



The Enduring Word Commentary Series

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

David Guzik

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Verse by verse commentary through
Ephesians 6:10-20

David Guzik

Enduring Word presents the Bible commentary of David Guzik.

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SPIRITUAL WARFARE

INTRODUCTION

In producing this book, our desire is to help you be equipped for the very real spiritual warfare that you face each and every day. By studying this passage from Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, we learn that there is an enemy lurking who seeks to use every crafty method at his disposal to sidetrack you in your walk with God, sideline you in the work of ministry, and rob you of the joy of your salvation. But be of good cheer, because God has given us His armor which, when employed by us, will make us able to stand against the attacks of our enemy.

This book will take you through each verse of Ephesians 6: 10-20, where God teaches us both, how to identify our enemy, and how to stand in His strength against spiritual attack. We hope that by learning these important truths, you will have victory in your walk with God and experience greater joy in your relationship with Him.

–David Guzik

Chapter 1



Finally

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. –Ephesians 6:10

This verse begins the well-known and often quoted passage from the Apostle Paul dealing with spiritual warfare and the whole armor of God. It's a theme that has fascinated Christians for a long time, probably because it touches the life experience of most every follower of Jesus.

One pastor captivated by the themes of this Ephesians 6 passage was named William Gurnall. Starting in 1655, he published his book *The Christian in Complete Armour, an explanation of Ephesians 6:10-20*. In his dedication, he described his book as a "mite" and a "little present" but it takes up three volumes, 261 chapters, and 1,472 pages - all on these eleven verses.

I'm impressed by how Gurnall subtitled his book: *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.* That's the full title, not the book itself.

Our look at this passage certainly won't compare to Gurnall's work, but we can begin at the beginning, noting that Paul began this section with the word, "**Finally.**"

It obviously means that this comes at the end of the letter to the church in Ephesus - a letter in which Paul carefully established our place in Jesus, and then the basics of the Christian walk. This is his last section dealing with that walk.

We can say it this way: The foundations for success in spiritual warfare (and our entire Christian walk) are the truths and principles brought to us in the previous sections of Ephesians. Everything about our spiritual battle comes “**finally**,” in light of all those things.

- In light of all that God has done for you.
- In light of the glorious standing you have as a child of God.
- In light of His great plan of the ages that God has made you part of.
- In light of the plan for Christian maturity and growth He gives to you.
- In light of the conduct God calls every believer to live.
- In light of the filling of the Spirit and our walk in the Spirit.
- In light of all this, there is a battle to fight in the Christian life.

Before you launch out into spiritual battle, give attention to the basics, the foundations of Christian living – who Jesus is and what He did for you. Building on those foundations explained from Ephesians 1:1 to 6:9, then we come the important subject of spiritual battle – *but not before*.

Chapter 2



Strong in the Lord

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. –Ephesians 6:10

It's a wonderful phrase: “**Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.**” According to F.F. Bruce, Paul more literally wrote “*strengthen yourselves in the Lord.*” He probably took the idea from 1 Samuel 30:6, where it is written that David “*strengthened himself in the Lord his God.*”

The detailed teaching of spiritual battle in this passage presents two essential components. First, you must “**be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.**” Then, you must “put on the whole armor of God” (as it will say in the next verse). The two are essential, and much teaching on spiritual warfare neglects the first. If you take a weak man who can barely stand and put the best armor on him, he will still be an ineffective soldier. He will be easily beaten. So equipping for Christian combat must *begin* with “**be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.**”

Before a soldier is given a gun or shown how to fire a missile, he or she goes through basic training. One great purpose for basic training is the build up the recruit's physical strength. It is as if the army says, “Soldier, we are going to give you the best weapons and armor possible. But first we have to make sure that you are strong, and that you can use what we give you.” To be effective in spiritual warfare, your spiritual strength must grow.

“**And in the power of His might.**” This shows how to get this strength. This does not happen just by saying the words. It is not an incantation or a spell. You can't just walk around saying, “**be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might**” over and over and it will happen. Christi-

anity isn't one of those self-help formulas where we simply say positive things to ourselves. Those kind of mental games can accomplish something, but it certainly wasn't what Paul meant here.

“**Might**” is inherent power or force. A muscular man's big muscles display his might, even if he doesn't use them. It is the reserve of strength.

