

# Spiritual Warfare

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[ 0 : 00 ] Turn your Bible to Ephesians chapter 6. And this morning I'm going to get some help from Renise.

And we will see how the Apostle Paul, as he was concluding this letter to the Ephesians, he brought an oftentimes overlooked area of the Christian life into focus.

And that area is spiritual warfare. And it is an important area and we ignore it to our own peril. And so let's consider this morning what the Apostle Paul said to them because it applies to us and indeed it applies to all of God's people.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

[ 1 : 45 ] 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.

Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness and a shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.

And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit with all prayer and supplication.

To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints. And also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth, boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly as I ought to speak.

[ 3 : 07 ] Would you pray with me? Father, we bow our hearts asking in this moment that you would help us as we sit under the preaching of your word.

Lord, help me as I seek to faithfully proclaim your word and help us all as we seek to faithfully hear it and obey it.

And Lord, most of all, we pray that your name will be glorified in the preaching of your word. It's in Christ's name we pray.

Amen. If I were to describe the awareness Christians have of this passage of Scripture, the range would be from ignorance to obsession.

Some are ignorant about the issue of spiritual warfare and others are obsessed with it. There are some who see everything that happens that's negative, that's associated with demons or something of the dark realm.

[ 4 : 23 ] And then there are others who are ambivalent to the reality that many times what is at work, actively at work, in circumstances that affect us is darkness.

But both of these extremes miss the point. Obsession misses the point about spiritual warfare and ignorance also misses the point about spiritual warfare.

And so this morning, my goal is to help us to move away from both of these extremes, if any of us find ourselves there this morning.

and I have two particular goals for this sermon. The first one is I want us to be reminded that spiritual warfare is an ongoing reality for all of God's people as they seek to serve Him in this world. And none of us is exempt. And then second, I want us to be reminded of how Scripture calls us to fight in this war that we are all engaged in if we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 5 : 44 ] And so when we consider these verses that we just read, what we see is the Apostle Paul spends the bulk of his time talking about the spiritual armor that God has given to His people to be able to fight the spiritual wars that come their way.

And I think we can, from what he says, make a conclusion about this spiritual armor that we have been given.

Now I want to warn you that the conclusion I'm going to share might be surprising to you. And if you find it surprising or even you might disagree with it, I just encourage you to hold it in suspense until we get to the end of the sermon and see whether the conclusion that I'm encouraging us to make from these verses that Paul focuses on about the spiritual armor that God has given to us, whether that conclusion is true.

And so here's the conclusion that the Apostle Paul makes or what he says about the spiritual armor that God has given to us.

[ 7 : 05 ] The believer's armor in spiritual warfare is the faithful living of the Christian life. I believe that that is a faithful conclusion from what the Apostle Paul says in these verses.

Now I know for some that's not super spiritual enough. But I believe that what we will see this morning is that as intimidating and as powerful as the forces of darkness are.

When we faithfully live the transformed life that we've been talking about in this letter of Ephesians that God has come to us and God has made us citizens of his kingdom and he has transformed our lives.

When we live that life we can stand against the darkness and the onslaughts of the devil. And so this morning I want to show from this passage how this is true by considering three key things that Paul raises in this passage.

The first is the war. Paul describes the war that we are engaged in in verses 10 to 12. Let's read it again.

[ 8 : 31 ] He says, Finally, be strong in the Lord and the strength of his might put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Brothers and sisters, this is no light description of darkness that Paul is talking about. And Paul is talking about the fact that the darkness that we face is supernatural darkness.

And this really is an important thing for us to grasp. This is supernatural. This is beyond us. And indeed, this war that we are in is not our war.

In many ways, we can consider this war to be a war that we have been drawn into. When God saved us, when God brought us out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear son, we then became a part of a cosmic war that was going on.

[ 9 : 52 ] And Paul picks this up in verse 11 when he helps us to see that this is a war between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil.

Notice how he says it. Now, put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. So it's not our war. ultimately, it is God's war.

And God gives us armor for his war. He tells us how we are to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

We are strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might when we put on God's armor because it is God's war. We also see in these verses the enemy that we actually face.

But fundamentally, this enemy that we face is fighting God himself on all that pertains to God.

[ 11 : 00 ] So he only is fighting us in an indirect way because he is fighting God. And this enemy is Satan himself although he has help. This is Satan himself.

