

Ephesians 6:10-24
February 5, 2023

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: All of us are aware that spiritual warfare is going on daily in our world. What is the real war taking place in our world, and who is it between? [Let people engage]

Transition: Paul is going to remind us that God has prepared us, equipped us, and provided everything we need to realize His purposes for us as individuals and as the local church. But we also have to be aware that the Enemy constantly works to derail, discourage, and defeat us. But that won't happen unless we allow it. We must be prepared to battle the scheming ways of Satan. Paul explains how in today's text. Let's begin.

BOOK:

The Armor of God

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 saints.

¹⁹ Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Final Greetings

²¹ Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. ²² I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.

²³ Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

In Paul's great love, for those who follow Christ, he does not try to candy-coat what lies ahead. There will be spiritual battles. (Read 2 Timothy 3:12.) All believers will face spiritual trials, far beyond our physical strength and capabilities. But, the good news is God will never leave his children on their own, to face the enemy. He has supplied all we will ever need, to stand strong. We must avail ourselves of these weapons; we must put on our armor and be prepared for the battle.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 2, pp. 57-61). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The Enemy (Eph. 6:10–12)

The intelligence corps plays a vital part in warfare because it enables the officers to know and understand the enemy. Unless we know who the enemy is, where he is, and what he can do, we have a difficult time defeating him. Not only in Ephesians 6, but throughout the entire Bible, God instructs us about the enemy, so there is no reason for us to be caught off guard.

The leader—the devil. The enemy has many different names. *Devil* means “accuser,” because he accuses God's people day and night before the throne of God (Rev. 12:7–11). *Satan* means “adversary,” because he is the enemy of God. He is also called the tempter (Matt. 4:3), and the murderer and the liar (John 8:44). He is compared to a lion (1 Peter 5:8), a serpent (Gen. 3:1; Rev. 12:9), and an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:13–15), as well as “the god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4, NIV).

Where did he come from, this spirit-creature that seeks to oppose God and defeat His work? Many students believe that in the original Creation, he was “Lucifer, son of the morning” (Isa. 14:12–15) and that he was cast down because of his pride and his desire to occupy God's throne. Many mysteries are connected with the origin of Satan, but what he is doing and where he is going are certainly no mystery! Since he is a created being, and not eternal (as God is), he is limited in his knowledge and activity. Unlike God, Satan is not all-knowing, all-powerful, or

everywhere-present. Then how does he accomplish so much in so many different parts of the world? The answer is in his organized helpers.

Satan's helpers. Paul called them “principalities ... powers ... rulers ... spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12). Charles B. Williams translates it: “For our contest is not with human foes alone, but with the rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers of this dark world; that is, with the spirit forces of evil challenging us in the heavenly contest” (WMS). This suggests a definite army of demonic creatures that assist Satan in his attacks against believers. The Apostle John hinted that one third of the angels fell with Satan when he rebelled against God (Rev. 12:4), and Daniel wrote that Satan’s angels struggle against God’s angels for control of the affairs of nations (Dan. 10:13–20). A spiritual battle is going on in this world, and in the sphere of “the heavenlies,” and you and I are a part of this battle. Knowing this makes “walking in victory” a vitally important thing to us—and to God.

The important point is that our battle is not against human beings. It is against spiritual powers. We are wasting our time fighting people when we ought to be fighting the devil who seeks to control people and make them oppose the work of God. During Paul’s ministry in Ephesus, a riot took place that could have destroyed the church (Acts 19:21–41). It wasn’t caused only by Demetrius and his associates, for behind them were Satan and his associates. Certainly Paul and the church prayed, and the opposition was silenced. The advice of the King of Syria to his soldiers can be applied to our spiritual battle: “Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king” (1 Kings 22:31).

Satan's abilities. The admonitions Paul gave indicate that Satan is a strong enemy (Eph. 6:10–12), and that we need the power of God to be able to stand against him. Never underestimate the power of the devil. He is not compared to a lion and a dragon just for fun! The Book of Job tells what his power can do to a man’s body, home, wealth, and friends. Jesus calls Satan a thief who comes “to steal, and to kill, and to destroy” (John 10:10). Not only is Satan strong, but he is also wise and subtle, and we fight against “the wiles of the devil.” *Wiles* means “cunning, crafty arts, stratagems.” The Christian cannot afford to be “ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:11). Some men are cunning and crafty and “lie in wait to deceive” (Eph. 4:14), but behind them is the arch-deceiver, Satan. He masquerades as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14) and seeks to blind men’s minds to the truth of God’s Word. The fact that Paul uses the word “wrestle” indicates that we are involved in a hand-to-hand battle and are not mere spectators at a game. Satan wants to use our external enemy, the world, and our internal enemy, the flesh, to defeat us. His weapons and battle plans are formidable.