“**Power**” is the exercise of might. When the muscular man uses his might to bend an iron bar, he uses his power. It means that the reserve of strength is actually in operation.

God has vast reservoirs of **might** that can be realized as **power** in the Christian life. But His **might** does not work in me as I passively sit and do nothing. His might works in me as I actively rely on it, and step out to do the work. I can rely on it and do no work. I can do work without relying on it. But both of these fall short. I must rely on His might and then do the work.

It is not:

- I do everything and God does nothing.
- I do nothing and God does everything.
- I do all I can and God helps with what I can't.

Each of those approaches falls short. The key is for me to by faith rely on His **might** - and rely on it more and more - and then do the work, seeing His **power** in action.

Chapter 3



Wasted Strength

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. –Ephesians 6:10

It's a wonderful, powerful statement from the Apostle Paul – an invitation for us to draw on the resources of God's strength. That's more than enough strength for any of us.

Yet there is an aspect to this that we must think about. I first found this idea in the works of the late Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones – an idea that is important to our ability to use the resource of God's strength in our life.

In his great series of sermons on this text, Dr. Lloyd-Jones listed many ways in which he believed Christians wasted their strength. It was as if they had received some of the available **might** of God, but it simply leaked away like water in a bucket full of holes.

I don't present this list to judge or condemn, but for your sober consideration. Read it over, and ask God what might apply to your life. These are some of the things Martyn Lloyd-Jones thought took away the strength of the Christian:

- Committing to too many spiritual works or things
- Too much conversation
- Arguments, debates, wrangling
- Laziness
- Too much time in the wrong company
- Too much foolish talk and joking
- Love of money and career

Wasted Strength

- A desire for respectability and image
- An unequal partnership with an unbeliever
- Ungodly entertainment
- A wrong attitude toward or doubting the Word of God

Lloyd-Jones didn't want this list to become a law, or a source of legalism and bondage. He wrote: "We have to walk on a knife-edge in these matters; you must not become extreme on side or the other. But you have to be watchful. And, of course, you can always tell by examining yourself whether your strength is increasing or declining."

Is your strength increasing or declining? It may be that you are receiving the strength of God, but wasting it. Talk to God about it.

Chapter 4*All the Armor*

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. –Ephesians 6:11

The Apostle Paul, inspired by God, began this section about spiritual warfare by telling us to “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” (Ephesians 6:10). After that word to receive the strength of God, Paul explained the goal of our battle – “**that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.**” We express the strength we have in God by standing **against the wiles of the devil.** The schemes of our spiritual adversaries come to nothing when we stand against them in the power of God.

Along the way, Paul told us to put something on – “**put on the whole armor of God.**” Of course, Paul wrote using a metaphor, a word-picture. Just as a Roman soldier had armor that made him ready to fight, so the follower of Jesus has spiritual resources and equipment that prepare him to survive and to win spiritual battles.

This **armor of God** will be explained more fully in the next passage; but the emphasis here is on “**the whole armor of God.**” God gives the believer a full set of spiritual equipment, and He sends us out into battle with everything we need at our disposal.

This ancient Greek word for **armor** is used in only one other place in the New Testament. In Luke 11:21-22, Jesus spoke of the “*strong man who is fully armed,*” but is stripped of “*all his armor*” when a *stronger* one comes and defeats him. We know that at the cross, Jesus disarmed all spiritual authorities and powers that oppose us (Colossians 2:15).

So we are to “**put on the whole armor of God.**” This armor is “**of God**”

both is the sense that it is from Him, and in the sense that it is His actual armor. In the Old Testament, it is the Lord who wears the armor:

*For He put on righteousness as a breastplate,
And a helmet of salvation on His head;
He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing,
And was clad with zeal as a cloak. –Isaiah 59:17*

God now shares that armor with us - no wonder we are *more than conquerors!* (Romans 8:37)

In the book of 1 Samuel there is a story of a boy about to fight a battle, and a king gave the boy the king's own armor to fight in. The armor must have been good, because it belonged to a king. Yet the boy didn't want to fight in the king's armor, no matter how good it was. The boy – who would later become a king himself – explained that he didn't want to use the king's armor because he had not tested it (1 Samuel 17:29).

