

Ephesians 6:10-24

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[0 : 00] Heavenly Fathers, we come to the end of Paul's instructions to us in this book of Ephesians. I pray that you would sink these messages down deep in us.

! I pray, Lord, that you would open the scripture to our eyes, that we would not be afraid of it, and that it would be liberating and freeing. I pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

Now, this is the second week in a row where we've come to a text and said, wait, what? Right? Last week, we asked ourselves if we were crazy for launching our public services with slaves, obey your masters, right? This week, Paul concludes the book of Ephesians with the most extensive teaching on spiritual warfare in the New Testament.

What's the book of Ephesians about? Not that, right? It's about the gospel. It's about resurrection. It's about building up the church. It's about heart renewal and mind transformation. It's about living a life pleasing to God, imitating Christ, chapter 5 and following.

[1 : 28] It's not about wrestling cosmic powers, right? Somewhere around middle school, all of us probably, at least if we were in American school systems, learned to write the five-paragraph essay, right?

In the first paragraph, you introduce your subject and you take a stand. You take a position on the point. In the next three paragraphs, what do you do? You make three points. And then finally, in that last paragraph, what do you do?

You conclude. You summarize what you said. And then you say, this all supports my argument. The end. What is the cardinal rule of that conclusion paragraph?

You don't introduce new stuff, right? It undercuts everything you just said. You don't say, three points on my topic. Oh, and by the way, I've got this one other thing I want to talk about.

That completely undermines everything you did. Now, is Paul doing the same thing here? Does he have six chapters, five and a half chapters on the gospel and the resurrection life?

[2 : 37] And then does he conclude it way off base? At a left field. To understand how spiritual warfare fits in the flow of Ephesians.

To see how it's a fitting conclusion to the letter. We need to really understand what it is. And I think that we've been informed more by Hollywood than we have by the Bible about what spiritual warfare is.

So what does Paul mean when he says in verse 11, stand against the schemes of the devil? To really get what he's talking about here. We need to do two things.

First, we need to look specifically at what he asks us to do. And then secondly, we need to put it in the context of the whole book. So first, the specific instruction.

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 and against the authorities and against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

[3 : 53] 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.

Verse 14, stand, therefore. Having fastened on the belt of truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness. Paul's instruction to us, our marching orders in spiritual warfare is to stand.

But stand on what? Stand where? And that's where the context comes into play. Ephesians has been all about how God uses the same power that he raised Christ from the dead in our lives.

What does that look like? It looks like chapter 2. We are raised with him if we are in Christ. It looks like also in chapter 2, to reconcile different races and peoples and cultures around the cross.

In chapter 3, that power is directed to send us on mission. Chapter 4, it changes our hearts and renews our minds. And in chapters 5 and 6, it empowers us to imitate Jesus.

[5 : 05] Ephesians is all about how God's power in the gospel doesn't just get us a ticket into heaven. It's about how he uses the resurrection power of the gospel to radically reshape our lives.

Our daily living. Here and now. To make a difference. Here and now. And that's where we stand. Stand firm on that.

That God plans to make us mature imitators of Christ. So we stand firm on what God has done in chapters 1 through 3. So that we can stand firm on our mission to imitate Jesus.

Chapters 4 through 6. Now is that true of you? I have to ask. I don't know everyone in this room. I don't know your hearts. I hope that chapters 1 through 3.

The same power that rose Christ from the dead is also alive in you. That you are risen with Christ. Have you been brought to life?

[6 : 22] Have you rallied around the banner of the cross? With people from all around the world? If not, you need to look back and hear that message again. You need to take hold of God's grace to unite you to Christ.

To raise you from the dead. To seat you in victory. By turning from yourself and putting your faith in Jesus. With God's grace through your faith, you can be saved.

This can be your story. Back to our passage. What about spiritual warfare? If we're in Christ, the enemy can't do anything about what happened in chapters 1 through 3.

As Jesus said on the cross, it is finished. If we are in Christ, we are in Christ. If we are raised with Christ, we are raised with Christ forever.

What's the next best thing for Satan? To put a lid on the rest of it. If he can't touch what God's already done in chapters 1 through 3, he's going to try to do everything he can to limit fruitful maturity in chapters 4 through 6.

[7 : 42] He doesn't want us to grow. He doesn't want us to build up the church. He doesn't want to see the kingdom expand. If the devil can't undo it, he's going to try to contain it.