There's a passage in Revelation chapter 12 verses 7 through 11 that is perhaps one of the most insightful passages about our enemy and how he actually fights.

How he fights his wars against God and against God's people. Listen to what it says. Revelation 12 verses 7 through 11. Now war arose in heaven.

Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. angels fought back and he was defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven.

And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent who was called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth and his angels were thrown down

with him.

[12:11] and I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come and the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down who accuses them day and night before our God and they have conquered him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony for they love not their lives even unto death.

I think verse 11 is very insightful for us. You get this picture of this horrific and fearful foe against God and his people fighting against Michael fighting against the other holy angels and what the Bible says is the way God's people overcome all that he seeks to bring against them is they do it by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony.

The blood of the lamb is not something that we do. The blood of the lamb is something that we by the grace of God have benefited from and have received. but it helps us to see where our victory lies.

It helps us to see where our confidence needs to be. It's not in ourselves. Now again this passage really gives us insight into the enemy and how he fights and the nature of the war that we are engaged in.

Notice in verse 9 he is called the great dragon, the ancient serpent, the devil, Satan, and the deceiver of the whole world.

[14:16] In verse 10 he is called the accuser of the brethren. And again brothers and sisters, these names for Satan helps us to see how he fights, gives us insights into how he engages God's people in this warfare that we are in.

Notice also in verse 9 that Satan's evil spirits or his demons who are with him, they are called angels. Now this should sober us but it should not scare us.

And the reason it should not scare us is the war is ultimately God's war. It's not our war and he gives us armor in which we are able to stand and withstand against Satan and his demonic spirits. And so what we see is that Satan's tools of his trade in war are darkness, fear, craftiness, deceit, and accusation in their various strands.

But that's what he traffics in. That's what he brings against us. Now here in verse 12 back to Ephesians we're able to see that Satan is not alone.

[15:44] He is fighting God's people with forces of darkness who are with him. some of you may remember the 90s.

I think some of you were around and serving the Lord at the time and would probably recall how in the 90s there was a big emphasis on spiritual warfare.

As a matter of fact this verse verse 12 many many books were written on that single verse alone. and what we see is in verse 12 Paul refers to rulers and authorities and cosmic powers and spiritual forces of evil.

And some people think that what Paul was referring to is levels of demonic forces rankings of demonic forces and whole books again have been written on how these are structured and how Satan's kingdom is structured.

And a lot of speculation about it took place. I remember one of the popular things that some churches did in cities they would rent planes and they would fly around the city and they would be praying and saying that they were engaging in strategic level warfare.

[17:05] And really all they were doing was praying in a very expensive way. That's all they were doing. But it didn't make a difference because if you think about it if you had to do that to engage spiritual forces what happened to areas where the churches couldn't afford to rent planes and do that?

And how were God people able to fight before planes were invented? And so it was really just fanciful things that were going on at the particular time.

So what is Paul saying in verse 12? What is he saying about these rulers and authorities and cosmic powers and spiritual forces of evil? Is he simply describing Satan and his demons in four different ways?

Or is he giving us some order of ranking? the reality is it really doesn't matter. Whatever it is we are called to fight.

Whatever it is we are engaged in this cosmic battle and we have to do so with the whole armor that God has given to us.

[ 18 : 22 ] Now in terms of what I think about it I think it's reasonable to conclude because scripture is very clear on this that there are degrees of power among demons.

All demons are not equal. All demons don't have the same power and authority. And so it is possible that Paul could be talking about different levels but we cannot know that with any certainty from these verses.

And again it is not important. But I think it's important for us to just be aware that demons do have different kinds of authority.

So for example in Matthew 12 43-45 Jesus points to some demons being more evil than others and being more evil than others really speaks to them having more power to do evil than some other demons have.

Remember we talked about how when demons are cast out of a person and if that person just the house of that person is vacant and unfilled then that demon those demons go and they bring others who are much more stronger than them and reoccupy that person's life.

[ 19 : 45 ] So there are degrees of power among demons. But bottom line it doesn't matter because whatever verse 12 is saying to us we have to still engage faithfully in the fight with the whole armor of God.

God. And I think what we need to be considering at this particular point in the sermon is how aware are we, how mindful are we of the reality of spiritual warfare going on around us?

Because if we're not aware, oftentimes what we will find is that we are fighting flesh and blood. we're fighting, I mean, the real fight is being ignored while we get into some distraction, something that has nothing to do with the issues in front of us.

