



STRENGTH: Care for the Body



*"I need to stay physically strong so I can do the work God has for me." — **Florence Nightingale***

Definition: "Care for the Body" is the ability to build healthy habits and practices regarding our physical well-being.

Verse: *"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit... therefore honor God with your body." - 1 Corinthians 6:19–20*

1. Our Bodies as Temples

1 Corinthians 6:19-20: ¹⁹ *Do you not know that **your bodies are temples** of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? **You are not your own;*** ²⁰ *you were bought at a price. Therefore **honor God with your bodies.***

- **Your Bodies Are Temples:** In the Old Testament, the temple was revered as the exclusive, holy dwelling place of God's physical glory. Under the new covenant, that same divine glory dwells within your physical person, meaning you are called to treat your body with the exact same reverence and care you would give a church sanctuary. Paul didn't view the body as a distraction, but as a dedicated space for the Spirit of God to dwell.
- **You Are Not Your Own:** Our bodies are on loan from God to be used for His purposes. Embracing a biblical view of health requires shifting away from the cultural mindset of "it's my body, I'll do what I want." True discipleship means recognizing that our physical bodies are not our property, but are lent to us by God as sacred vessels to be managed for His purposes.
- **Honor God With Your Body:** Physical care is an act of stewardship: physical care isn't just about fitness or dieting- it is a deeply spiritual act of stewardship and worship. In other words, recognizing that the Holy Spirit resides with us, making our physical maintenance a form of worship.

We often treat our physical and spiritual lives as two separate entities. We assume that as long as our soul is healthy, our physical habits are secondary. But the Bible presents a much more integrated view of the human person. Your body is the vehicle in which your calling has the ability to be lived out. Taking care of your health is not an act of vanity; it is an act of stewardship and service.

2. Our Bodies as Living Sacrifices

Romans 12:1: *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to **offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.***

- While we often think of worship as singing, praying, or church attendance, Paul reveals that true, proper worship involves offering your body, giving our lives totally to God. Taking care of your everyday physical health ensures that you remain available and ready for God's call. (Paul goes on to list several examples.)
- With the early Christian movement, temple sacrifices were no longer the primary focus of worship. Worship became focused instead on how an individual lived their life, how they loved and honored God with every part of their being.
 - Instead of an external ritual performed by priests, daily sacrifices were to be an internal holistic devotion performed by every Christian.
 - Instead of a dead animal offered once for atonement, believers consecrate their own bodies (their whole lives) continuously to God.
 - Instead of blood being shed as substitutionary payment, the believer's daily acts of love and gratitude are what redeem him. The believer is always in the act of offering - it is not just a one-time event at a temple.

3. Being Strong In The Lord

Ephesians 6:10-18: ¹⁰ Finally, **be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.** ¹¹ Put on the **full armor of God**, so that you can take your **stand against** the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to **stand your ground**, and after you have done everything, to **stand**.

¹⁴ **Stand firm** then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

Historical Perspective

Jewish Context: The imagery is deeply rooted in the Old Testament, specifically the Book of Isaiah. In Isaiah 59:17, it is Yahweh (God) Himself who originally puts on the *breastplate of righteousness* and the *helmet of salvation* to fight injustice. God does not just protect us; He hands us His very own spiritual garments to wear.

Roman Context: Paul wrote this letter around 60–62 AD while under house arrest in Rome. He was chained 24/7 to a rotating shift of the Praetorian Guard, Rome's elite security force. Instead of seeing his guard's uniform as a symbol of captivity, Paul transformed it into a picture of God's protective care.

