

**Life is War**  
**Ephesians 6:10-24**

My hunch is that modern readers come to this passage in one of two ways. **Some love this passage. Their favorite movies may be Braveheart, Gladiator, 300, Blackhawk Down, and Saving Private Ryan! Some of them love UFC. Some enjoy fireworks, and drive camouflage F-150's with gun racks. Some of these types enjoy laser tag and paint ball, and face paint.** (Before there was paint ball, we used to have corn-cob fights! It was a serious battle). **For these types, this passage is interesting.**

Others find it **antiquated, ridiculous, bizarre, and uninformed.** (And maybe some who love this passage, actually feel this way).

We find it **antiquated and ridiculous** because of modern weaponry and warfare. **A person dressed up in a tin suit does not communicate strength and vitality and security to us! Give me a few good men with an M16 and I can hold back a Roman battalion. Give me some men with sniper rifles, grenades, laser-guided weapons; throw in a few tanks, and we'll be truly protected. Or, give me some men with attack helicopters, stealth bombers, or just send in a drone to take care of business.** Even our kids, grow up playing video games that rarely have anything to do with breastplates and armor. Instead, they have digital shields, or swords that can shoot lasers. Therefore, this picture seems ridiculous.

One could also think this text is **bizarre and uninformed. Isn't** the mention of *militaristic language fanatical and unenlightened?* **Haven't we had enough of religious holy war talk? Isn't** all his talk about the spirit and evil simply the product of an **uninformed, superstitious writer?** Aren't **the real problems** in the world simply **psychological, physiological, or relational, economical and/or political?** Why this talk of "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms?" Weren't the biblical writers too simplistic, attributing everything to spiritual matters?

Consider four introductory points in light of these concerns.

1. **It's not antiquated; it's ageless.**

**While it seems old fashioned, it could not be more relevant.**

**We can't replace the items with contemporary items: "the bazooka of righteousness" the "B52 of truth," "the "Chinook of faith" "the tank treads of the gospel of peace."**

That would not only be silly, but it would lose the metaphorical point.

Part of the point has to do with the **part of the body** that these pieces cover – so that a tank or a drone would not apply.

This passage is **not antiquated**; **it's actually ageless** because **humanity has not changed, our spiritual needs have not changed, and the evil one is still active, as he was in the garden.**

**Believers in Ephesus and believers in Raleigh, have the same need for Christ and his mighty power, in order to glory of God.**

## **2. It's not ridiculous; it's rooted in the OT.**

**While Paul is certainly aware of Roman soldiers, and maybe even looking at them at the time of writing, his language is more influenced by the majestic OT warfare imagery, especially from Isaiah.**

**The Old Testament often refers to God (and his Messiah) as a warrior and his people as "troops" who are in need of God's strength. Here are a few:**

**The LORD is a warrior;  
Yahweh is his name.**

**(Exodus 15:3 HCSB)**

**Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me;  
fight against those who fight against me!**

**Take hold of shield and buckler  
and rise for my help!**

**Draw the spear and javelin  
against my pursuers!**

**Say to my soul,  
"I am your salvation!"**

**(Psalm 35:1-3 ESV, cf., Hab 3:1-16)**

**The LORD goes out like a mighty man,**

like a man of war he stirs up his zeal;  
he cries out, he shouts aloud,  
he shows himself mighty against his foes.  
(Isaiah 42:13 ESV)

For you equipped me with strength for the battle;  
you made those who rise against me sink under me.  
(Psalm 18:39 ESV)

Even more significantly, God and his Messiah also wear these items mentioned in Ephesians 6.

but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,  
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;  
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,  
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.  
Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,  
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.  
(Isaiah 11:4-5 ESV)

He made my mouth like a sharp sword;  
in the shadow of his hand he hid me;  
he made me a polished arrow;  
in his quiver he hid me away.  
(Isaiah 49:2 ESV)

He put on righteousness as a breastplate,  
and a helmet of salvation on his head;  
he put on garments of vengeance for clothing,  
and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.  
(Isaiah 59:17 ESV)

How beautiful upon the mountains  
are the feet of him who brings good news,  
who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness,  
who publishes salvation,  
who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."  
(Is 52:7 ESV, cf. 2 Sam 18:24-27)

Paul is picking up these allusions. Paul's readers resonate with this background, and so should we.

Therefore, this passage is not ridiculous; it's actually rooted in the OT imagery of the King of Kings. It points us to the very nature of the Messiah and his mighty works.