If he can, he's going to try to get you to stop driving forward. In spiritual growth, love the Lord your God. And in your daily walk, love your neighbor as yourself.

That's the closest thing he can get to a victory, is to stymie our Christian walk. So spiritual warfare is standing firm against the schemes of our enemy to thwart the outworking of the gospel in our lives as mature imitators of Jesus Christ.

That's why Paul concludes Ephesians with spiritual warfare. It's fitting.

All the good he set us up to do, all the growth, all the comfort, all the expansion of the kingdom, all the encouragement, there is opposition. The devil will do anything to distract us.

[8 : 58] From Ephesians chapter 1 to 3. So we don't grow to look like Ephesians chapters 4 to 6. So we need to stand firm.

When we look at Paul's vision of spiritual warfare in context, living out the results of the gospel, and when we look at Paul's instruction for spiritual warfare, stand firm, that probably doesn't look like what you and I initially think of when we hear the term spiritual warfare.

Where do our minds go when we hear that? Hollywood? You know, special effects? Relics? Incantations? Did it go to like deliverance ministries sort of things?

You know, you're an angry person, you must have a demon of anger that we need to cast out. Paul has actually talked pretty specifically how that's sin in our lives, not demons. Our minds can go to a hundred different places.

And actually, our enemy wants that. Desires that. Why? He wants us to think that spiritual warfare is about ominous music, and flaming swords, and spinning heads, in, you know, a broken down, insane asylum.

[10 : 18] He wants that. Why? Why? So that we aren't even thinking about the main battlefield. Growing to look more like Jesus, and proclaiming the gospel further.

And that's a brilliant strategy. Since the devil has us believing that spiritual warfare looks like it's dungeons and dragons, it's not only that we don't recognize his attacks.

It's worse. We don't realize that a battle has even happened. If we think that spiritual warfare is really about some super Christian, standing toe to toe with the devil, in a battle royale, right, we won't recognize that the spiritual battle has even happened when he's distracted us away from the Christian maturity of Ephesians 4 through 6.

to win the fight and make it so that the loser doesn't even know a fight happened, that's brilliant. He won't even fight back.

He doesn't think he needs to. Put on the whole armor of God, Paul says, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. I want to pause here and say, I don't want to tell us, you know, I don't want to pretend like there is no such thing as demonic oppression.

[11:44] I went to seminary with some pastors from Nigeria and they have told me stories. But every time they walked into a place where there was physical demonic oppression, what happened?

After Jesus was victorious in those situations, they began the lifelong process of the spiritual warfare of turning Ephesians 1 through 3 into Ephesians 4 through 6.

Always. Chapter 6, verse 11. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. What's a scheme of the devil?

What are they? That word actually occurs only one other time in the entire Bible. And Paul's already used it. We talked about it today in the scripture reading earlier in chapter 4.

Starting in verse 11. And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood to the measure and stature of the fullness of Christ.

[12:56] And that's actually a great summary of where we stand firm. That's where we're going. That's the maturity that we're looking for. Now here comes the verse about the schemes. So that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried by every wind of doctrine by human cunning by craftiness and deceitful schemes.

What does that tell us? It tells us that our enemy's schemes look like winds of doctrine that spin us about and distract us from Jesus.

Our enemy's schemes look like human cunning focused on anything that carries us away from God's plans. Our enemy's schemes look like craftiness.

They don't look like glowing totems, incantations, relics, and Hollywood special effects. They don't look like power encounters, squaring off against the devil in dark places.

Our enemy's schemes are much more dangerous than that because they're hidden. We don't even know they're there. Look again at 4:14.

[14:11] The schemes of the devil are like the currents in the water and the wind in the air. Did you notice if the wind was blowing when you walked in today? Did you notice which direction? The Thames is a tidal river.

Is it ebbing or is it flowing right now? Do you know? We don't notice those things. That's exactly Paul's point is that our enemy is subtle.

Scripture says the devil is a roaring lion looking to devour us. How do lions hunt? They prowl. They stalk.

They're masters of subtlety until they pounce. Here's how one theologian explained the schemes of the devil in chapter 6, verse 11. The idea here is that Satan does not carry on in open warfare.

He does not meet the Christian soldier face to face. He advances covertly, makes his approaches in darkness, employs cunning rather than power, and seeks rather to deceive and betray than to vanquish by mere force.

