

# Standing Strong:

## *How to Activate the Armor of God for Victory in Every Battle*

Football season is approaching—can I get an “amen”? I’m a fan of football, love watching the games. You know, life shares similarities with football in many aspects. Today, I’ll draw parallels between football, our faith, and life.

A while back, we had a series about penalties, equating football scenarios to teachings from scriptures. Though I won’t dive into that today, I’ve got something important to share. Imagine this: every football team must have uniforms—they’re essential. Before hitting the field, players suit up. Remember, the real action happens on the field, not the bench or the locker room.

Just as Jesus once told his disciples as they walked, he urged them to look at the field. That’s where the excitement unfolds, where God’s work takes place. It’s where your purpose lies, your ministry too. There’s a bountiful harvest waiting for us. The time to gather it is now.

You might notice that we’re praying for a harvest, yet it’s not the harvest that’s the issue—it’s the lack of workers. Picture this: the fields are ready to be harvested and abundantly ripe. What we don’t gather, the enemy will seize. The church must rise and take responsibility as we look at the world’s troubles and people falling into challenges. Are we truly fulfilling our role? Do we even recognize the potential harvest?

## Gear Up

Football has been described not as a mere contact sport but as a collision sport. Similarly, every member of God’s team eventually realizes that the Christian life is a battleground, not a playground. They face a powerful opponent, and their own strength isn’t enough—only the strength of the Lord prevails. Remember, our struggle isn’t against flesh and blood. The people you might not get along with aren’t your actual foes. The real enemy is invisible, more destructive than any earthly adversary. This enemy hides in darkness, causing significant harm.

Imagine this: the team might have provided protective gear, but you boldly declare, “I don’t need any of it—no helmet, shoulder pads, or anything. I’m going out there in just my bathing suit to play.” It sounds absurd, downright foolish. But even worse is when a

Christian thinks, "I can handle things without God's armor. I'll fight this battle on my own."

Here's the reality: the devil opposes God, His work, and especially His people. His attacks are targeted, direct, unrelenting, and precisely timed. Often, they're tailor-made to our weaknesses. Sadly, we often don't even realize we're under spiritual attack. We mistakenly attribute everything to the physical realm when the root issue is spiritual.

Ever come across defeated Christians? I've encountered my fair share. How many lately have you seen who are thriving, setting records, and enthusiastic about their faith? Often, many of us struggle because our spiritual defense is weak. It's like offering a little prayer here and a few verses there.

You may ask, Pastor, what's the bare minimum for a victorious life? It's straightforward: put on the armor. When you neglect it and leave it behind, you end up losing.

The Bible recounts how David shed his armor in springtime when kings typically went to war. David opted to sleep and become complacent. He got a bit lazy. He entrusted his battle to his commanders, letting them fight in his place. But remember, no one can fight your battle except you. If you face defeat, the responsibility rests on you, not someone else. At times, when things aren't going well, and we're struggling without progress, we tend to seek blame elsewhere. Yet, often, the weight of responsibility lies squarely on our shoulders.

David was a king—anointed as a teenager to lead the nation. But where was he? Lounging around. We know the consequences, the harm it caused him and the nation.

As members of God's team, we don't equip ourselves in the locker room but in the prayer room. Let me tell you something: the prayer room is your war room. When you find that solitary space with God and surrender yourself, saying, "I'm done with the sidelines, I'm ready for the game," it's a game-changer.

Too many Christians are content sitting on pews or benches, watching others play the game. They settle for being mere spectators, munching popcorn and cheering. But God didn't call you to be a cheerleader; He called you to get in the game. A battle unfolds, yet many Christians fail to recognize the enemy. That's why we often end up defeated.

But in that prayer room, as you engage with the Commander-in-Chief and seek His guidance, you ask, "How can I make a positive impact on someone's life?" Are you genuinely making a difference? Are your actions leading to a meaningful impact?