### 3. **It's not bizarre; it's a brilliant conclusion.**

This passage serves as a climactic conclusion to an amazing letter.

The armor of God doesn't come out of nowhere. Paul alludes to several key ideas that were already mentioned, and he provides a closing exhortation with vivid imagery.

Here are some of the ideas previously already addressed:

- **Divine Power** – The call to be strengthened draws our minds back to the opening chapter, and to the prayer in chapter 3 (1:19-20, 3:16, 20, 6:10)
- **Already Not Yet** – This passage reminds us that Christ has *already* triumphed over the powers of darkness (1:21; 3:10; 4:8), giving us new life, and freeing us from the fear of these powers (2:2); but we have *not yet* experienced the full fruits of Christ's victory, for the powers still exist (though they are defeated! – 4:27, 5:16). Ephesians 6 reminds us that a battle still rages.
- **Virtues** – The realities connected with the pieces of armor that we are to put on have already been mentioned: truth (1:13, 4:15, 21, 24, 25, 5:9); righteousness (4:24; 5:9), peace (2:14-18; 4:3); the gospel (1:13; 3:6); the word of God (1:13; 5:26); salvation (1:13; 2:5, 8, 5:23); faith (1:13, 15, 19; 2:8; 3:12, 17; 4:5, 13).
- **Prayer** – The summons to prayer in 6:18-20 also picks up previous language like "all the saints" (3:18); "the mystery" (1:9, 3:3-4, 9; 5:32); "boldness" (3:12), as well as Paul's imprisonment (3:1; 4:1).
- **"Put on"** - Earlier Paul said that we should "put on the new self, created after the likeness of God" (4:24) and "be imitators of God." Now, he says we "put on the armor of God," (11). The armor given to us is God's own armor.

**To put on the armor of God is to put on the Messiah himself. It means to be identified with him, and to fight with his strength, displaying his character.**

**The critical battle has already been won! There's just a mop up operation going on. He is Lord. We are in him.**

The emphasis is **not** on us memorizing each piece and “praying it on.” **It's about putting on the characteristics and virtues that are ours through our union with Jesus Christ.** We are to put on Christ, which simply means as in Ephesians 4:24, recognize who you are in Christ, and live consistently with that identity with the spiritual resources that are yours.

**Because of this emphasis, we have confidence and hope! We don't have to live in bondage and in fear.**

Therefore, what we have here is a carefully put together conclusion that recaps and motivates the hearer. It is **not bizarre; it's a brilliant conclusion.**

4. **Paul isn't uninformed; it's truly informed.**

Paul has been speaking of the ethical and relational challenge we have in **4:1-6:9**. Now, he points out with more emphasis the *cosmic and spiritual* battle that exists. (Not that he hasn't mentioned life in the Spirit. He has! Only here it is with greater, more sustained, cosmic emphasis).

**He shows us that there is more going on than meets the eye.**

**We can't simply say that our relational challenges in the church, our behavioral challenge in the home, or our ethical challenges in society are the results of everything except spiritual problems.** They may surely involve physical and psychological challenges, but we are complex beings and many of our problems are spiritual warfare issues. Paul takes us from a **moral perspective** to a **cosmic perspective**. **Stott says, “Beneath the surface, an unseen spiritual battle is raging.”**

Some may think that Paul was simply unenlightened. However, I believe that he actually knew what he was talking about. He was an inspired Apostle, whom God used to pen his Word.

In our culture, everyone wants to talk about problems apart from talking about evil, faith, or the Spirit.

Anyone who proposes a cause to a problem being spiritual is labeled as a *fanatic, or naïve, silly, unenlightened or uninformed* about the real issues.

Some may give a sentimental value to those of faith, but nothing more. In their heart they believe that this whole thing is silly.

When these shootings have occurred in America, have you noticed what the publications and the media talk about? They talk about how the *brain* functions, or about *weapons*, or about the child's *upbringing*, about *video games*, etc. All of these issues are significant, but rarely is anything related to spiritual warfare ever brought up.

When relief workers arrive notice that pastors are there only for moral support, *not* to provide answers and hope. That is left to the "professionals."

We think we are so advanced, and yet, the streets still run with blood; humans are being oppressed, treated like animals; families are breaking down everywhere; and on and on. We are in a broken world, that is influenced by the "god of the his age." The Bible will not allow for a simplistic answer to the problems of this age. Clearly, there are some answers in the fields of sociology, biology, etc. but they can not provide all the answers.

