. Famines will increase; pestilences will sweep away thousands. Dangers are all around us from the powers without and Satanic workings within, but the restraining power of God is now being exercised.

12LtMs, Lt 31, 1897, par. 16 **[The restraining power of God was being exercised in 1897, it is still being exercised, but the four winds are loosening, Satanic powers are gaining greater freedom to act. Do you recognize this?]**

“Satan hath desired to have thee, that he might sift thee as wheat,” is applicable to very many souls. Yet we are not left helpless. The Lord spreads his covering hand over us, saying, “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.” [Luke 22:31, 32.]

12LtMs, Lt 31, 1897, par. 17

[Yes, the enemy is raging, but we have a Savior who will not leave us nor forsake us. We must keep our eyes fixed on Christ.]

The church militant is not the church triumphant. We are enjoined, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 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. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand



therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” [Ephesians 6:10-17.]

12LtMs, Lt 31, 1897, par. 18

The night of trial is nearly spent. Satan is bringing in his masterly power because he knoweth that his time is short. **[Are you encouraged? The trial is nearing its conclusion. But Satan is bringing his final great masterful deception to fruition. Can you discern it?]** The chastisement of God is upon the world to call all who know the truth to hide in the cleft of the Rock and view the glory of God. **[What is the chastisement of God? It is God letting go His protection and allowing more of the disasters and evil to occur, so that the people who have not hardened their hearts against God can see the difference between the methods of God and the methods of Satan. God’s people, those who love truth, love and liberty, who do their own thinking, to present themselves to God as living sacrifices will not conform to the worldly methods of lies, coercion, control and blind submission. We will speak the truth in love, while leaving others free.]** **The truth must not be muffled now. Plain statements must be made. Unvarnished truth must be spoken in leaflets and pamphlets, and these must be scattered like the leaves of autumn.**

12LtMs, Lt 31, 1897, par. 19