Spiritual warfare requires something other than a flesh and blood response, although many times the issues that we are faced with, the enemy may use flesh and blood to come against us, but if we find ourselves fighting the flesh and blood, then we are actually not at all engaged in the fighting.

This, brothers and sisters, is foundational to this issue of spiritual warfare. If we fall for the lie that is just what we see in terms of people and activity around us, then we've already lost because Satan will mask his activity as being human activity when it is so much more than that.

[ 21 : 40 ] And so, for example, it could very well be that the discouragement, the doubt, the despair that some of us face that we might attribute to what someone did or something that happened, behind all of that is the full force of satanic activity coming against us to cause us to despair because the fight of Satan is against our souls.

He is the enemy of our souls. He wants to destroy our very spiritual life, and then he would destroy us if he could.

And so that's the first issue that Paul raises in these verses as he concludes this letter. He raises the issue of this war.

And think about how he chooses his words to describe how we are to respond. He doesn't say we are in a boxing match.

He says we're in a wrestling match. And I haven't wrestled, but one of the things I know about wrestling generally is you basically use every single part of your body, all of your muscles, every part of you is engaged in that fight.

[ 23 : 05 ] This is a wrestling match. Not boxing. It's a wrestling match. And we are wrestling against the schemes of the devil and against the cohorts of his demons and their demonic power.

armor. And for this war, God gives his people armor. And this is the second issue that the apostle Paul addresses in this passage.

So let's now consider the armor. He describes the armor God has given to his people as that which will cause them to stand against the scheme of the devil in verses 13 through 17.

So in verse 13 he says, 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 firm.

So Paul is saying, therefore in light of this war that we are in, take up the whole armor of God and the goal for taking it up is that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand.

[ 24 : 18 ] that's the goal for taking up the whole armor of God. Now what is it made by the evil day? Well Paul is referring to a time of pressure and difficulty stemming from spiritual attacks.

And I think we all have an idea when we're getting some evil days. I've described in my own experience over the years, I would sometimes, you know, maybe jokingly say, boy the devil was

here, he was certainly here today.

Because we know the devil isn't everywhere all the time, he is not on the present as God is. But very similar to soldiers, soldiers are always to be on active alert or preparedness, but they're not always engaged in combat.

And the same is true with us. But there are some days that we actually have come upon or the evil day has come upon us and Satan is actually fighting against us.

And we don't all face the same evil day. It happens to us in different times and in different seasons. And I believe that is a part of the providence of God so that we can actually help one another during those times of spiritual warfare that we may be engaged in.

[ 25 : 50 ] And I think we'll see that as we progress through this passage. But some days are more intense than others. And it is especially in that evil day, in that moment of onslaught that we need to be able to stand with the whole armor of God.

Now in verses 14 to 17, Paul lists six pieces of armor, and it seems like he had in view as an illustration the armor of a Roman soldier to help illustrate that this is a real battle and God has given us real spiritual armor.

And notice that we are only ready to stand when we put on the whole armor of God. And the first piece of the armor that Paul mentions is in verse 14, the belt of truth.

Now the Roman soldier, he would have had a belt, and it was usually made of leather, and it was actually a part of the under garment that he would wear, and it held his tunic together, and made sure that it didn't get in his way as he was walking or as he was engaged in battle.

And so what is the belt of truth that is a part of the armor that God has given to us to stand against Satan's wickedness? What is the belt of truth for us?

[ 27 : 26 ] Some people say it's the word of God, but I don't think it's the word of God, because later on in verse 17, Paul actually identifies the word of God when he says it's the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.

So I don't think he's telling us to put on two of the same pieces of armor. I think he's talking about something else in calling us to put on the belt of truth.

I think fastening the belt of truth, the belt of truth speaks to this commitment or a resolve to hold to the truth and to hold to truthfulness.

It speaks about integrity. It speaks about honesty. It certainly speaks to clinging on to the truth of God's word, but again, it's not the word of God itself.

It is holding on to the truth. To recognize the truth is essential in fighting against the father of lies, deceiver of all who live on the earth.

[ 28 : 36 ] Satan hates truth, but when we fasten truth to our hearts and lives and we live in truth and truthfulness, we give Satan no place in our lives.

On the other hand, if we're not committed to the truth, if we're not committed to truthfulness, then we are vulnerable to Satan's attacks, and indeed we even facilitate them.