You must take into account sin and Satan, when you try to assess the problems of this world.

Paul is not uninformed about the real problems; he is informing us about the real, unseen battle beneath these visible problems.

**6:10-20- Big idea:**

Paul exhorts the Ephesians and us to stand firm by God's strength in God's armor in the midst of spiritual warfare.

The **three imperatives** are: “be strong,” “put on the full armor of God” and “stand.” “They are dominate the text, the rest of the verses are explanatory” (Snodgrass, 337).

Notice the **lead sentence** in verse 10 – “Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.” The next verse shows **how** this strength is appropriated – “put on the armor of God” (11a) and **why** it’s necessary – “that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.” (11b). Again, the point is to stand in God’s strength with God’s armor in the midst of spiritual warfare.

Notice the **repetition**, “to stand,” to withstand” “stand firm” “stand therefore” (11, 13, 14). In verse 14 it’s issued as an imperative, and according to O’Brien it “is the chief admonition of the passage” (O’Brien).

- There is a **defensive** element here. We must “resist” the devil’s temptations. It calls to my mind James’ words, “Resist the Devil and He will flee from you” (4:7). Stand holding your ground – not giving in an inch. Say, “I will not yield to your temptation, I will not listen to your lies, I will not budge.”
- There’s also an **offensive** element in the text. We are to take up the sword of the Spirit (17), and speak the gospel in the face of opposition (19-20).

The theologian-preacher of the reformation, Martin Luther, was known for taking a stand. He famously said to those who urged him to recant or else, “Here I stand, I can do no other. God help me.” Luther sensed the presence of the devil so much that he reportedly **threw his inkwell** at the devil, leaving ink marks on the wall that can still be seen, as he translated the Bible into German! I have an inkwell from there to remind me of the opposition I face as I prepare sermons and write.

- There’s also a **corporate** element here. Together, we must put on the armor of God. Paul tells the Philippians, “Stand firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the Gospel,

and not frightened in anything by your opponents.” (Phil. 1:27-28). **If you are familiar of the Battle of Thermopyle, that’s the picture I get. Hollywood made a movie about it called 300. It was one of the most famous, “last stands.” In 480 BC, though outnumbered, the Greeks held back the Persians led by Xerxes I for three days. “Our arrows will blot out the sun.” Then we shall fight you in the shade.” We too take our stand, fighting them in the shade.**

**In 1665 Puritan Minister, William Gurnall, published a book called *The Christian in Complete Armor*, 261 chapters, 1,472 pages. He called it a “mite,” a “little present.” 1,400 pages! That’s a book! He qualifies as a writer! His subtitle: *The saint’s war against the Devil, wherein a discovery is made of that grand enemy of God and his people, in his policies, power, seat of his empire, wickedness, and chief design he hath against the saints; a magazine opened, from whence the Christian is furnished with spiritual arms for the battle, helped on with his armour, and taught the use of his weapon; together with the happy issue of the whole war.***

**Can’t you see him proposing that as a nice little subtitle for the editor?** You don’t spend six years preaching on this passage, and writing 1,472 pages on it, unless you believe this **to be serious**. John Newton said that if he was confined to one book beside the Bible, he’d choose *Christian Armour*.

**Lloyd-Jones spent 300 pages on verses 11-13; and then wrote a second one on them to fill in the gaps of the previous one, that was also 300 pages.**

This important passage breaks down in three natural divisions, in **verses 10-13** with the call to be strengthened by the Lord because the enemy is vast and strategic; (2) **verses 14-17 describe the equipment** we put on; (3) **18-20 is a summons to prayer.**

I shall outline them under this heading

## **HOW TO STAND STRONG IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE**

### **1. Be Aware of the Battle (10-13)**

2. Be Equipped with God's Armor (14-17)
3. Be Devoted to Prayer (18-20)

This is how we stand firm against the enemies' attacks, and how we advance the gospel in the midst of opposition.

### **#1: BE AWARE OF THE BATTLE (10-13)**

#### **A. We need the Lord's Strength (10, 11, 13)**

Paul begins with "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power" (10).

We must be strengthened by the mighty power of the Lord because we don't want to crumble when the evil one tempts us.