The Equipment (Eph. 6:13–17)

Since we are fighting against enemies in the spirit world, we need special equipment both for offense and defense. God has provided the “whole armor” for us, and we dare not omit any part. Satan looks for that unguarded area where he can get a beachhead (Eph. 4:27). Paul commanded his readers to put on the armor, take the weapons, and withstand Satan, all of which we do by faith. Knowing that Christ has already conquered Satan, and that the spiritual armor and weapons are available, by faith we accept what God gives us and go out to meet the foe. The day is evil, and the enemy is evil, but “if God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31)

The girdle of truth (v. 14a). Satan is a liar (John 8:44), but the believer whose life is controlled by truth will defeat him. The girdle holds the other parts of the armor together, and truth is the integrating force in the life of the victorious Christian. A man of integrity, with a clear conscience, can face the enemy without fear. The girdle also held the sword. Unless we

practice the truth, we cannot use the Word of truth. Once a lie gets into the life of a believer, everything begins to fall apart. For over a year, King David lied about his sin with Bathsheba, and nothing went right. Psalms 32 and 51 tell of the price he paid.

The breastplate of righteousness (v. 14b.) This piece of armor, made of metal plates or chains, covered the body from the neck to the waist, both front and back. It symbolizes the believer's righteousness in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21) as well as his righteous life in Christ (Eph. 4:24). Satan is the accuser, but he cannot accuse the believer who is living a godly life in the power of the Spirit. The life we live either fortifies us against Satan's attacks or makes it easier for him to defeat us (2 Cor. 6:1–10). When Satan accuses the Christian, it is the righteousness of Christ that assures the believer of his salvation. But our positional righteousness in Christ, without practical righteousness in the daily life, only gives Satan opportunity to attack us.

The shoes of the Gospel (v. 15). The Roman soldier wore sandals with hobnails in the soles to give him better footing for the battle. If we are going to "stand" and "withstand," then we need the shoes of the Gospel. Because we have the peace with God (Rom. 5:1) that comes from the Gospel, we need not fear the attack of Satan or men. We must be at peace with God and with each other if we are to defeat the devil (James 4:1–7). But the shoes have another meaning. We must be prepared each day to share the Gospel of peace with a lost world. The most victorious Christian is a witnessing Christian. If we wear the shoes of the Gospel, then we have the "beautiful feet" mentioned in Isaiah 52:7 and Romans 10:15. Satan has declared war, but you and I are ambassadors of peace (2 Cor. 5:18–21); and, as such, we take the Gospel of peace wherever we go.

The shield of faith (v. 16). The shield was large, usually about four feet by two feet, made of wood, and covered with tough leather. As the soldier held it before him, it protected him from spears, arrows, and "fiery darts." The edges of these shields were so constructed that an entire line of soldiers could interlock shields and march into the enemy like a solid wall. This suggests that we Christians are not in the battle alone. The "faith" mentioned here is not saving faith, but rather living faith, a trust in the promises and the power of God. Faith is a defensive weapon which protects us from Satan's fiery darts. In Paul's day, arrows, dipped in some inflammable substance and ignited, were shot at the enemy. Satan shoots "fiery darts" at our hearts and minds: lies, blasphemous thoughts, hateful thoughts about others, doubts, and burning desires for sin. If we do not by faith quench these darts, they will light a fire within and we will disobey God. We never know when Satan will shoot a dart at us, so we must always walk by faith and use the shield of faith.

The helmet of salvation (v. 17). Satan wants to attack the mind, the way he defeated Eve (Gen. 3; 2 Cor. 11:1–3). The helmet refers to the mind controlled by God. It is too bad that many Christians have the idea that the intellect is not important, when in reality it plays a vital role in Christian growth, service, and victory. When God controls the mind, Satan cannot lead the believer astray. The Christian who studies his Bible and learns the meaning of Bible doctrines is not going to be led astray too easily. We need to be "taught by Him as the truth is in Jesus" (Eph. 4:21). We are to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). Wherever Paul ministered, he taught the new converts the truths of the Word of God, and this helmet protected them from Satan's lies.

One Sunday afternoon, I visited a man who had been a deacon in a local church, but was at that time involved in a false cult. We sat at the table with open Bibles, and I tried to show him the truth of God's Word, but it seemed his mind was blinded by lies. "How did you happen to

turn away from a Bible-preaching church and get involved in this belief?” I asked, and his reply stunned me.

“Preacher, I blame the church. I didn’t know anything about the Bible, and they didn’t teach me much more. I wanted to study the Bible, but nobody told me how. Then they made me a deacon, and I wasn’t ready for it. It was too much for me. I heard this man preaching the Bible over the radio and it sounded as if he knew something. I started reading his magazine and studying his books, and now I’m convinced he’s right.”