The boy – named David, of course – went on to fight the battle against Goliath in armor that he *had* tested before. David had trusted God to protect him, give him courage, and to give him skill in battle before. That trust was part of tested, proven armor for David, and he won the battle against Goliath.

The armor God gives you won't be effective until you use it – until you test it. The more you use it, the more effective it will be. Just make sure you take the **whole armor of God**.

Chapter 5



Not Against Flesh and Blood

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. –Ephesians 6:12

Many followers of Jesus do not understand that our real battle is not against **flesh and blood**. They put all their efforts in that direction. Paul's idea here is much the same as in 2 Corinthians 10:3-4: "*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.*"

Then Paul described just whom we do battle against: "**Against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.**" Paul used a variety of terms to refer to our spiritual adversaries. We should regard them as being on many different levels and of many different ranks, yet they all have one goal: to knock the Christian down from their place of standing.

Ephesians 6:11 tells us that all of our warfare is combating "*the wiles of the devil.*" At the end of the day it is completely irrelevant if the particular opponent we face is a principality, a power, or a ruler of the darkness of this age. Collectively, they are all members of "**spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.**" They are all part of a spiritual army that is organized and established into ranks - and under the headship of Satan, the devil, who comes against us with his wiles.

We learn more about these **principalities** and **powers** from other passages in the New Testament.

- Romans 8:38 tells us that **principalities** cannot keep us from God's love. Therefore, there is a limit to their power.

- Ephesians 1:20-21 tells us that Jesus is enthroned in heaven, far above all **principalities** and **powers**.

- Colossians 1:16 tells us that Jesus created **principalities** and **powers**. Colossians 2:10 tells us that Jesus is head over all principality and power. Therefore, Jesus is not the opposite of Satan or principalities.

- Ephesians 3:10-11 tells us that the church makes known the wisdom of God to **principalities** and **powers**.

- 1 Corinthians 15:24 tells us that **principalities** and **powers** have an end; one day their purpose will be fulfilled and God will no longer let them work. Therefore, God has a purpose in allowing their work in the present age.

- Colossians 2:15 tells us that Jesus disarmed **principalities** and **powers** at the cross.

Therefore, *our victory is rooted in what Jesus did*, not in what we do. It isn't that there is no doing on our part - but our doing is the *appropriation* and *application* of what Jesus did.

Understanding our spiritual adversaries – what they can and can't do – is an important part of success in our struggle against them. In it all, remember: our adversaries in this struggle are not human, but spiritual – *and Jesus has defeated them*.

Chapter 6



Stand

Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

–Ephesians 6:13

Paul introduced the idea of “**the whole armor of God**” back in Ephesians 6:11. In the following verses he details the specific items related to the armor of God. In this verse, he simply states what the main purpose of spiritual warfare and the armor of God is.

Simply said, we are given this spiritual armor so “**that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.**” This describes what we use the strength of God and the armor of God for.

The primary picture in Paul’s mind is not that the Christian goes out attacking spiritual enemies. That concept may have its place in the Christian life, but that isn’t Paul’s thinking here.

For this passage, instead of picturing an “army” of God’s people seeking out and attacking some kind of demonic fortress, we are to have the idea that Jesus illustrated in His ministry. Jesus didn’t patrol around, looking for demons to conquer. That would almost allow demons to set the agenda for His ministry. Instead, Jesus knew what God the Father wanted Him to do, He set about doing it, and He dealt with satanic opposition when it arose. When satanic opposition raised itself, *Jesus stood against it and was not moved.*

So the idea is that God has given us a call, a mission, a course to fulfill. Satan will do his best to stop it. When he attacks and intimidates, we are to **stand**. It is plain that this is Paul’s emphasis in Ephesians 6:11 and 6:13. We love an energetic church that advances the Kingdom of God so

vigorously that it shakes the councils of hell, but we don't let principalities and powers set our agenda. We do the Lord's work and stand against every hint of spiritual opposition.

God gives the Christian a glorious standing to maintain by faith and spiritual warfare:

- We stand in **grace** (Romans 5:2).
- We stand in the **gospel** (1 Corinthians 15:1).
- We stand in **courage** and **strength** (1 Corinthians 16:13).
- We stand in **faith** (2 Corinthians 1:24).
- We stand in Christian **liberty** (Galatians 5:1).
- We stand in Christian **unity** (Philippians 1:27).
- We stand in the **Lord** (Philippians 4:1).
- We should stand **perfect** and **complete** in the will of God (Colossians 4:12).