Notice this is passive – "be made strong" (cf., 3:16)

- **Don't look in the wrong place for strength: Our Strength is not...**
  - *Our resources and ability*
  - *How long we've been Christians*, "Take heed lest you fall"
  - *How much we know about the Bible.*
  - *How long you've been in ministry.*
  - ***Our strength is in Jesus Christ, and his mighty power.***
    - "strong" (dunamis)
    - "strength" (might, sovereignty)
    - "might" "might" (see 1:19) – Resurrection
  - **My strength, this very moment, is in union with Jesus.**
  - "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:1)
- **Look in the right place, to the right person: Jesus; Say, "Yes, I'm weak, but I don't need to remain weak."**
  1. David, "found strength in the Lord" (1 Sam 30:6)
  2. Hebrews 11:32-34, "they were made strong in weakness."

Paul says twice that we must put on **the armor of God**. This is how we stand. We **don't have enough human resources to stand against**

the enemy. We put on the armor, or as mentioned, “put on the new self.”

We put on Christ. We remember who we are and what is ours in Christ.

The strength that is mentioned in verse 10, 11, and 13 implies that the devil can be resisted by the Lord’s strength.

**B. We need to know our enemy (11-13)**

The devil has already been mentioned in this book – **4:27**.

**Who is the Devil? “Diabolou”**

“Satan” in Hebrew means “adversary.” His Greek title, “Diabolos” means “slanderer.” He opposes. He accuses.

- Satan is called the devil only in the New Testament (Matt. 4:1; 13:39; 25:41; Rev. 12:9; 20:2)
- Satan is head of the demons and his minions (verse 12, also Job 1:6; Matt. 4:10)
- “The serpent” (Gen. 3:1, 14; 2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9; 20:2)
- “Beelzebul” (Matt. 10:25; 12:24, 27; Luke 11:15)
- “The ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)
- “god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4)
- “The evil one” (Matt. 13:19; 1 John 2:13)
- “The dragon” (Rev. 12:9)

His various names display the fact that he is **wicked; powerful and cunning.... He comes to kill, steal and destroy**. And he has schemes for doing so.

Notice a few things about our enemy in Ephesians 6...

- **He's evil.**

We need God's armor because we are facing one who opposes God. The text goes on to mention "the spiritual forces of evil" (12), and "the evil day" (13). "When God is blessing, the devil starts messing"

- **He's strategic.** ("schemes")

Paul tells us to be aware of the devil's schemes. He's wily, subtle and devious.

Paul has pointed out some of the ways he works already. He tries to gain a foothold by tempting us to have uncontrolled anger (4:26), or falsehood (4:25), stealing (4:28), or unwholesome talk (29).

These are all "former ways of life," the ways in which we once walked before God made us alive with Christ (2:1-5).

Satan can make things look attractive and desirable and distort the truth, camouflaging the evil.

- **He wrestles.**

I used to watch (fake) wrestling as a kid. James has started grappling (real wrestling). I watched him last week. I was a bit out of my element. I didn't know what to say, "um... go!" I thought of using the old Karate Kid instructions, "sweep the leg!" The first guy was really good. He was sort of like Chuck Norris fighting him. He held his own in the second match. Grappling is intense. It's physical. It involves leverage, manipulation, maneuvering, and strategy.

The word used to describe the struggle isn't used elsewhere in the NT, but was commonly used for the sport of wrestling in the first century (O'Brien). The context of the match is between soldiers. It is a close, intense battle, filled with manipulation, and evil strategy. He isn't firing laser guided missiles!

Jesus told Peter, "Satan wants to sift you like wheat [that's intense], but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail" (Luke 22:31).

Notice that we don't wrestle against **flesh and blood**.

We might ask, "What do you mean Paul? You've been beaten with rods, imprisoned, left for dead, shipwrecked, endangered countless times, and more. What do you mean your battle isn't physical?" He would say, "Behind these battles is another battle... It's unseen, cosmic, spiritual."

Remember when Jesus told Peter, "Get behind me Satan" (Mark 8:33). Obviously, he knew Peter wasn't Satan, but behind this conflict, was a spiritual conflict.

Our enemy is **vast**. The relationship between the devil and his minions is not explained. They simply operate in "this present darkness." They provided a unified attack.

Some think that these "rulers" and authorities" are political entities. They think Paul is speaking about cultural and societal systems. Even though Satan surely can and does work through these systems, I don't think that's what Paul is referring to here. He's speaking of the powers that work with the evil one in general.

- **He's defeated.**

We can have confidence because Jesus has already won the victory for us (1:19-22; 4:8). We aren't urged to win, but to stand.

The authority of the powers has been broken, and their final defeat is coming soon.