What a tragedy that when his local church took him in, they failed to fit him with the helmet of salvation. Had they practiced the truth found in 2 Timothy 2:2, this man might not have been a casualty in the battle.

The sword of the Spirit (v. 17b). This sword is the offensive weapon God provides us. The Roman soldier wore on his girdle a short sword which was used for close-in fighting. Hebrews 4:12 compares the Word of God to a sword, because it is sharp and is able to pierce the inner man just as a material sword pierces the body. You and I were “cut to the heart” (Acts 2:37; 5:33) when the Word convicted us of our sins. Peter tried to use a sword to defend Jesus in the Garden (Luke 22:47–51); but he learned at Pentecost that the “sword of the Spirit” does a much better job. Moses also tried to conquer with a physical sword (Ex. 2:11–15), only to discover that God’s Word alone was more than enough to defeat Egypt.

A material sword pierces the body, but the Word of God pierces the heart. The more you use a physical sword, the duller it becomes; but using God’s Word only makes it sharper in our lives. A physical sword requires the hand of a soldier, but the sword of the Spirit has its own power, for it is “living and powerful” (Heb. 4:12). The Spirit wrote the Word, and the Spirit wields the Word as we take it by faith and use it. A physical sword wounds to hurt and kill, while the sword of the Spirit wounds to heal and give life. But when we use the sword against Satan, we are out to deal him a blow that will cripple him and keep him from hindering God’s work.

When He was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, Christ used the sword of the Spirit and defeated the enemy. Three times Jesus said, “It is written” (Luke 4:1–13). Note that Satan can also quote the Word: “For it is written” (Luke 4:10), but he does not quote it completely. Satan tries to use the Word of God to confuse us, so it is important that we know every word that God has given us. “You can prove anything by the Bible,” someone said. True—if you take verses out of context, leave out words, and apply verses to Christians today that do not really apply. The better you know the Word of God, the easier it will be for you to detect Satan’s lies and reject his offers.

In one sense, the “whole armor of God” is a picture of Jesus Christ. Christ is the Truth (John 14:6), and He is our righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21) and our peace (Eph. 2:14). His faithfulness makes possible our faith (Gal. 2:20); He is our salvation (Luke 2:30); and He is the Word of God (John 1:1, 14). This means that when we trusted Christ, we received the armor. Paul told the Romans what to do with the armor (Rom. 13:11–14): wake up (Rom. 13:11), cast off sin, and “put on the armor of light” (Rom. 13:12). We do this by putting “on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 13:14). By faith, put on the armor and trust God for the victory. Once and for all, we have put on the armor at the moment of salvation. But there must be a daily appropriation. When King David put off his armor and returned to his palace, he was in greater danger than when he was on the battlefield (2 Sam. 11). We are never out of reach of Satan’s devices, so we must never be without the whole armor of God.

The Energy (Eph. 6:18–20)

Prayer is the energy that enables the Christian soldier to wear the armor and wield the sword. We cannot fight the battle in our own power, no matter how strong or talented we may think we are. When Amalek attacked Israel, Moses went to the mountaintop to pray, while Joshua used the sword down in the valley (Ex. 17:8–16). It took both to defeat Amalek—Moses’ intercession on the mountain, and Joshua’s use of the sword in the valley. Prayer is the power for victory, but not just any kind of prayer. Paul tells how to pray if we would defeat Satan.

Pray always. This obviously does not mean “always saying prayers.” We are not heard for our “much speaking” (Matt. 6:7). “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thes. 5:17) says to us, “Always be in communion with the Lord. Keep the receiver off the hook!” Never have to say when you pray, “Lord, we come into Thy presence,” because you never left His presence! A Christian must “pray always” because he is always subject to temptations and attacks of the devil. A surprise attack has defeated more than one believer who forgot to “pray without ceasing.”

Pray with all prayer. There is more than one kind of praying: prayer, supplication, intercession, thanksgiving (Phil. 4:6; 1 Tim. 2:1). The believer who prays only to ask for things is missing out on blessings that come with intercessions and giving of thanks. In fact, thanksgiving is a great prayer weapon for defeating Satan. “Praise changes things” as much as “prayer changes things.” Intercession for others can bring victory to our own lives. “And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends” (Job 42:10).

Pray in the Spirit. The Bible formula is that we pray to the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit. Romans 8:26–27 tells us that only in the Spirit’s power can we pray in the will of God. Otherwise, our praying could be selfish and out of the will of God. In the Old Testament tabernacle, there was a small golden altar standing before the veil, and here the priest burned the incense (Ex. 30:1–10; Luke 1:1–11). The incense is a picture of prayer. It had to be mixed according to God’s plan and could not be counterfeited by man. The fire on the altar is a picture of the Holy Spirit, for it is He who takes our prayers and “ignites” them in the will of God. It is possible to pray fervently in the flesh and never get through to God. It is also possible to pray quietly in the Spirit and see God’s hand do great things.