The Holy Spirit joins us during our devotional times with God. Remember, we can't equip ourselves with the armor of God on our own. The Holy Spirit comes as the Paraclete, a Greek term meaning the one called to my side to assist, guide, comfort,

and empower me. He stands by my side, helping and preparing me for the field. As I step into the prayer room, seeking God's presence, the Holy Spirit descends, clothing me with readiness and arming me for the challenges ahead. Conflicts will arise, and what you avoid confronting, you'll never conquer.

Perhaps this is why we sometimes hesitate to truly seek God in the prayer room and pray, "Make me a warrior." Are we willing to step onto the field? Are we ready to face opposition? Can we endure the sweat, the bruises, and the hardships?

In serving the Lord, you'll face challenges and wounds. It's inevitable. The enemy will throw everything he has in your path to hinder, discourage, and frustrate you. He'll throw all his weapons at you. This is where we're immensely grateful for the Ministry of the Holy Spirit and the power of God.

## The Belt of Truth

Let's examine the components of God's armor. Firstly, we have the belt of truth. "Stand, therefore," as mentioned in your text. "Having girded your waist with truth." Putting on the belt of truth is akin to wearing your game face—a declaration that you mean business. In ancient times, soldiers wore a leather apron as a belt and abdominal protection. Essentially, it guarded their core, much like how we should protect and uphold our core values—living out the truth.

The belt of truth signifies two primary aspects. First, as believers, it's not enough to just possess a working knowledge of biblical truth. We must deeply believe in it. While we can recite many scriptures, do we truly believe them? There's a difference between knowing and believing.

Belief is not just spoken but demonstrated through actions. By putting the Word of God into action, we gain insights, confidence, and the character needed to stand firm during challenges. Acting upon God's Word equips us to maintain our stance even when facing the intensity of battle.

Are you up for a battle? Ready for war? Are you prepared to embrace God's challenge? Do you want to step onto the field, create an impact, and leave a lasting legacy? Do you aim to be remembered as someone who stood firm when others quit and avoided effort or sacrifice? Commitment seems to have lost its appeal in the church, yet being committed to the Lord and matching His faithfulness to us is crucial.

Furthermore, the belt signifies the right attitude for our involvement in spiritual warfare. In the midst of battle, the foremost lesson is acknowledging that the battle belongs to the Lord. Even though we're heading into battle, we don't take possession of this conflict. It's the Lord Jesus Christ's battle. Through His crucifixion, He declared it

finished. He has defeated the devil, disarmed evil forces, and overcome all of the enemy's powers.

Jesus has shattered every single one of the enemy's tactics. Our faith and the Word of God have determined the battle's outcome.

I recall my younger days, sitting about three pews back on the right side, often alone in a large church. I'd listen intently to the sermons, taking notes, yearning to learn more about God and understand Him better.

I distinctly remember one day when the preacher spoke about being part of God's team and how we are champions. It was odd because I didn't feel like a winner then. But as he painted the picture of what it meant to be in God's family, I thought, "That's the kind of team I want to be a part of." I was typically the last chosen for anything, but his message made it seem like if I joined God's team and signed up with Him, I wouldn't be a benchwarmer. He made it clear that God could take me, flaws and all, and use me to make a meaningful impact. So, I signed up—I became a part of the family of God.

Indeed, I became a son of God. But did I also become a warrior for God? That's the question you need to ask yourself today, "Am I actively fighting as a warrior for the Lord?" Let me pose this: knowing the battle's outcome is assured, why do we sometimes let a defeated foe steal our triumph, rob us of our happiness, and tarnish the testimony Christ secured for us on the cross? How does this happen?

As I read the Bible, I learn about a believer filled with the Spirit, equipped with God's gifts. Where are we going astray? What are we missing? The truth in God's Word allows us to see life from His vantage point. It elevates us beyond mere human understanding, enabling us to view matters through an eternal lens. If we solely cling to this horizontal, worldly perspective, we might miss the spiritual harvest that the disciples themselves overlooked. Sometimes, it requires God to point out what we're missing. We must let the Spirit of the Lord lead us.

## The Breastplate of Righteousness

The breastplate of righteousness serves as a reminder to protect our emotions and manage our feelings. The battle between righteousness and unrighteousness often centers on the struggle between what we know and feel. By safeguarding our feelings, we prevent them from controlling our decisions and pulling us towards unrighteous paths. To put on the breastplate of righteousness is to live in consistent, moment-to-moment obedience to our Heavenly Father.