The same idea is repeated in 1 Peter 5: *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.”* (1 Peter 5:8-9)

All in all, there is a lot bound up in that little word, **stand**.

- It means that we are going to be attacked.
- It means that we must not be frightened.
- It means that we must not droop or slouch, or be uncertain or half-hearted in the fight (no self-pity is allowed).
- It means that we are at our position and alert.
- It means that we do not give even a thought to retreat.

God helping you, **stand**.

Chapter 7



Beginning With Truth

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace
–Ephesians 6:14-15

The previous sentence ended with the idea, “**stand.**” This sentence *begins* with the word, **stand.** Here the Apostle Paul told us *how* to **stand therefore.** We can only **stand** when we are equipped with the spiritual protection (the armor) God gives us in Jesus Christ. Each aspect of this symbolic armor answers to a specific dynamic within the Christian life that enables us to stand against spiritual attack.

Remember that Paul wrote this while in the custody of Roman soldiers. It was easy for him to look at the equipment of his guards and see how God has equipped the believer. As he describes this spiritual armor, the order in which the pieces of armor are described is the order in which the soldier would put them on.

He began with the idea of a belt: “**Having girded your waist with truth.**” Truth is symbolically represented as a belt that both protects our mid-section and gathers up our garments so that we can fight effectively.

Strictly, the belt is not part of the armor; but before the armor can be put on, the clothing underneath must be gathered together. Remember in those days men often wore long, robe-like clothes. It would be hard to fight and maneuver in hand-to-hand combat in a robe. The bottom part of a man’s robe would be tucked into the belt to make the man more ready to fight. It kept the other parts of the armor in place, and simply made it possible for the soldier to use the rest of the armor effectively.

When a soldier sat down and was relaxed, he took off his belt. Putting on the belt prepared one for action, it freed one for movement, and it put him in a battle frame of mind. The same idea is communicated by Jesus in Luke 12:35-36.

The belt of truth represents the core Christian faith, the essential truths of the gospel and Christianity. This is what some other New Testament passages call *the faith*. Many people believe that the church will never go forward until it takes off this belt of truth, but that is completely wrong. This is armor to *have* - it is a foundation you live upon all the time, your understanding of and confidence in the basic doctrines of the faith.

Whatever you do – don't let go of the truth, Biblical truth. That keeps everything else together and ready to use.

Chapter 8



What to Put On

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace
 –Ephesians 6:14-15

As the Apostle Paul described the spiritual armor that prepares the Christian to succeed in living the Christian life, he made spiritual analogies using the figure of a Roman soldier. Since he wrote this letter from a Roman jail, guarded by Roman soldiers, it was a natural connection to make.

The description of this spiritual armor is divided into two sections. First Paul wrote about the armor to *have*, then about the armor to *take*. The **breastplate of righteousness** is the second item listed, and is one of the aspects of the armor to *have* – that is, we keep it as something constant. Using the connection Paul made, we are to keep **righteousness** on us just as a Roman soldier kept his **breastplate** on him.

Note it well: **righteousness** is represented as a **breastplate** that provides essential protection for the most vital organs. We can no sooner battle against spiritual enemies in our *own* righteousness than a soldier can effectively fight without his breastplate.

This is not our own earned righteousness, not a feeling of righteousness, but the kind of righteousness that is received by faith in Jesus. It supplies a general sense of confidence, an awareness of our standing and position. We know that our standing with God is based on who Jesus is and what He did, instead of who we are and what we have done. We **put on the breastplate of righteousness** by choosing to trust in Jesus, by putting your faith in Him. Then – and only then – are you protected by

this **breastplate**.

As Martyn Lloyd-Jones, wrote, “Thank God for experiences, but do not rely on them. You do not put on the ‘breastplate of experiences,’ you put on the breastplate of ‘righteousness.’”

We are sometimes tempted to say to the devil “Look at all I’ve done for the Lord.” But that is shaky ground, though sometimes it feels good. It is shaky because the feeling and experiences and doing are so changeable. God’s righteousness isn’t. The breastplate of righteousness is your best defense against the sense of spiritual depression and gloom that comes against your gut.