Pray with your eyes open. *Watching* means “keeping on the alert.” The phrase “watch and pray” occurs often in the Bible. When Nehemiah was repairing the walls of Jerusalem, and the enemy was trying to stop the work, Nehemiah defeated the enemy by watching and praying. “Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch” (Neh. 4:9). “Watch and pray” is the secret of victory over the world (Mark 13:33), the flesh (Mark 14:38), and the devil (Eph. 6:18). Peter went to sleep when he should have been praying, and the result was victory for Satan (Mark 14:29–31, 67–72). God expects us to use our God-given senses, led by the Spirit, so that we detect Satan when he is beginning to work.

Keep on praying. The word *perseverance* simply means “to stick to it and not quit.” The early believers prayed this way (Acts 1:14; 2:42; 6:4); and we also should pray this way (Rom. 12:12). Perseverance in prayer does not mean we are trying to twist God’s arm, but rather that we are deeply concerned and burdened and cannot rest until we get God’s answer. As Robert Law puts it, “Prayer is not getting man’s will done in heaven; it is getting God’s will done on earth” (*Tests of Life*, [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968]). Most of us quit praying just before God is about to give the victory. Not everybody is so constituted that he can sincerely spend a whole night in prayer, but all of us can persevere in prayer far more than we do. The early church prayed without ceasing when Peter was in prison and, at the last moment, God gave them their answer (Acts 12:1–19). Keep on praying until the Spirit stops you or the Father answers you. Just about the time you feel like quitting, God will give the answer.

Pray for all the saints. The Lord’s Prayer begins with “Our Father”—not “My Father.” We pray as part of a great family that is also talking to God, and we ought to pray for the other members of the family. Even Paul asked for the prayer support of the Ephesians—and he had been to the third heaven and back. If Paul needed the prayers of the saints, how much more do you and I need them! If my prayers help another believer defeat Satan, then that victory will help me too. Note that Paul did not ask them to pray for his comfort or safety, but for the effectiveness of his witness and ministry.

The Encouragement (Eph. 6:21–24)

We are not fighting the battle alone. There are other believers who stand with us in the fight, and we ought to be careful to encourage one another. Paul encouraged the Ephesians; Tychicus was an encouragement to Paul (Acts 20:4); and Paul was going to send Tychicus to Ephesus to be an encouragement to them. Paul was not the kind of missionary who kept his affairs to himself. He wanted the people of God to know what God was doing, how their prayers were being answered, and what Satan was doing to oppose the work. His motive was not selfish. He was not trying to get something out of them.

What an encouragement it is to be a part of the family of God! Nowhere in the New Testament do we find an isolated believer. Christians are like sheep; they flock together. The church is an army and the soldiers need to stand together and fight together.

Note the words Paul uses as he closes this letter: peace—love—faith—grace! He was a prisoner of Rome, yet he was richer than the emperor. No matter what our circumstances may be, in Jesus Christ we are “blessed with all spiritual blessings”!

Hoehner, H. W. (1985). *Ephesians*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 642-645) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

F. Standing in warfare (6:10–20)

Whereas every division of 4:1–6:9 was introduced by the Greek inferential particle *oun* (4:1, 17; 5:1, 7, 15) and the verb “walk” (*peripateō*; 4:1, 17; 5:1, 8, 15), this final division is signaled by “finally” (*tou loipou*, “the rest”). This section discusses a believer’s use of God’s resources to help him stand against evil powers.

1. PUTTING ON THE ARMOR (6:10–13)

a. What: to be strong in the Lord (6:10).

6:10. Paul exhorted believers to **be strong in the Lord and in the might** (*kratei*, “power that overcomes resistance” as used in Christ’s miracles) of God’s inherent strength (*ischyos*; cf. “the power [*kratous*] of His inherent strength” [*ischyos*] in 1:19). Hence believers can be strengthened not only by the person of the Lord but also by His resources (cf. Phil. 4:13).

b. How: to put on God’s armor (6:11a).