Just like a defeated enemy, he's mad about it! When you study historical battles, you see this trend. When one is defeated, they don't easily surrender. They get even more intense and vicious. You may have even done that (I have done sadly.... Example: Corbin. The final free throws have been made and soon the buzzer will sound).

There's just a mop up operation going on now. We are not called into this battle as if the victor is in doubt. "Poor God." No! The

decisive victory has been won. It is our privilege to participate in this mop up struggle, and it is a vicious struggle. We fight with confidence, because all things will ultimately be put under Christ's feet!

**We get to fight as a victor, not as a victim.** To change the metaphor, you don't sweat it, when you have a winning hand. Christ has handed us a royal flush. Soon the cards will be laid down and the game will be over. It's over all ready for all practical purposes.

**When? (13b)**

Paul mentions "**the evil day.**" There are various interpretations of this phrase, but I go with the view that this is combination of the present evil age we are in (5:16), and of particularly tempting occasions in this evil age.

**Matt. 4:11** – "then the devil left him" – Of course, he wanted to attack him all the time, but there were times when he came in particular force.

**Application:** We must stand against his schemes in the evil day:

Just as you would want to know what your opponent in **football**, Paul makes us aware of the fact that Satan too has a **scheme**.

***Stand in God's strength when he comes after your flesh (desires).***

- He doesn't make you sin; you choose to sin, but he places the temptation out there.
- He will tempt you with sins we've been talking about in Ephesians: Anger (4:26-27), sexual immorality, greed, or disharmony in a family, etc.
- Or, he will tempt you to not think about him at all! Be ready to stand firm.

***Stand in God's strength when he comes after your mind (human reasoning)***

- The mind begins to question things, which may be an appropriate application of the “helmet of salvation.”
  - Some are tempted to abandon the Lord Jesus.
  - Some are tempted to despair and give up.
- Satan really wants to attack us in the realms of assurance. He is the accuser.
  - He uses lies (John 8:44), deception (Rev. 12:9), murder (Psalm 106:37; John 8:44; John 10:10)
  - Look at **Ephesians 4:14**. He uses false teaching and false doctrines, expressed in various cults and non-Christians movements (2 Cor. 10:10)
- When you are tempted to despair, look to the cross. When you are being accused, remember Romans 8:1. Remember 1 John 3:20, “whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.” Fill your mind with truth.
- In some instances, Jesus heals people of diseases by casting out demons that are not mentioned. (Matt. 17:14-18)

**Stand in God’s strength when he comes after the body of Christ.**

- He tempts the body of Christ to be at war with each other. Notice the context of Ephesians.
- Look at **James 4**. James says that we quarrel with others because we have sinful craving within personally. Then he says resist the devil. (4:7b)
- He also opposes the mission of the church. He blinds the minds of unbelievers” (2 Cor 4). He leads lost people away with false gospels.

Therefore, we must walk in God’s strength. We must remember who we are, and what Christ has already done through his victorious

## **#2: BE EQUIPPED WITH GOD'S ARMOR (13-17)**

After telling us to put on the armor, Paul now describes it.

The first thing to recognize is it is **"of God."** As mentioned, in the Old Testament God is a warrior (Isaiah 11:1-5; 59:17).

The armor, which the Messiah wears in battle, is our battle gear. There is no reason to yield one inch to Satan, if we have on the full armor of God.

But we must be ready and equipped. **We don't wear swim suits, or pajamas; we wear battle-gear.**

### **A. Belt of Truth (14a)**

Truth is important in Ephesians. It is revealed in the gospel (1:13, 4:15), and must be characteristic of believers (4:24-25, 5:9).

As we buckle on this piece of the Messiah's armor, we live in that truth, speak that truth and display the characteristics of our victorious King.

**Do not give the devil a foothold by speaking truth – in your language, behavior and attitude.**

Paul summarizes the source of truth in **Eph. 4:21**, "the truth in Jesus."

**Coming to Jesus, believing in Jesus, resting in Jesus, is a coming to the truth.**

**Put truth of Christ on everyday. Satan hates truth.** He hates when you **speak truth** (Eph. 4). He hates when **you study truth**; he hates when I **preach truth**.

### **B. Breastplate of Righteousness (14b)**

**For the Roman soldier, the breastplate covered the chest to protect it against assaults and arrows.**

Paul's language is drawn from **Isaiah 59:17**, where Yahweh puts on "the breastplate of righteousness."

Once again, we are to put on the virtues of our Messiah.

This doesn't seem to me to be referring to *imputed* righteousness; that is, our right standing before God. I never have to take it up that righteousness because Christ's has given that to me permanently.