The second piece of the armor that Paul mentions is in verse 14, the breastplate of righteousness. And the breastplate for the Roman soldier would have been this protective piece of armor that covered vital body parts, both in the front and in the back.

And when we think of righteousness as a breastplate, I think we want to think of it in two ways. First, we want to think of righteousness as that declared righteousness, that unearned righteousness that God gives us in Jesus Christ.

He declares us not guilty and uncondemned in his sight. And understanding and accepting Christ's righteousness will enable us to stand against Satan's accusations.

[ 29 : 56 ] That's what he does. His condemnation, when he reminds us of our sins and brings them against us to beat us down and to put guilt and shame on us.

Holding that awareness that in and of ourselves we are nothing but Christ's righteousness is what we have. God has given it to us and that is our protection against those lies and against those accusations that he might bring our way.

That needs to be our conviction. That needs to be our breastplate to protect us. That we can call positional righteousness.

We get that based on being in Christ. It's credited to us though we didn't earn it. I mean in a sense when Satan comes against us we can agree with him.

Yeah, that's right. In truth what you have said about me personally, yeah, all that's true but in Christ none of that is true. And our faith in the righteousness of Christ needs to be stronger than our awareness of our own fallenness and our own brokenness and our own sinfulness.

[ 31 : 14 ] But there's also a functional part to this righteousness, this breastplate that we need to have. There's a functional part to it as well. It is not enough for us to confess the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have to walk in that as well. There's a functional or a moral righteousness that is also being addressed when Paul says that we are to take the breastplate of righteousness.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 7, the Apostle Paul talks about how he and his fellow servants lived. And he said they lived as having the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left.

And so brothers and sisters, confessing the righteousness of Christ without correspondingly living righteous lives leads to a faulty armor.

We will not be able to stand when the evil day comes. If we're not committed to living righteous lives as part of our armor against Satan, we will quickly yield to temptation.

[ 32 : 30 ] If I'm indulging in sin privately, engaging in enduring pornography, stealing, engaging in sexual immorality, or any other kind of sinful, deceptive living, if I'm engaged in that, I have no protective breastplate against Satan's attacks and his onslaughts when he accuses me, when he condemns me, and when he deceives me.

The third piece of armor that Paul points us to is in verse 15, the shoes of gospel readiness. Notice that the shoes are not the gospel itself.

It's not the gospel of peace. Instead, the shoes are the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. And we all know how important it is to wear the right shoes for the task or activity that we are engaged in.

You don't go to war in flip-flops. You don't wear soccer cleats when you're going to play basketball. In the same way, the soldier's shoes were important.

They needed to aid him, especially in hand-to-hand combat. They needed to grip the ground so that he didn't slip and fall and then be vulnerable. And in this war, Satan wants our feet to slip.

[ 33 : 55 ] Satan wants us to fall. And so we need spiritual shoes, as it were, to grip the ground. And what Paul is saying here is that the gospel that has come to us and that is at work in our lives gives us a readiness, gives us a steadiness that we're able to stand.

That's our shoes, the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace that has come to us. And what it speaks about, it speaks about the gospel as it were, just being that firm foundation on which we can stand.

the gospel being that undergirding for us, supporting everything else because if we slip, then the helmet, the breastplate, all those other things, they're not going to function in the same way that they were intended to function.

And so this idea of the gospel really giving us the readiness, that firmness, that shortness in our feet to be able to stand against Satan when he comes against us.

But this readiness is not automatic. It comes from understanding the gospel in the depths of our soul and knowing and accepting the truth about ourselves and about God.

[ 35 : 31 ] it comes from knowing that we are undeserving sinners who have been accepted by a merciful God, been forgiven by him, all because of Jesus Christ.

Not based on anything that we did, not based on anything we will ever do, and because of the way Satan fights against us, accusing us, condemning us, trying to fill our hearts with doubt and unbelief and trying to deceive us, understanding the gospel and standing in the good of the gospel enables us to stand against his schemes in the evil day.

What makes us stand is not when all is well and quiet around us. No, what makes us stand is when we are standing firmly on the gospel, the readiness that it brings to us.

all hell could be breaking loose around us, but we're grounded in the gospel, we're grounded in the truth, I'm accepted in Christ.

He has promised never to leave me, never to forsake me, nothing separates me from his love. God knows the worst of me, and yet he has accepted me comprehensively never to ever turn his back on me.

[ 36 : 59 ] Brothers and sisters, in the evil day, that gives a shortness to stand, that brings a readiness to us, but you don't want to be trying to take that to heart in the evil day.