6:11a. The form of the Greek imperative **put on** indicates that believers are responsible for putting on God's (not their) **full armor** (*panoplian*, also in v. 13; all the armor and weapons together were called the *hapla*; cf. 2 Cor. 6:7) with all urgency. The detailed description of the armor (given in Eph. 6:14–17) may stem from Paul's being tied to a Roman soldier while in prison awaiting trial (cf. Acts 28:16, 20).

c. *Why: to stand against the devil's strategy (6:11b–13)*

6:11b–12. The purpose of putting on God's armor is to be able to **stand against the schemes** or stratagems (*methodeias*, used in the NT only here and in 4:14) of the devil or adversary (cf. 4:27). Christians are not to attack Satan, or advance against him; they are only to “stand” or hold the territory Christ and His body, the church, have conquered. Without God's armor believers will be defeated by the “schemes” of the devil which have been effective for thousands of years.

The **struggle is not physical (against flesh and blood)**; it is a spiritual conflict against the spiritual “Mafia.” Though the ranks of satanic forces cannot be fully categorized, the first two (**rulers and authorities**) have already been mentioned in 1:21 and 3:10. Paul added **the powers of this dark world** (cf. 2:2; 4:18; 5:8) and **the spiritual forces of evil**. Their sphere of activity is **in the heavenly realms**, the fifth occurrence of this phrase, which is mentioned in the New Testament only in 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12. Satan, who is in the heavens (2:2) until he will be cast out in the middle of the Tribulation (Rev. 12:9–10), is trying to rob believers of the spiritual blessings God has given them (Eph. 1:3).

6:13. Some think this verse implies that a believer, having subdued all, is able to stand in victory. It is preferable to think that this is summarizing what has been stated: that having made all the necessary preparations (with **the full armor of God**; cf. v. 11), one is then ready and **able to stand** in defense. This view fits better with the context because immediately after this verse Paul described the armor to be put on. This would be unnatural if he were speaking (in v. 13) of standing in victory. Also, to say that verse 13 refers to standing in victory but that verses 11 and 14 refer to standing in defense is inconsistent. Too, the word **stand** in verse 13 is *antistēnai*, “to withstand or stand against” (cf. James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:9).

2. STANDING WITH THE ARMOR (6:14–16)

a. *The mandate: to stand (6:14a).*

6:14a. Verses 14–20 make up the eighth long sentence in this epistle. Others are 1:3–14, 15–23; 2:1–7; 3:1–13, 14–19; 4:1–7, 11–16.

The imperative **stand** denotes urgency. This is followed by four Greek participles that denote either the cause or means of standing. The participles are rendered as follows in the NIV: “buckled,” “in place,” “fitted,” “take up” (6:14–16).

b. *The method: to arm (6:14b–16).*

6:14b. Before a Roman soldier put on his armor, he put a belt **around** his **waist**. This held his garments together and served as a place on which to hang his armor. **The belt of truth** refers not to the facts of the gospel but to subjective truth, a believer's integrity and faithfulness. As a soldier's belt or sash gave ease and freedom of movement, so truth gives freedom with self, others, and God.

6:14c. **The breastplate of righteousness** refers not to justification, obtained at conversion (Rom. 3:24; 4:5), but to the sanctifying righteousness of Christ (1 Cor. 1:30) practiced in a believer's life. As a soldier's breastplate protected his chest from an enemy's attacks, so sanctifying, righteous living (Rom. 6:13; 14:17) guards a believer's heart against the assaults of the devil (cf. Isa. 59:17; James 4:7).

6:15. This verse does not speak of the spreading of the gospel, for Christians are pictured in vv. 10–16 as standing, not advancing. Instead this refers to a believer's stability or surefootedness **from the gospel** which gives him **peace** so he can stand in the battle.

6:16. **The shield** in a Roman soldier's attire, made of wood, was about 2 1/2' wide and 4' long. It was overlaid with linen and leather, to absorb fiery arrows. Thus it also protected the other pieces of the armor; hence Paul used the phrase, **in addition to all this. Of faith** is a genitive of content; the shield consists of faith. The idea, then, is that a Christian's resolute faith in the Lord can stop and extinguish **all the flaming arrows of the evil one** aimed at him. (Cf. "evil one" [Satan] in John 17:15; 1 John 5:19.)

3. RECEIVING THE FINAL PIECES OF ARMOR (6:17–20)

a. *The mandate: to receive (6:17).*

6:17. The outline is divided here because the Greek word **take** is an imperative, rather than another participle. This parallels the imperative "stand" in verse 14. The helmet and sword are the last two pieces a soldier takes up. A helmet, being hot and uncomfortable, would be put on by a soldier only when he faced impending danger. Having one's head guarded by a helmet gives a sense of safety, so **the helmet of salvation** refers either to present safety from the devil's attacks or to a future deliverance, "the hope of salvation as a helmet" (1 Thes. 5:8).