[15:21] Can you see why that's so dangerous? It's easy to spot open warfare. You hear the gunshots. But it's hard to see covert operations.

Our enemy's schemes are subtle. He wants to slip beneath our notice. So what does that look like? What are these subtle schemes that hinder God's great work of making us imitators of Christ?

He has a lot of them. Let's look at a few specifically. So, what are they? Remember, his design is to do anything to get us not to stand in maturity.

So anything that takes us away from pursuing chapters 4 through 6 is on his table. First, harsh trials.

We already said that Ephesians 6 contains the most extensive treatment on spiritual warfare in the New Testament. What's the most extensive treatment on spiritual warfare in the Old Testament? It's the book of Job.

[16:33] Satan wants to rob God of glory. How does he do that? He hurts one of God's signs. He takes his wealth, he takes his land, he takes his health, he robs Job of his family, at least, you

know, the good parts.

Why does he do it? Satan said this to God. This is how he framed his argument to God. Does Job fear God for no reason? Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has on every side?

You have blessed the work of his hands and his possessions have increased in the land. Stretch out your hand and touch all he has and he will curse you to your face. Satan hurt Job so that Job would stop praising God.

So Job would take his eyes off God and put them on his situation. Now, Job did focus on God through his sufferings.

But that doesn't mean that he wasn't deeply broken by those sufferings. The book of Job is full of some of the richest lament ever put to paper. But Job didn't let Satan win.

[17 : 50] He was victorious over Satan by standing firm and pointing his eyes to God in the midst of the storm. Fiery darts of loss.

His family, his fortune, his health, they tore his life apart but he stood firm. He had every opportunity to take his eyes off God and look for satisfaction elsewhere.

But he stood firm. He looked the devil in the eye and said, the Lord is greater than all my pain so I will stand.

And how do we know that Jesus is better than all our pain? All our temptation? Well, it's because he stood for us.

When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, what did he offer him? The whole world. If Jesus would abandon his mission to rescue you and me, he'd give him the entire world.

[18 : 57] And that's not actually a terrible idea when you think about it. It's not a bad deal for Jesus in a way. Jesus avoids the cross. He avoids a Roman scourging.

He avoids twelve bumbling disciples. He avoids all the attacks of the Pharisees. And he still gets the whole world. But he stood.

He stood and said, better is my father's plan for the redemption of the world. He chose all those trials for you and for me. So we can be sure that he's worth it.

When our world collapses all around us. When we're tempted to the limit. When we're ready to turn on all the good work that God is doing in our souls and take the easy road because it's hard.

When all those things are tempting us, we can stand. We too can look the devil in the eye and say, Jesus is greater than all our pain, all our temptation so we too will stand.

[20 : 11] That is spiritual warfare. It's for God's glory and it's for our good. That's getting a bit ahead of ourselves.

We've moved already from the devil's first scheme hurting us straight to the armor, how we fight it. So let's look at a few more of the devil's schemes so we can be prepared or alert as Paul says.

Another of the devil's schemes is temptation. Now, the devil didn't make you do it, but he wants to make it easy for you to do it. Another of the devil's schemes are lies.

The very first time humans encountered spiritual warfare, it was in the Garden of Eden. The serpent came to them and said, did God really say that? Twisting God's words and lying to them.

And this is one of Satan's favorite weapons. And this is where the rulers and authorities of the present evil age that we see come into the equation I think a lot.

[21 : 22] He uses our cultural institutions to reinforce his lies. The media, politicians, universities, they tell us lies all day long.

We tell ourselves lies all day long so that we don't even notice them anymore. Lies like your natural desires are what's best for you.

They're natural. No. Your natural desires are set squarely down the path of death. Another lie.

The God of Christianity is hateful. No. Christianity is the only religion where God dies for the people who hate him. There is no such thing as a more loving God.

Another lie. The world would be better if we can simply pass this new policy. Nope. In thousands of years of human civilization, we have passed every policy imaginable in one form or another.

[22 : 22] And not once did it fix the world. Government left, right, up, down, center, whatever. None of it is a substitute for Jesus. Another lie.

Taylor Swift makes good music. Just seeing if you're awake. Seeing if you're awake. Another lie. You'll be happy if you just buy this or if you just look like that.