In the evil day, you just need to stand in that. In the evil day, it's not the time to be refreshed in your mind. We live every single day, by the grace of God, to the best of our ability, trying to remind ourselves of these truths, and so when the evil day comes, we just stand in the good of the gospel. We stand in the shortness of the gospel. And quite amazing that all this scary stuff about this big devil and these big demons, God is saying, this is the way you respond to them.

This is the way you stand against them. Satan hates the gospel.

And part of the reason he fights against us is that we have received the gospel, and the gospel is at work in our lives. Part of the warfare that we engage in, brothers and sisters, calls us to take the gospel.

[ 38 : 16 ] It calls us to share the gospel with others. And that sharing also attracts the warfare. But if we have truly received the gospel, we are standing in the good of the gospel, and we are loving the gospel, we can't help but share the gospel.

We want to share the gospel of the goodness of God with others. And in sharing the gospel, we are growing in steadiness, we are growing in strength, we are growing in the ability to stand, even as we do that.

And so brothers and sisters, as we grow in our understanding of the application of the gospel, and the more we share the gospel, we grow in our readiness that Paul identifies as shoes for our feet, so that we are not going to stumble on our journey, and we will not fall in the midst of the battle.

In verse 16, Paul identifies the fourth piece of the armor of God, and he says it's the shield of faith. And notice how he says it, he says in all circumstances.

Have you ever found yourself consciously trying to have more faith in God in situations where it seemed that your back was against the wall more than when all seemed well and you can just pretty much live coasting by without exercising faith in God?

[ 39 : 54 ] No, Paul says in all circumstances. When the sun is shining, when the sky is raining, in all circumstances, we need faith. He says you are to take up the shield of faith by which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.

The Roman soldier's shield, you would think that it was made out of metal, but it wasn't made out of metal, it was made out of wood. It was actually made out of two layers of wood, and it was covered with leather and linen.

And when they were going into battle, they were drenched in water, it would be like soaking wet, water. And the reason was that the technology of that day was they had these dots they would shoot with these fiery dots, these dots that had fire on them, and so when they would hit the shield drenched in water, they would just be extinguished in that way.

One of the other interesting things about that shield was the shield was the size of the soldier. So a shorter soldier had a shorter shield, and it wasn't a one-size-fits-all, but the whole idea was this shield was to fully protect whoever the soldier was.

And I think we can get the picture. See, Satan is, what is he shooting at us? He's shooting us dots of doubt and discouragement and malice and anger and lust and disobedience and rebellion and the list goes on.

[ 41 : 38 ] He's shooting all of these at us. And we quench them by maintaining and retaining our faith in a good God who loves us and who cares for us.

faith is believing in God and in his word. It's not faith in faith. There are people who cite themselves out and they have faith in faith. There are people who really believe, even unbelievers believe this, that they can have enough faith and they can get whatever they want from God, but that's not biblical faith.

Biblical faith is rooted in God and rooted in his word. And the attacks of Satan are largely against our minds, and so it is really for our minds that we need the shield of faith to protect our minds against all that Satan will be sending our way.

And faith in God, faith in his word, faith in his goodness will quench them. And I think one of the common dots that Satan shoots at all of us is to try to get us to doubt God's goodness.

And that's the first doubt that he shot at Adam and Eve. He actually got Adam and Eve to believe that God was not really good with them, that God was withholding from them, that God did not give them every single thing that they needed and that was good, and they bought the lie.

[ 43 : 14 ] And Satan is not innovative, he does the same thing with us. He comes against us and he tempts us to believe that God is not good.

The provisions of God's word that tell us how to live, we have to live this way and not that way, the devil lies and says, you know, God is holding out from you, he's holding back from you.

And what we need to do is hold on to the word of God. Deuteronomy 10 verses 12 to 13 tell us that God's commandments and statutes are for our good.

He gives them to us for our good, not to be stingy with us, not to be mean with us. He gives them to us for our good, and we need to believe that, and when we believe that, we will not yield to the lies of Satan.

We will crush them by holding faith in our good and gracious God. And next, in verse 17, Paul identifies the fifth piece of the armor.

[ 44 : 26 ] He refers to it as the helmet of salvation. What exactly is the helmet of salvation? Well, for the Roman soldier, this would have been a bronze helmet, would have been cushioned on the inside, so that his head could be the weight of the helmet.