This seems to refer to *practical righteousness*, right living, as in **4:24**, and **5:9**. It means to "imitate God" (**5:1**).

Put on those righteous qualities associated with your new life in Christ, those righteous qualities reflected in the life of Jesus.

Don't give in an inch to Satan in the areas of impurity, lust, greed, or injustice, by putting on the breastplate of righteousness.

Realize who you are in Christ, and live out that new identity in daily living.

### **C. Gospel Shoes (15)**

He says, "as for your shoes... put on readiness given by the gospel of peace" (6:15, ESV).

Now we get to the ladies favorite part – shoes!

**It is amazing the kinds of shoes you can buy. Go to a shoe store: Crocs, boots, biking shoes, hiking shoes, tennis shoes, basketball shoes, running shoes, baseball cleats, football cleats, sandals, flip flops, and toms. What they're saying is: "Shoes are really important. And you need different types."**

Paul again draws from Isaiah: "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news." (52:7). For Isaiah, one pictures a messenger coming across the mountaintops announcing the victory.

Paul actually doesn't refer to shoes specifically, however (though it's implied). It's translated in different ways:

- "and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace" (NIV)
- "and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (NASB)
- "and your feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of peace" (HCSB)

Without diving into all the interpretive issues, Paul is basically saying believers should always be ready to share the gospel. BE ready to invite others to our community (Example: Codispodi). We've got shoes and bracelets!

Josephus says that one of the reasons for the success of Caesar's army was their shoes. He issued them great footwear. Their studded half boots that enabled them to travel great distances. They covered great distances in a short amount of time, pursuing the enemy into every nook and cranny. They went into hard places. We to every nook and cranny; we take the Gospel to far away places, even hard places.

Have you had your gospel shoes on this week? It's not an option. Remember, Paul says take up the WHOLE Armor. He doesn't say, one guy can put on the breastplate (he's about "holiness"), another the belt ("because he likes truth"). Take up the whole armor (put on the whole character of Christ).

What are we announcing? It is the "gospel of peace." Isaiah goes on, "who publish peace, who bring good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns'" (52:7b).

Earlier in the book, Paul told us that through the blood of Christ, we are brought near to God (2:11-22). In 2:14, he said, "He himself is our peace." We are reconciled to God and enjoy the peace of God through the death of Jesus (cf., Rom 5:1). He then said, "He came and preached peace" (2:17).

Jesus was the ultimate one with beautiful feet, the who came with his gospel shoes, announcing peace to Jew and Gentile. Those who know Christ, have his peace, and have this same mission.

That's why we must go to hard places. People need to hear this message! We want to bring this good news to them.

In the midst of this passage on warfare, there is a message of peace. This is the difference with our mission and other religious missions. We are not taking life; we are offering life. We are willing to even lay our lives down because Christ laid his down for us, and we know he will raise us up.

#### **D. Shield of Faith (16)**

The word Paul uses for shield is not the small one, like a frisbee, that left the body exposed, but the one that covered the whole body.

The Psalmist says repeatedly that God is a shield. “**God himself is a shield to those who take refuge in him**” (Psa 18:30, cf. Prov 30:5). We are to put on Christ, believing the promises of God, and what he says about us, and what he says is ours. Then, we have a shield to protect us from the darts of the enemy.

These shields were designed to quench the darts that were dipped in pitch and lit. The shields were often soaked with water to put out the fire.

The devil will fire many types of missals at us, but we must soak ourselves in the gospel, and trust in the promises of God's Word. When the enemy fires the missal of doubt, despair, accusations that enflame your conscious, or unbelief, rebellion, lust, fear, go back to God's Word, and remember who you are, and hold to those truths by faith.

Apollyon taunted Christian and said, “Here I will spill your soul and threw a flaming dart at his breast.” But Christian, “had a shield in his hand with which he caught it, and prevented the danger of that.”

#### **E. Helmet of Salvation (17a)**

The helmet was made of tough iron or bronze, with cheek guards, with an inside lining of sponge which made the weight bearable. **Most of us don't have the neck muscles to hold it up.** Nothing short of an ax could penetrate it.

Here again the language from **Isaiah 59:17** is used. Yahweh, the victorious warrior, wears the "helmet of salvation." In Thessalonians, he says, "as a helmet the hope of salvation" (5:8). There, Paul echoes Isaiah urging them to arm themselves with the hope they have in Christ.

Hodge says, "that protects the Christian, which enables him to hold up his head with confidence and joy is the fact that he is saved."