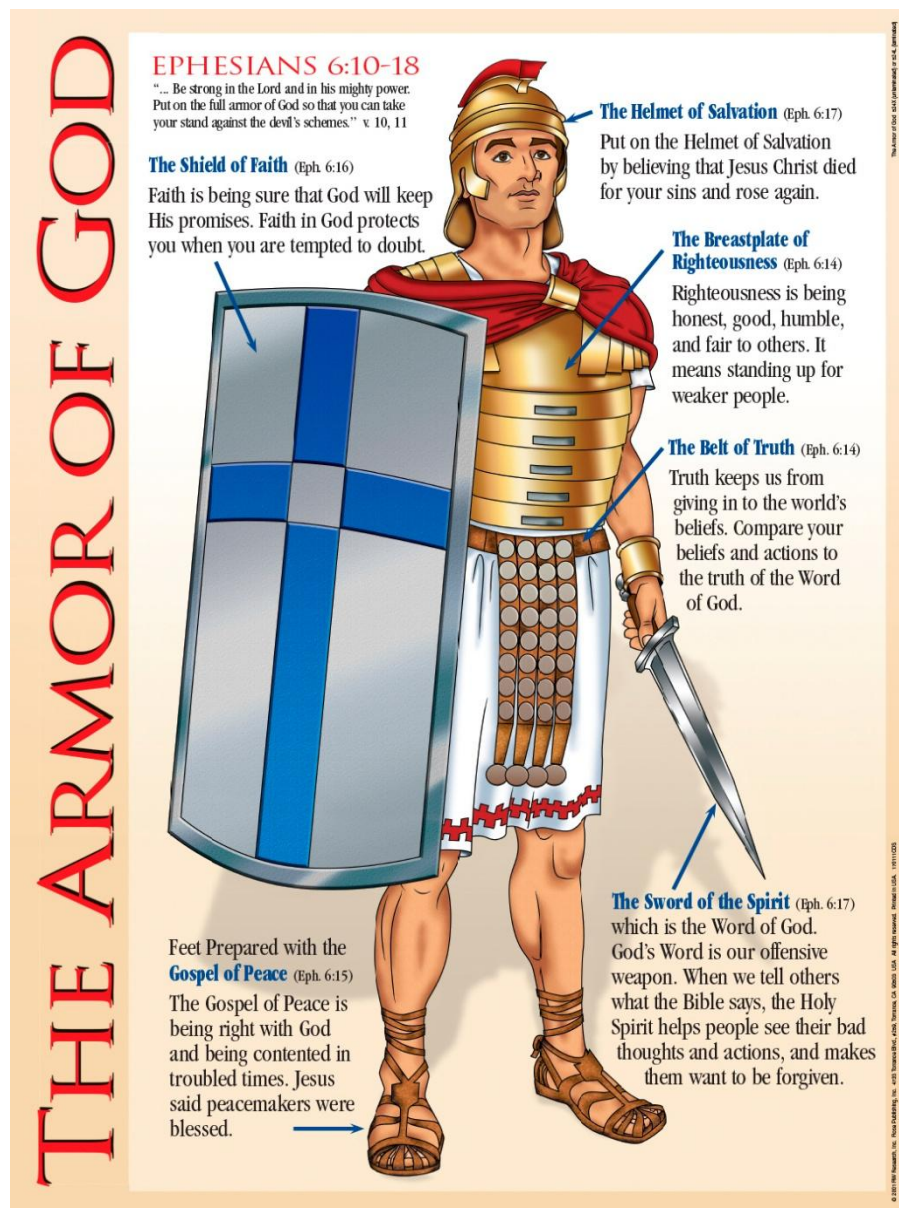
The "Stand Firm" Command

Paul uses the Greek military word *stēte* ("stand firm") repeatedly. In the 1st century AD, the Roman army stood out because they did not chase individual glory like their opponents. They stood shoulder-to-shoulder, dug their iron-shod sandals (*caligae*) into the dirt, and held the line. Spiritual warfare in Ephesians is not about advancing and attacking; it is about holding the ground Christ already won.

- **The Hobnailed Sandals:** Roman military sandals featured heavy leather soles studded with iron cleats or hobnails. They were designed strictly for traction. In a clash of armies, losing your footing meant being trampled. The shoes allowed a soldier to dig into the dirt, brace for impact, and literally **stand**.
- **The Battle Objective:** A Roman unit's primary goal in a defensive stance was to absorb the enemy's chaotic charge without breaking ranks. If every soldier **stood his square foot of ground**, the formation remained unbroken, the flying flaming arrows were deflected, and the enemy exhausted themselves.
- **Final Victory:** In ancient Roman warfare, a battle ended with one army scattered or dead on the ground, while the winning army remained upright on the field. By saying "*after you have done everything, to stand*," Paul means holding the ground and being the last one standing when the smoke clears. It is the posture of survival and triumph over spiritual adversity.

Rather than a call to physical combat, the "armor of God" is a metaphor for relying on God's strength to maintain moral integrity and unity. Paul is not advocating for physical violence or aggression; instead, his state of mind is one of defensive alertness focused entirely on spiritual endurance.

Paul's contextual connection told the early church: *You are fighting a fierce battle, but God has handed you His very own armor. Put it on, lock shields with your community, dig your cleats into the ground, and stand.*



Weekly Challenge

- **The "Glorifying" Meal:** Choose one meal to eat with a mindset of stewardship, focused on maintaining your temple of the Holy Spirit.
- **The Medication/Supplement Prayer:** Many feel discouraged by needing to take a daily handful of pills. Turn it into a liturgy: "Lord, I thank You for the science that sustains this temple so I can serve You one more day."
- **Body Prayer:** Verbally offer your physical health and abilities to God for the week. Stop and ask yourself "What part of my life am I offering to God today?"
- **The 30-Second Morning Check-In:** Before getting out of bed tomorrow morning, take 30 seconds to mentally run through your body and armor:
 - **Head (Helmet):** *"My mind belongs to God today."*
 - **Heart (Breastplate):** *"My emotions are guarded by His grace."*
 - **Core (Belt):** *"I will walk in truth, not pretension."*
 - **Feet (Shoes):** *"Wherever I walk today, I bring peace."*