Finally, a Roman soldier would take in hand his sword, his only offensive weapon. **Of the Spirit** refers to the source or origin of **the sword**; hence it is "the sword given by the Spirit." "The sword of the Spirit" is specified as **the Word of God**. "Word" (*rhēma*; cf. Eph. 5:26; Rom. 10:8, 17; 1 Peter 1:25) refers to the preached Word or an utterance of God occasioned by the Holy Spirit in the heart. Believers need this "sword" to combat the enemy's assault, much as Christ did three times when tempted by the devil (Matt. 4:1–11).

b. *The method: to care (6:18–20).*

6:18. The manner in which a soldier takes up these last two pieces of armor is suggested by two Greek participles: "praying" and "being alert." When the enemy attacks—and **on all occasions**—Christians are to **pray continually in the Spirit** (i.e., in the power and sphere of the Spirit; cf. Jude 20). **With all kinds of prayers and requests** suggests the thoroughness and intensity of their praying. And like reliable soldiers, they are to **be keeping alert**, literally, "in all persistence" (*en pasē proskarterēsei*; the noun is used only here in the NT). Their requests are to be **for all the saints** because of Satan's spiritual warfare against Christ and the church. In the Greek "all" occurs four times in this verse; three are translated in the NIV and the fourth is rendered as **always** (lit., "in all times" or "every time").

6:19–20. Paul asked his readers not only to **pray** in general for all saints but **also** specifically to pray **for him that he might make known the mystery of the gospel**. Here Paul probably did not refer to witnessing or preaching the gospel of Christ. Instead, he may have referred to his need to be bold (twice he said **fearlessly**) and clear regarding the "mystery of the gospel" when he would be on trial before Caesar in Rome (when and if the Jewish accusers would make

charges against him). The Romans looked on the Christians as a sect of the Jews, and the Jews considered them as a heretical group. In his trial Paul needed to make clear that Christians are neither a Jewish sect nor a heretical group but a new entity, the church, the body of Christ, composed of Jewish and Gentile believers. This recalls Paul's lengthy discussion of this "mystery of the gospel" in 2:11–3:11. For this reason Paul was **an ambassador in chains** (cf. Acts 28:16, 20; Eph. 3:1; 4:1; Phil. 1:7, 13–14, 16; Col. 4:3, 18; Phile. 1, 9–10, 13).

G. Conclusion (6:21–24).

1. INFORMATION (6:21–22)

6:21–22. Apparently **Tychicus** was the bearer of this epistle. Paul considered him a **dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord**. In Colossians 4:7 Paul called him by these same titles and added that he was a "fellow servant" (*syndoulos*, "fellow slave"). Tychicus is also mentioned in Acts 20:4; 2 Timothy 4:12; and Titus 3:12. Tychicus was to inform the Ephesians of Paul's welfare—**how** he was **and what** he was **doing**—in order to **encourage** them (cf. Eph. 3:13).

2. SALUTATION (6:23)

6:23. Three spiritual qualities frequently mentioned by Paul—peace, love, and faith—are referred to in this verse. The phrase **peace to the brothers** is found nowhere else in the New Testament. This **and love with faith** (cf. 1:15) have their sources in God. Paul wanted them to continue their love for other Christians, their spirit they are all "members of one body," 4:25) and to combine that love with their faith in God, for which they were well known. **God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ** is similar to Paul's wording in 1:2–3, 17; 5:20.

3. BENEDICTION (6:24)

6:24. **Grace** concludes the letter, just as it had introduced it (1:2). The words **with an undying love** are literally, "in incorruption, incorruptibility, immortality" (*en aphtharsia*; cf. Rom. 2:7; 1 Cor. 15:42, 50, 53–54; 2 Tim. 1:10). It has the idea that believers' **love** for the **Lord Jesus Christ** is to be pure, not corrupted with wrong motives or secret disloyalties. Unfortunately, some Ephesian believers later did lose the fervency of their love for Christ (Rev. 2:4). Paul's benediction, though unusual (cf. the chart "Paul's Concluding Benedictions in His Epistles," at Rom. 16:17–20), was certainly fitting.

Anders, M. (1999). *Galatians-Colossians* (Vol. 8, pp. 190–195). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

The Demands of Spiritual Warfare (vv. 10–20)

SUPPORTING IDEA: *We are to put on the full spiritual armor of God so that we will be able to win the spiritual war against the devil.*

6:10. Paul introduces his final subject by urging the Ephesian believers to **be strong in the Lord**. When it comes to spiritual warfare, we cannot be sufficiently strong by ourselves. If we

are going to have adequate strength for the spiritual battles of life, it must be the Lord's strength. Only he has the **mighty power** sufficient to win spiritual battles against the demonic enemy.

6:11. The way we are strong in the Lord is to put on the full armor of God. When we have this armor on, we are able to stand against the wiles and schemes of the devil. Satan is a deceiver and a destroyer (Rev. 12:9). He deceives in order to destroy. Putting on the armor, of course, is a metaphor for following certain instructions from Scripture.