In other words, to resist the devil we must be assured of our salvation.

Say to the evil one, "I am saved from sin's penalty, I am being saved from sin's power, and I will one day be saved from sin's presence." Say to him, "I am alive with Christ. Redeemed. Forgiven. Reconciled. Raised with Christ. Seated with Christ."

Put your helmet on, and don't let him get to your head.

#### F. **Sword of the Spirit**

The final piece of equipment is an **offensive** weapon primarily. The believer must take up the sword and engage the enemy.

The term refers to a short-handed sword, used in personal combat. It is the sword "**of the Spirit**" meaning the Spirit makes the sword powerful and effective (O'brien).

Paul identifies it with "**the word of God**," a term in which Paul often signifies as the gospel (O'brien). However, he normally uses "logos" but here he uses "rhema" which usually refers to the spoken word.

If that's the case here, then he is referring to speaking the gospel, which is powerful and effective by the Spirit of God.

In other words, the gospel empowered by the Spirit is how a Christian is well-armed.

Again, one hears echoes from Isaiah here about the Messiah (cf., 11:4; 49:2; Rev 19:15).

We are given access to the weaponry of the Messiah for battle because we are united with him.

We are to speak the gospel in the realm of darkness, that those who are held captive by the evil one may go free.

### **Defensively**

We also know that God's word keeps us from sin (Psalm 119:9, 11). So we should learn it, and have it with us at all times as the enemy attacks (Matt 4:11, the Messiah's use of it, cf. Deut 8:3).

I always enjoy visiting places that have old weapons, especially the swords. Sometimes you can see the really big swords in the museums. Some of them weigh more than I do.

What many think, as they hold or look on these massive swords, is that they're interesting but practically useless for modern warfare. They wouldn't be issued to troops today.

Many today admire the Bible, and may put the Bible in their den, but they don't use the Bible. Why? They've deemed it useless for modern warfare.

This shouldn't surprise us. In the garden, the evil raised doubt and suspicion about God's Word.

Don't be deceived. Don't go into battle without a sword.

**Back?** It's interesting that no equipment is given for the back. In *Pilgrim's Progress*, Bunyan said that is because Christian had no option but to stand his ground!

### #3: BE DEVOTED TO PRAYER (18-20)

Paul doesn't begin a new sentence in verse 18. It is a continuation of thought. We stand firm against the enemy's schemes through prayer. We are to take up the sword of the Spirit *praying*.

No, armor is associated with prayer. However, a modern piece of equipment comes to mind, that of a walkie-talkie. Piper uses this picture saying:

We cannot know what prayer is for until we know that life is war. Life is war. That's not all it is. But it is certainly that. Our weakness in prayer is owing largely to our neglect of this truth. Prayer is primarily a wartime walkie-talkie for the mission of the church as it advances against the powers of darkness and unbelief. It is not surprising that prayer malfunctions when we try to make it a domestic intercom to call upstairs for more comforts in the den. God has given us prayer as a wartime walkie-talkie so that we can call headquarters for everything we need as the kingdom of Christ advances in the world. (Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, 41)

Paul says, "**praying in the Spirit**" which doesn't refer to speaking in tongues. It should be understood in light of the rest of Ephesians. All true prayer is by the Spirit, because it is through Christ, by the Spirit, that we have access to God (Eph 2:18; cf, 3:16; Jude 20; Rom 8:26)

Let me mention just two parts of this Spirit-enabled prayer:

1. **Pray Comprehensively (18)**

Paul mentions four universals (four "alls"):

- "**praying at all times.**" The Christian soldier stays in constant contact with the commander because the battle is constant. Brother Lawrence says in *The Practice of the Presence of God*, "**The Time for business does not differ with me from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for**

different things, I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were on my knees.”

- **“with all prayer and supplication.”** I doubt a sharp distinction is intended here with these two words. Paul is simply emphasizing faithful prayer.
- **“keep alert with all perseverance.”** Like good soldiers, we need to keep alert and not fall asleep. This idea of “watching and praying” appeared in the ministry of Jesus, who encouraged his disciples to “watch and pray” in light of temptation and the weakness of the flesh (Mark 14:38), and in view of the return of Christ (Mark 13:32-37).

We are to keep our eyes open, to be alert to incoming temptation and obstacles, and to pray, for the end is near. (cf. 1 Pet. 4:7)

Perseverance is also required in prayer elsewhere (Rom. 12:12, Col. 4:2; Acts 2:42; 4:23-31; 6:4; Acts 12:5), to overcome fatigue and discouragement and hardship, and for boldness in proclamation.