Consider Proverbs 4:23, a verse I hold dear: "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." When you accepted Christ, you instantly became a target for the enemy, as he holds a deep resentment towards God.

## Shod Your Feet

In verse 15, Paul speaks of having "shod your feet with the preparation of the Gospel of peace." The foot covering of a Roman soldier was a sturdy leather sandal. Interestingly, the sole sometimes had spikes or nails for better traction during close combat.

Steady footing is crucial when you're deep in the trenches of a spiritual battle. You want to stand firm and hold your ground, even when face to face with the enemy. If we fall, we will fall here, but we won't run.

Perhaps you're confronting your own version of the Red Sea, a fiery furnace, or a lion's den. The Word of God is true, and He will pave the way through it. You won't be consumed by fire, and the teeth of the lions won't harm you.

Psalms 18:33 tells us that He makes our feet like the feet of a deer, enabling us to stand in high places. He trains us for battle, so there's nothing weak about a soldier in the Lord's army.

So, remember Paul's words: "Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand, stand grounded, stand firm."

Imagine if every Christian across America and the world said to themselves and each other, "Let's stand." What a powerful impact that would have. We will boldly proclaim the Word of the Lord. Unyielding, unwavering, living by the convictions found in the Bible, speaking only the truth.

Our defense against the enemy involves voicing our faith and where we stand on important matters. It's time to choose a side, to line up on the field—God's side, the winning team.

Now, let's talk about the footwear. It signifies our readiness to spread the good news of the gospel everywhere we go. Peace intertwines with the Gospel message. We can find solace in Him and be at peace with God. It's a remarkable feeling.

Indeed, peace is the core of our gospel. It should also be our aspiration as we interact with people daily. The love, peace, and joy in our lives should draw others toward Christ. They might say, "What's different about you? There's this radiance, a luminosity that surrounds you. You light up the room."

## Shield of Faith

The shield of faith is particularly significant. "Taking the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one." Roman soldiers employed various types of shields. The first was a small, lightweight round shield, about two feet in diameter, secured to the arm by two leather straps. This shield was incredibly handy if you were in close combat, facing a sword-wielding opponent.

The second kind, which Paul refers to here, was much larger. It measured around 2.5 feet wide and four and a half feet high, designed to shield the soldier's entire body. Just envision this: a soldier could kneel behind this shield and remain completely safeguarded from incoming arrows. Imagine being part of a line or a legion, and suddenly you realize arrows are flying your way. This is the shield you'd rely on for protection. Sometimes, the soldiers would even dip their leather-covered shields in water, making them damp to further reduce the arrows' impact.

Picture that shield of faith—there's protection when you kneel in faith, believing in God. It doesn't matter what you're facing, the enemy's assault, or the overwhelming odds stacked against you. You kneel down, and you're safe. God has you covered; He's your vigilant protector. Even when arrows are relentlessly pelting, you stand firm.

Sooner or later, the enemy's arrows will run out, or he'll cease shooting. When that moment comes, it's your turn. Stand up, soldiers of God! Lift that shield of faith high and move forward. This is the essence of the message: yes, they might have stopped you temporarily, but remember, you will rise again.

Yes, there might be an onslaught coming your way. It might feel like you're backed against a wall, but stay a little longer on your knees. And when the storm of attacks subsides, rise up in the strength of the Lord and seize the day. The battle is God's; this day is His, for He owns it all.

Remember, laborers are scarce, and true soldiers are even rarer.

Taking God at His word, we fend off the fiery darts—the deceitful lies—hurled at us by the enemy. Lying is the devil's specialty; he's the source and father of lies. He distorts our understanding of God's character, faithfulness, goodness, and enduring kindness and mercy. He strives to blind us to all that God has done and all He has pledged to do.

Using the shield of faith boils down to one thing: claiming the promises of God. Without God's promises, we'd be adrift, uncertain what to believe or expect from God. We'd find ourselves lost in a fog of doubt, engulfed in utter confusion. God's promises provide us with something solid to anchor our souls and faith to—a lifeline to cling to.