6:12. The reason this spiritual armor is needed is that **our struggle is not against flesh and blood**. The picture of warfare here implies that we do not face a physical army. We face a spiritual army. Therefore our weapons must be spiritual. **Against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms** seems to suggest a hierarchy of evil spirit-beings who do the bidding of Satan in opposing the will of God on earth.

6:13. When we have obeyed all the instructions implicit in the **full armor of God**, we can resist Satan's attempts to deceive and destroy us. **The day of evil** is anytime during this era in history until Jesus returns. All days are evil in their potential and become evil in reality when Satan or his demons decide to use that day to attack you.

The clear implication here is that, if the Christian has all his armor on, he has the ability to **stand firm** against Satan. At times the spiritual warfare in which we find ourselves may be frightening. However, the only thing we have to fear, if our armor is in place, is fear itself. "The one who is in you [Jesus], is greater than the one [Satan] who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7). "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith" (1 Pet. 5:8–9). Scripture is utterly consistent. If we have our armor in place, if we are firm in our faith, we may resist the devil. If we do, he will flee from us.

6:14. After instructions to put on the full armor of God and the promise of the power of God in victory over the devil, Paul specifically describes the various pieces of armor. **The belt of truth** pictures the large leather belt the Roman soldier wore. It held other weapons and kept his outer garments in place. To put on the belt of truth can be understood as accepting the truth of the Bible and choosing to follow it with integrity.

The breastplate of righteousness pictures the metal armor in the shape of a human torso common to the Roman uniform. To put on the breastplate can be understood as choosing not to harbor and nurture known sin. It is striving to be like Christ and live according to his ways of righteousness.

6:15. Feet fitted with the readiness pictures the hobnailed shoes which kept the soldiers footing sure in battle. To put on these shoes could be understood as believing the promises of God in the gospel and counting on them to be true for you. Faith in these promises yields peace in the Christian's life.

6:16. The shield of faith pictures the small, round shield the Roman soldier used to deflect blows from the sword, arrow, or spear of the enemy. To take up this shield can be understood as rejecting temptations to doubt, sin or quit, telling yourself the truth and choosing on the basis of the truth to do the right thing.

6:17. The helmet of salvation pictures the Roman soldier's metal protective headgear. It does not refer to our salvation in Christ. First Thessalonians speaks of the helmet of the "*hope of salvation*," which is probably a parallel idea. That being the case, taking the helmet of salvation

could be understood as resting our hope in the future and living in this world according to the value system of the next.

The sword of the Spirit pictures the soldier's weapon sheathed to his belt and used both for offensive and defensive purposes. Taking the sword of the Spirit—defined for us as the Word of God—can be understood as using Scripture specifically in life's situations to fend off attacks of the enemy and put him to flight. We see the example of Jesus using the Scripture this way in Matthew 4:1–11.

6:18. Finally, while preparing for and doing battle, we are to be on the alert and **always keep on praying**. We petition God for our own needs in the battle, and we pray for the spiritual victory of other saints.

6:19–20. Paul finishes by asking for prayer for himself in his own ministry, acknowledging the fact that he was a prisoner at the time of this writing. He sought courage from prayer to proclaim the gospel even to those in his prison.

D. Encouragement for the Saints (vv. 21–24)

SUPPORTING IDEA: *Sending another Christian with good news of one's welfare can encourage the church in your absence from it.*

6:21. Paul closes with a review of his own circumstances, his intention to send Tychicus to encourage them, and a benediction. Tychicus served as a messenger for Paul to the churches (Acts 20:4; Col. 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:12; Titus 3:12). He may have carried the letter from Paul to Ephesus. He would let the church know of Paul's situation.

6:22. Knowing Paul's situation would be an encouragement for the church just as modern churches gain encouragement from news about missionaries they know in distant places. Churches need news of God's work around the world to encourage and strengthen them in their own work with God.

6:23. Letters typically closed with a wish for good health for the readers. As with his greetings, so in the closing Paul transformed this into a spiritual benediction. He prayed for wholeness, love, and faith for the readers, qualities that only God through his Son Jesus could grant. Victors in spiritual warfare would experience these qualities in daily life.

6:24. Paul concludes with his great theological word: *grace*. The letter that centers on divine grace (1:6–7; 2:5, 7–8; 4:7) and love (2:4; 3:19; 5:2, 25) and on love in the church (1:15; 3:17; 4:2, 15–16; 5:2, 25, 28, 33; 6:23) concludes with the hope that God's unearned love will be experienced by those who give love to Jesus forever. Such is the situation Paul wants to create in the churches, a climate where peace, love, and grace dominate all relationships, where God is sovereign, and where Christ is loved. Such a climate is the arena for victorious spiritual warfare and for successful family living.