And I think when we think of the helmet of salvation in this way, it's essentially really filling our minds with the assurance of salvation that comes from God.

The assurance of our salvation. The assurance that we belong to Christ, and that we will always belong to Christ, Christ, and that nothing will separate us from him, that Satan himself cannot pluck us out of his hand.

Brothers and sisters, when the evil day comes against us, and all manner of things is breaking up around us, it is good to know that our salvation is secure in Christ.

Christ. I think many of you know that the common way that we greet today, or one of the common ways, people say all is well, and for quite some time now, I have been more conscious of that, and I would say no.

[ 45 : 54 ] And they say, what do you mean? I say, all is not well. What do you mean? I say, well, we live in a broken world, all cannot be well in a broken world, but then I say this, but all that matters is well.

And brothers and sisters, that is a precious, a precious gift to have, that all that matters if we belong to Christ is well.

We can say with Horatio Spofford, it is well with my soul. I'm secure in Christ, no matter what comes my way, I am secure in Christ.

This is the assurance of salvation that we have. This is the helmet that protects our vital lives in Christ. And as precious as this is, this is not a widely shared truth.

There are many people this morning sitting in church buildings as we are this morning, they have no assurance of salvation. Their only awareness is that they must do this and that and the other thing if they will make it finally into God's kingdom in the end.

[ 47 : 19 ] But what an assurance it is to be able to go to sleep, to be able to go through life knowing, come what may, I am the Lord's. Come what may, he will never leave me, he will never forsake me, no one can pluck me out of his hands.

And we totally rely on him because he alone saves. And so brothers and sisters, no matter what's going on in our battles, no matter what Satan and his demons do, we have this protective helmet of salvation over our minds and our lives.

And then the final piece of armor that the Apostle Paul lists is in verse 17, the sword of the spirit. And unlike the other pieces of armor, Paul tells us exactly what this one is.

The others, we had to kind of interpret them for our spiritual lives. And Paul tells us this one, it's the word of God. the sword of the spirit is the word of God.

And this is the only part of the armor that is both offensive, we can fight with it, and it is defensive, we can defend against the enemy's attacks.

[ 48 : 42 ] And our best example of using the word of God to combat the enemy is Jesus himself. When he was tempted, each time he responded by saying it is written, he wielded the sword of the spirit, he said it is written, it is written, it is written.

And we must do the same. And here it should be obvious why we should see scripture memorization as being important, as being a part of engaging and preparing for warfare.

And Satan will certainly fight us in this endeavor. He'll fight us as we try to memorize scripture. He'll say to us, oh, you can't memorize scripture, you, all this had a bad memory.

Oh, you can't memorize scripture, you don't even need to try. You don't have the time to memorize scripture. Just do it when you come to church.

And how many of you know that the sword of the spirit is not just waving your Bible? Enough Bibles have been waved that if that was effective, the devil would be dead.

[ 50 : 11 ] God's need to moment by moment in the battle, in the fight, we need to be bringing God's word to mind, bringing his promises to mind, and fighting with that.

Notice in verse 18 that Paul connects prayer to taking the sword of the spirit. In other words, what he's saying is that God's word should be in our mouths, fueling our prayers, which should be made at all times, notice the alls that he mentions in verse 18, at all times, with all prayer and supplication, with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.

Now, though prayer is not actively a part of the armor, Paul is enlisted as a part of the armor. The activity of prayer is certainly connected to the armor.

It's connected to taking up the sword of the spirit. We're called to pray, and he calls us to pray in the spirit. And what does he mean by praying in the spirit?

Some people think it means praying in tongues. But that can't be. Paul is not calling for every single person at all times, every single believer at all times to pray in tongues.

[ 51 : 49 ] Tongues certainly would be included in one of the ways that prayer may be offered to God, but he's not exclusively saying that we have to pray in tongues.

Instead, the call to pray in the spirit is a call to spirit directed praying. It's a call to be guided by the spirit, aware of the spirit as we pray in an ongoing way.

It is to engage and involve the spirit who knows the mind of God, who is able to reveal things to us in terms of how we ought to pray.

It is engaging the spirit as we pray in an ongoing way. And then in verse 18, Paul tells us we need to pray for one another.

And see, this is where, when we think about it, we don't all go through the evil day together. I think some of you would remember the morning that Calvin and Keisha's building burnt down.

[ 52 : 57 ] That was an evil day for them. But many of us were able to come alongside them and pray for them. Pray that they would be strengthened.