- **“making supplication for all the saints.”** The unity of the church has been a major concern in the letter. Paul says here that we should pray for all the saints. When you become a Christian you get a new family, which means a new responsibility to pray for them.

The focus on “all” emphasizes the fact that because all of life is war, all of life must be lived in prayer. In the word of Piper, “we will not know what prayer is for until we know that life is war.

Because there’s a war, pray. Pray all the time. Pray with all prayer and supplication. Pray alertly. Pray for all the saints.

## 2. **Pray for Gospel-Communication (19-20)**

Here, Paul humbly request prayer from others. Why?

- That he may have **clarity** in proclaiming the gospel. He says, “that words may be given to me” (19a). Paul isn’t asking for a **new revelation** to tell, but simply **the right words** to tell. He’s asking for “liberty” to express the gospel clearly, powerfully and fittingly.
  - This request may refer to Paul’s imprisonment in Rome, where he anticipated an appearance before the tribunal, and the possible appearance before Caesar himself.
- That he may have **courage** in proclaiming the gospel (19b-20). He says, in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel... that I may declare it boldly.”

The greatest theologian-missionary of all times, is asking for prayer! That should encourage you!

He has the position (as do we) of being an “ambassador,” a representative of Jesus, but he knows he doesn’t have sufficient resources to communicate the gospel effectively, so he calls on the church to pray for him.

- **Cymba - let us hear you roar - righteous bold as a lion**

This ambassador is in chains! However, Paul knew that they could chain the messenger but not the message (2 Tim 2:9). Instead of feeling self-pity or resentment, he asks for prayer for the mission!

**App:** Pray for others as they share the gospel. Why? Satan doesn’t want us to have the right words to say or be bold. Evangelism is spiritual warfare. The culture opposes it. You can say just about anything, **but Christ is the only way, then it’s like hitting a golf ball in the shower.**

What was the result of their prayers? If **2 Timothy 4:17** is Paul’s recounting of his appearance before the tribunal, then no one came to his side, but he says,

**“But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. I was rescued from the lion’s mouth.”**

### **Final Remarks**

After speaking of his need for God’s power to speak the word, and his imprisonment, he closes with a reminder about his particular situation.

- **“Tychicus, the beloved brother.”** Here we see that Paul was not just a theologian-missionary-church planter. He was a lover of people. In his letters, he thanks people. Tychicus is one of the brothers that made up the family of God. He served with Paul for some time (Acts 20:4; Col 4:7; 2 Tim 4:12; Titus 3:12). Paul adds this personal touch, “that he may encourage your hearts.” He was, as we should be, concerned about the hearts.
- He probably delivered the letter to Ephesus along with the letter to the Colossians. Can you imagine that task? He is sent to “encourage your hearts.” What a great ministry.

In many ways, he does what every missionary-preacher-evangelist does, we are simply giving the letters to people. Spread the word, encourage the saints.

**Benediction (23-24).** Paul concludes the letter using the words he began with (1:2); peace (6:13), and grace (6:24). He also mentions faith, and then “**love**” three times. It is appropriate to mention love three times in a letter that has emphasizing the unfathomable love of God. Consider:

- “in love he predestined us for adoption” (1:4)
- But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he has loved us” (2:4)
- “and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge” (3:19)
- “Walk in love, as Christ loved us, and gave himself up for us” (5:2)
- “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her” (5:25)

**This love, faith, grace, and peace all flow from God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**But Paul adds something here that he has not mentioned in regard to love explicitly (though it has been implied), namely, their love for Christ.**

**He closes with a statement about their personal relationship with Christ. Paul has told us of God's great love, but now we must ask, "Do you love Christ?"**

**Do you love him? Are you a Christian? Have you turned from sin, and placed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?**

**Do you love him with a love "**incorruptible**" or an "undying love" that is a love that will go on into eternity?**

**Love him, and know that you are in a war. But fight as a victor, not as a victims because our Messiah has won the war! We keep our armor on, until our King returns. Then, we will fall down before him, the one who has loved us with an everlasting love, and we will put our weapons down because the war will be over.**

**"In heaven we shall appear not in armor but in robes of glory; but here they are to be worn night and day; we must walk, work and sleep in them; or we are not true soldiers of Christ" (Gurnall, 67)**

**Armor now. Robes later. "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." "Grace be with you... peace be with you."**