MAIN IDEA REVIEW: *Fathers are to nurture their children while children are to obey their parents, and slaves are to obey their masters while masters are to take care of their slaves. Also, life is a spiritual war, so be sure to keep each piece of spiritual armor in place; and stand firm against the devil.*

III. CONCLUSION

Don't Let Satan Frighten You

This spiritual warfare section, then, is one of the most important passages in the Bible. It tells us what we need to know and do to be successful in the spiritual battle of life. Said in as few of words as possible: keep a clear conscience before God, and resist the devil's attempts to frighten, deceive, or tempt you.

You cannot take that statement alone. You must read into it a fuller understanding of the information we have just covered. Basically, we are to draw near to God (keep a clear conscience; don't allow known, willful sin to take root in your heart unchallenged; accept the truth of the Bible and live accordingly) and resist the devil (stand firm against him; resist his attempts to deceive you; don't be terrorized by him). Satan has no real power if your armor is on, and he will flee from you.

PRINCIPLES

- The principle of mutual submission is the key to parent-child relationships.
- The principle of mutual submission is the key to employer-employee relationships.
- We cannot win the spiritual battle against Satan in our own strength. It must be the strength of the Lord.
- If our armor is in place, we are able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. We need not unduly fear him.
- Spiritual warfare must be undergirded with prayer.

APPLICATIONS

- If you are a parent, how well are you doing at being submissive to the needs of your child? If you are a child still under the authority of your parents, how are you doing at being submissive to their authority?
- If you are an employer, how well are you doing at being submissive to the needs of your employees? If you are an employee, how are you doing at being submissive to the authority of your employer?
- How are you doing at fighting the spiritual battle? Do you have a clear conscience? Do you have all your pieces of armor on? If not, which ones do you need to put into place? Are you undergirding your battle with prayer? Do you have others praying for you as Paul did?

IV. LIFE APPLICATION

Resting in the Finished Work of Christ

Satan is called the "accuser of our brothers" (Rev. 12:10). He stands ready to whisper venomous accusations to us in our quiet moments and hurl demonic defamations in our busy ones.

"You cheap hypocrite!" he hisses. "You worthless loser," he rasps. "You try to talk to people about Jesus, about righteousness, about faithfulness, and all the while, you have immoral thoughts, sinful attitudes, and inconsistent behavior. Who are you to talk about forgiveness? You have no right to talk to anyone about Christianity. Why don't you come back into your old life where you belong?"

And we believe him! Doing so, we go down in flames. The secret to withstanding Satan's accusations is not what we do; it is what Christ did on the cross. The secret to withstanding Satan's accusations is to rest consciously in what Jesus did on the cross. If we truly understand it, we can stand against Satan's accusations. If we don't, we might not be able to.

As John White wrote in his book *The Fight*:

God's answer to your guilty conscience is the death of His Son. Your answer to a guilty conscience is usually something you do, like confessing harder, praying more, reading your Bible, paying more than your tithe in the offering, and so on. Do you not understand? The Father does not welcome you because you have been trying hard, because you have made a thoroughgoing confession, or because you have been making spiritual strides recently. He does not welcome you because you have something you can be proud about. He welcomes you because His Son died for you. Are you blasphemous enough to suppose that your dead works, your feeble efforts can add to the finished work of a dying Savior? "It is finished!" he cried. Completed. Done. Forever ended. He crashed through the gates of hell, set prisoners free, abolished death and burst in new life from the tomb. All to set you free from sin and open the way for you to run into the loving arms of God.

Now do you understand how 'the brethren' overcame the Accuser by the blood of the Lamb? They refused to let his accusations impede their access to God. A simple confession was enough. They face the Accuser boldly saying, "We already know the worst you could ever tell us, and so does God. What is more the blood of Jesus is enough." Therefore, when you find the grey cloud descending, whether it be as you pray, as you work, as you testify or whatever, when you find the ring of assurance going from your words because of a vague sense of guilt, look up to God and say, "Thank you, my Father, for the blood of your Son. Thank you, even now, that you accept me gladly, lovingly in spite of all I am and have done—because of His death. Father and God, I come" (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976, 87).

Resist the efforts of Satan to accuse you, to bury you with guilt, to make you feel worthless and unqualified to come to Christ again. It is part of his warfare strategy to make you ineffective as a witness and unhappy as a disciple. Be on guard against his schemes. Recognize them. Stand firm against him in the strength which God provides.

When we are faced with the temptation to sin or feel buried by guilt, we are facing spiritual warfare. At that moment, we must be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. We must take up the armor of God and stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Ephesians 6:10-24). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.