Try to encourage them from God's word. Thank God the evil day doesn't happen to all of us at the same time. And we're able to pray for one another.

And one of the things we need to do, brothers and sisters, is we need to endeavor to be faithful to pray for one another when they are in those trials, in those difficulties. One thing that God is helping me to do is, it is so easy when people say to you, you know, pray with me about this, pray with me about that.

One of the things I'm learning to do is to take the moment right there and say, hey, let's pray now.

And the other is when I do say, I'm going to pray, to try to aid myself to remember to pray.

and this is a kindness that we can give to one another, that we uphold one another, that we pray for one another when we're walking through trials and we're walking through difficulties, praying for a brother or sister in the same way we'd want them to be praying for us if we were walking through that trial or in some other trial.

[ 54 : 20 ] And Paul calls all of God's people to pray for all of God's people. But in particular, what he says, he says you have to do it with alertness and perseverance.

And one of the things that we can see, especially with the Apostle Paul, is when he calls us to be alert and to persevere, generally what he is getting at is that something is at stake.

There's some risk involved. There's some danger lurking. The stakes are really high. And therefore you need to be alert and you need to persevere. And this brings me to the third and final issue that Paul identifies in this passage, and it is this, it is the stakes.

By stakes, it's what the warfare is all about. He touches on it in verses 19 and 20, but starting in verse 18.

He's praying at all times in the spirit with all prayer and supplication to that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly as I ought to speak.

[ 55 : 57 ] In short, what Paul is saying is that what is at stake is the advancement of God's kingdom, the divine rescue of perishing sinners out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of

God's own son.

That's at stake in this spiritual warfare, and God uses preaching to accomplish this task of bringing sinners out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his son.

And so Paul is asking for prayers. He's saying pray for me. So now we don't understand why a powerful God, all-powerful God, would use prayer, when he obviously does not have to use prayer, but that's what he does.

And so the great apostle Paul would be asking the saints, pray for me. And here's why I want you to pray for me. I want you to pray for me so that I might open my mouth boldly.

And Paul is hinting at the weakness of the flesh. And he knew what was at stake when he preached the gospel that his very life was being threatened by those who hated the gospel.

[ 57 : 13 ] He says that I may be bold and proclaim this mystery because I'm here in chains. I think John the Baptist is a very helpful example of how discouragement can set in.

John the Baptist identified Jesus. He said, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And then when John was put into prison, he was in a serious season of despair and doubt.

He sent his disciples to Jesus and said, you ask him if he is the Messiah or whether we should look for another one. And so Paul isn't asking for prayers in some perfunctory man.

He's asking for prayers because he is flesh. He needs it. Ministers need it. I need it. Because persecution can cause us to lose heart.

Persecution can cause us to not boldly proclaim the gospel if more persecution may come. But we need to declare it boldly.

[ 58 : 26 ] We need prayer to be able to do that. But we're all called to do this.

We're all called to be engaged as followers of Christ, laying our lives down in the cause of Christ, the one who laid his very life down for us.

And we're called to do it standing in God's armor. We need to be faithful Christians who hold fast to the truth, who are righteously living, believing in the imputed righteousness of Christ, but also living righteous lives, standing on the gospel, sharing the gospel, exercising faith in God's word, relying on the salvation that God has brought to us in Jesus Christ, and having the word of God in our hearts and in our mouths as we persevere and pray, having an alertness and praying for the advantage of the gospel.

Brothers and sisters, that's the ordinary Christian life, and that's the way God calls us to fight against Satan and all of his schemes. As impressive as they may seem, as daunting as they may seem, as terrifying as they may seem, God calls his people to live the ordinary Christian life, and when we do, we will stand against all of his schemes.

And that's not spooky spiritual. as they simply being a faithful, ordinary Christian, seeking to live the Christian life.

[ 60 : 14 ] And so brothers and sisters, let's not be ignorant of the war that we are engaged in. It is unseen, but it is real. And indeed, it is the war of wars.

It is the war of eternal consequence. And I pray that God will help us to embrace this truth. Let's pray together. Oh, Lord, I pray that you would help us to see the need to faithfully live as you have called us to live, to be your people, taking up the full armor of God day by day by simply living faithful lives to you.

And when we do, your kingdom will be advanced through the preaching of the gospel, and we will stand against all of Satan's schemes.

And so we give you thanks now. Work in our hearts in this way we pray. In Jesus' name, Amen.