Chapter 9



Keep Your Boots On

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace
–Ephesians 6:14-15

In order to stand in the Christian life – to stand in the middle of the inevitable conflict and struggle that comes and goes as we live for God – we are given essential help. The help is represented to us in the pictures of the equipment of a Roman soldier.

In this last part of Ephesians 6:14-15 the Apostle Paul relates a particular part of the Roman soldier's equipment – their distinctive sandals. As it connects to the Christian experience, those sandals are like **having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace**.

Notice, the **preparation of the gospel** is represented as these protective boots (or sandals) worn by Roman soldiers. No one can fight effectively or properly go about their business without this equipment.

The ancient Jewish historian Josephus described these sandals as “shoes thickly studded with sharp nails.” Many historians believe that one reason for the great success of Roman armies was that they could march long distances over rough ground and fight with a firm footing.

Preparation is a word meaning “a prepared foundation.” The gospel provides the footing for everything we do. However powerful the rest of your body is, if you are wounded in your feet you then you won't last before the enemy.

Paul probably had Isaiah 52:7 in mind when he referred to **having shod**

your feet: “*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’*” It is all vitally connected to the good news of who Jesus is and what He did for us at the cross. It was announced by prophets like Isaiah, and reported by Paul and others.

The idea of **preparation** is really *readiness* - we must be mobile, flexible, and ready with the gospel. This is a something to *have* in the Christian life, to live in constant readiness and standing.

Don't miss the point – without having the gospel as your constant foundation, as much as a soldier constantly has his boots – you aren't prepared. You are an easy target. Never let go of the **preparation of the gospel of peace**.

Chapter 10



Having, Taking

Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. –Ephesians 6:16-18

Paul introduced the idea of “the whole armor of God” back in Ephesians 6:11. In the following verses he detailed the specific items related to the armor of God. In verses 14-15 he described three aspects of this armor to *have*: truth represented by a belt, righteousness represented by a breastplate, and the gospel represented by sandals or boots. He wrote using spiritual analogies, relating these aspects of the Roman soldier’s equipment to these spiritual truths and principles.

At this point, after putting forth the idea of armor to have, Paul now wrote, “**Above all**” as he introduced three more aspects of God’s armor. In this sense, **above all** really has the idea of “in addition to the previous,” and it applies to each of the three pieces of armor that follow. It isn’t the idea, “these parts of armor are more important than any of the other.”

Yet notice the phrasing Paul used with these following aspects: “**Taking the shield of faith . . . And take the helmet of salvation.**” Ephesians 6:14-15 told us of armor to *have*. Some of the armor we must wear all the time, and have as a standing foundation. Therefore *having* comes first. We must be rooted in belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and the “combat boots” of the gospel.

Now we come to the armor to *take*. These aspects of the armor we take up from situation to situation, as the moment demands. Think about those “demanding moments” in spiritual warfare.

- A flood of depression or discouragement, feeling like a black cloud.
- When a relatively insignificant thing gets blown far out of proportion.
- An opportunity to speak with someone about what Jesus did for you.
- Opposition against a sense that God wants you to do something, or to follow through on something.
- A sense of panic and helplessness.

In those critical moments, we need to

Take the shield of faith.

Take the helmet of salvation.

Take the sword of God's Word.

We'll see how to do that in the following verses. First, we need to understand this distinction between *having* and *taking*, and be ready to take up what is needful at the moment. God knows how to supply what we need at the critical moment; we need to receive it.

Chapter 11



Stopping Flaming Arrows

Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. –Ephesians 6:16-18

One by one, the Apostle Paul described spiritual truths and principles that help the Christian live for God in this world in a similar way that the armor of a Roman soldier helped him effectively fight for the empire. Paul recognized that the Christian's struggle was spiritual and not against flesh-and-blood people (Ephesians 6:12). Still, the soldier's armor could be used to describe what a Christian needed to win in his or her own spiritual conflict.

He divided this armor of God in two groups: the armor to *have* and the armor to *take*. In Ephesians 6:16 he described the first aspect of the armor to take: “**taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.**”

So then **faith** is represented as a **shield**, protecting us from the **fiery darts of the wicked one**, those persistent efforts of demonic foes to weaken us through fear and unbelief.