## The Helmet of Salvation

The helmet was often the most intricately crafted and costly piece of a soldier's armor. The connection between the helmet and salvation underscores that the devil will aim to strike at our security and our certainty in God. The helmet signifies protecting our minds.

Two of the devil's most potent weapons are discouragement and doubt. To discourage us, he highlights our failures, sins, unresolved issues, poor health—anything negative in our lives. He aims to undermine our confidence in our Heavenly Father's love and concern for us. But remember, your Heavenly Father deeply cares for you. Don't let doubt take hold.

The helmet of salvation is a steadfast reminder that you've been rescued from sin's guilt and punishment, fully liberated from condemnation through Christ. So, when does this apply? Now. Today. No condemnation awaits those who are in Christ Jesus.

Wearing the armor of God means being concealed in Christ. Pay attention, for God has a message: "Take my armor." It's not the armor of a mere king; it's the armor of the King of Kings, thoroughly tested and proven.

The enemy creeps in when we make mistakes, stray, or take the wrong path. He lies to us, accuses us, and condemns us. He whispers that we should hang up our uniform, leave the field, and face rejection from God's team. But here's the truth: even if you stumble, fall, or fumble, remember that God remains your Heavenly Father. He won't cast you aside or kick you out.

Some might drift away from God, but understand that God has never discarded anyone. You're not expendable to His grace. If He sidelines you or corrects you, it's a sign of His deep love for you. The Lord shows love through discipline.

So keep your helmet on and stay engaged. God's not finished with you. Yes, you've stumbled. Welcome to the club. Chances are, you'll stumble again. But remember, the game isn't over. There's still time on the clock, my fellow believers. We're in the final stretch. The final whistle could blow at any moment.

## The Sword of the Spirit

The only offensive tool mentioned is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. The Word of God is depicted as a sword, to be precise, a short dagger-like blade ranging from about six to eighteen inches long. It was a weapon meant for close combat.

God's Word is alive and dynamic, sharper than a double-edged sword. It reaches into the division between soul and spirit, discerning thoughts and intentions of the heart.

God understands the matters of your heart. Nothing you say will astonish Him. He knows more about you than you know about yourself.

Peter's attempt to use a physical sword to defend Jesus in the garden is well-known. He aimed for the man's head but hit his ear instead. However, he later understood the power of the Sword of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. In his message in Acts Chapter 2, he boldly proclaimed that Jesus, whom they had crucified, was now Lord and God. His audience was deeply affected, asking what they should do. Peter's response was to repent and be baptized, leading to 3000 new believers that day.

This event illustrates the impact of the Word of God, which pierces hearts more effectively than a physical sword. While a sword may cause harm, the Sword of the Spirit brings healing and life. You can employ this sword by memorizing and quoting the Word of God. It equips you to resist strong temptations and is a powerful weapon. The Word of God is living, powerful, active, effective, and reliable.

In many ways, the armor of God is a representation of Jesus Christ.

He embodies truth, righteousness, and peace. The breastplate symbolizes His faithfulness, nurturing our own faith. He acts as a shield, guarding us and offering salvation. The helmet represents the living Word.

Recently, I've faced challenges and felt disheartened. In these moments, God's voice urges me, "What are you doing?" This reminder parallels past experiences when He redirected my path.

Recall Joshua at the Battle of Ai? He confronted God, asking why he faced defeat. He mourned and held a pity party. But God's response was direct: "Will you rise?"

Have you ever thrown a tantrum before God? We all have. So rise. That resonates in my heart, and maybe it's for you too. Demonic despair, disappointment, and depression might be overwhelming you. The devil might claim it's the end, the final act. Don't lend an ear to the enemy. Avoid dwelling in negativity.

Sometimes, challenges are wake-up calls, urging us to stand tall and make an impact. So what's your choice? Will you surrender, seeing no future or hope? Or will you stand firm in the Lord's name and strength and make a difference? Church, the time is now. It is long overdue that we develop a new mentality.