The **shield** Paul described was not the small round one, but the large, oblong shield that could protect the whole body. In ancient warfare, these **fiery darts** were launched in great number at the beginning of an attack. The idea was not only to injure the enemy, but to shoot at him at all sides with a massive number of arrows, and so cause confusion and panic.

Think of all the harmful and destructive things that fly through your

mind, as if they were flaming arrows meant to strike you down, or at the very least cause you confusion and panic.

- Angry, vengeful, bitter thoughts.
- Desperate, downcast, dark feelings.
- Proud, vain, selfish imaginations.
- Strong, irrational, unprofitable fears.
- Destructive, hateful, jealous lies.
- Foolish, hurtful, debasing lusts.

The **wicked one** – our spiritual adversary – hurls all of these at every opportunity, and they come at us as if they were flaming arrows. **Faith** turns them back.

Do you feel as if you are losing faith? Regard that feeling itself as a flaming arrow, and rouse yourself to faith again. Stop *trying* to trust God and simply trust Him.

Say it: “I put my trust in You, O Lord; help me for Jesus sake. I choose to not trust in myself, but in who Jesus is, and in what He did for me on the cross. Show Your strength in my weakness.”

God honors and blesses this humble dependence of faith – and those flaming arrows will not only be caught before they can injure, but they will also be quenched of all their confusion and panic causing qualities.

Chapter 12



Hope and Salvation on Your Head

Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. –Ephesians 6:16-18

God often uses material things to communicate a spiritual truth. He will take something that we are familiar with – a door, a grapevine, a piece of bread – and God will use those things as illustrations of spiritual principles and truths. God speaks to us in these pictures because it makes it easier to understand spiritual things.

Here, the Apostle Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to do the same thing. He used the armor of an ancient Roman soldier to explain aspects of the Christian life, especially relating to the spiritual struggle that each follower of Jesus experiences.

In the section right before us, Paul told us to “**take the helmet of salvation.**” In the ancient world, this was usually a leather cap studded with metal for extra strength. Often some kind of plume or decoration was added, perhaps to identify the soldier to his regiment. **Salvation** is therefore pictured as this kind of **helmet**, protecting essential material. A soldier would be foolish to go into battle without his **helmet**.

Paul wrote about this same idea in another passage, 1 Thessalonians 5:8: “*But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.*”

This speaks of the **helmet of salvation** in connection to the *hope of salvation*. The helmet of salvation protects us against discouragement, against the desire to give up, giving us hope not only in knowing that

we are saved, but that we *will* be saved. It is the assurance that God will triumph.

One of Satan's most effective weapons against us is *discouragement*. When we are properly equipped with the helmet of salvation, it's hard to stay discouraged. Our hope isn't in our self, or even in our ability to keep our self close to Jesus. Our hope is in Jesus Himself, and in the rescue He brings to us. To put our hope, our confidence in anything else would be as foolish as a soldier going into battle without a helmet. Don't make that mistake.

Chapter 13



A Spiritual Sword

Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. –Ephesians 6:16-18

One by one, the Apostle Paul used the pieces of a Roman soldier's fighting armor to illustrate spiritual truths and principles.

- *Truth* is like the thick leather belt.
- *Righteousness* is like the metal breastplate.
- The *gospel* is like the sturdy sandals or shoes.
- *Faith* is like the large shield
- *Salvation* is like the essential helmet.

Now, as the last spiritual analogy, Paul likens the Roman soldier's sword to be like the **word of God**. In fact, he even calls God's word "**the sword of the Spirit.**"

The idea is both simple and powerful: that the *Spirit provides a sword* for you, and that *sword is the word of God*. To effectively use the sword of the Spirit, we can't regard the Bible as book of magic charms or tie a Bible around our neck the way that garlic is superstitiously said to drive away make-believe vampires.

To effectively use the sword, we must regard it as the word of God; as Paul plainly wrote, "**which is the word of God.**" If we are not confident in the inspiration of Scripture, that the sword really came from the Spirit, then we will not use it effectively at all.

But we must also take the **sword of the Spirit** in the sense of depending that He helps us to use it. Not only did the Spirit *give* us the Scriptures, but also He makes them alive to us, and equips us with the right thrust of the sword at the right time.

Think of a soldier or a gladiator in training, practicing sword thrusts and moves and positions. He must practice them ahead of time, and if he is a superior fighter, and has a great fighting instinct, at the time of battle he will instantly recall which thrust, which position suits the precise moment. He will never be able to use the thrust in the fight if he has not first practiced it; yet he still needs to make the move at the moment.

Therefore, effectively using the sword takes practice. The great example of this was Jesus combating the temptation of Satan in the wilderness. Martin Luther was another example of this, when he came to an understanding of Psalm 31:1: *deliver me in Your righteousness*. This helped him understand the real meaning of *the just will live by faith* (Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 10:38).

He could use the sword of the Spirit at the necessary moment because he had worked with it beforehand. In the same way, our study and interest in the word of God prepares us to use its truth and principles at the necessary moment. In the needful moment we can answer every lie that comes from the world, the flesh, and the devil with the truth from heaven. In those times the sword of the Spirit – the word of God – is our *offensive, attacking* weapon, the only one given among our entire spiritual armor.

Chapter 14



Putting it into Action

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints; and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

-Ephesians 6:18-20

The Apostle Paul related what we need to live the Christian life to the armor that a Roman soldier used and wore. Now, following that section Paul tells us what we should do with that spiritual armor; how we put it into action.

Primarily, it's done through prayer: **“Praying always with all prayer.”** The idea is *all kinds of prayer or prayer upon prayer*. We should use every kind of prayer we can think of. Group prayer, individual prayer, silent prayer, shouting prayer, walking prayer, kneeling prayer, eloquent prayer, groaning prayer, constant prayer, fervent prayer - *just pray*.

We can say that it is through prayer that spiritual strength and the armor of God go to work. In theory, the prayerless Christian can be strong and wearing all the armor - but actually goes into battle through prayer.

Often we just don't pray because we are simply overconfident in our own abilities. Winston Churchill said to Britain in the early days of World War II: “I must drop one word of caution, for next to cowardice and treachery, overconfidence leading to neglect and slothfulness, is the worst of wartime crimes.” It's especially true in the spiritual war we fight.

Paul reminded us that we could also pray **“for all the saints.”** We can

battle spiritually not only on our own behalf, but also on the behalf of others. The soldier isn't only concerned for his or her own safety. They feel an instinct to protect and battle on behalf of *others*.

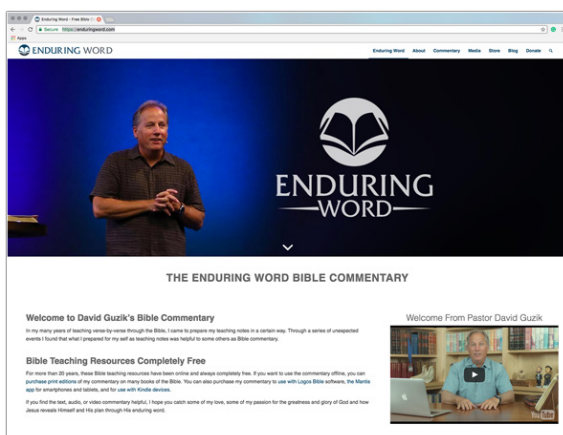
After bringing up the idea that spiritual warfare can be waged on behalf of others, Paul asked his readers to pray for him. “**And for me, that utterance may be given to me...to boldly make known the mystery of the gospel.**” Paul could have asked prayer for many things, but he wanted them to pray for this.

We *could* imagine Paul asking for many things, such as relief from his imprisonment or other comforts. But his heart and mind are fixed on his responsibility as an **ambassador** of the gospel. He probably has in mind his upcoming defense before Caesar.

Specifically Paul asked, “**that utterance may be given to me.**” The idea behind **utterance** is clear speaking. Added to **boldly**, Paul asks for prayer that he might proclaim the gospel both *clearly* and with a *fearless power*. It is easy to neglect one or the other.

It all comes back to the idea of spiritual battle. When Paul preached in difficult circumstances, he knew the spiritual struggle firsthand and knew the prayers of others would help in that struggle. If you want to do something with the armor of God, *pray!*

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