No. There is no such thing as real, as lasting happiness apart from Jesus. But, if our enemy can get us to look for a bedrock of happiness somewhere else, he will get all our time and he will get all our energy.

And there's such a thing as a lie of omission. That's, you know, when you don't tell the whole truth. It's probably actually the most common lie the devil tells in our society today. What's the omission? The omission is God, actually, just entirely, not in the picture. We're a post-enlightenment, post-morality, post-Christian, post-everything kind of culture.

[23 : 33] In public discourse, no one ever thinks to mention God or providence or right and wrong. We don't even know what phrases we would use to have a public discourse on those things.

The spiritual darkness of our time, God, the great lie of omission that the devil tells day after day in our culture is the pervasive secularism that we see in the world, the widespread forgetting of God. If he can make us forget God at work and in the home and while we're relaxing, imitating Christ goes out the window.

It's the perfect lie of omission. The enemy hurts us, he tempts us, he lies to us, and sometimes he does it all at once.

If you're into video games, it's just a combo attack. Move one, he'll look for you when you're weak. Move two, he'll tempt you with a sin.

[24 : 41] Move three, he'll tell you a lie about that sin. What does that look like? Move one, he'll wait for you to be weak. Maybe you're alone. Maybe you're tired, cadets. Maybe you're upset.

Move two, he'll tempt you with a sin. Maybe it's that website. Maybe it's sending that angry email. Maybe it's whatever your favorite sin is, whatever sin you love best. Number three, he'll tell you a lie about that sin.

It's not a big deal. No one will know. You deserve to live a little. You won't hurt anybody. Because it is a big deal.

It's a big deal because it is the difference between growing in Christ or not today. sin. It's the difference between drawing near to God in a difficult situation and putting up a wall of disobedience between you and God.

And guess what? It's not private. There is coming a day when everything will be laid bare before the throne of God for all to see. And guess what?

[25 : 55] Sinning isn't you living a little. sin. The wages of sin is death and the life that is the life of men is found only in Jesus. And guess what?

It will hurt somebody. There's no such thing as a victimless crime. Even if you're not hurting someone else with your sin, though almost all sin does, even if that's the case, you're still hurting yourself.

And as we read back in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 30, you're grieving. The Spirit of God. So, combo attacks. They are sneaky and they are deadly.

We could go on and on with the schemes of the devil. We'll only mention one more. Distractions. Not evil things. Neutral things.

Sometimes even good things that are not ultimate things. Anything to keep you from making Jesus priority number one.

[27 : 01] This can even look like the Bible. What was Jesus' problem with the Pharisees? They memorized the entire Old Testament.

They knew it inside and out. And what were they using it for? To make themselves look good. It's a great thing to have the whole Old Testament memorized.

But if it's done so that you look great in the eyes of men, you're not pursuing God. You haven't made God number one.

And so what does he say to them? He tells them that they are the sons of the devil. Yikes. our enemy hurts us, he tempts us, he lies to us, he distracts us, he combines them.

These are some of his very subtle schemes. So how do we stand against that? That's the question. Verse 12 told us that our enemies are in the heavenly places. Now that sounds scary.

[28 : 11] But if we look back to chapter 1 verse 19, Paul prayed that we would remember this. He prays that we would remember what is the immeasurable greatness of God's power towards us who believe.

According to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised from the dead, and here's the thing, and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places. Far above all rule and

authority and power and dominion, above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.

And he put all things under his feet. our opponents are in the heavenly places, and that sounds scary, but that's where Christ rules and reigns.

And what does that do for us? Chapter 1, verse 3, it means God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

so let's look at those blessings in the heavenly places. Paul tells us to stand by putting on the full armor of God. There are five pieces of armor here, plus the sword, but he doesn't really explain them very much, does he?

[29 : 24] He just kind of lists them off and says, put them on, take them up. Why doesn't he explain them further? The belt of truth, it's really vague, the breastplate of righteousness, that's not really clear to us.

So why doesn't Paul help us out and explain these new ideas? He doesn't explain them because they're not new, actually.

Each item here, truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, scripture, they've all been critical themes in Ephesians. He's already told us what each of these are and how to use them.

The only new thing here is that he's using an armor metaphor. He's telling us to defend ourselves with these things. He's telling us to clothe ourselves with these things, to ward off those evil schemes of the devil, the subtle schemes.

So let's look at them. We're going to look at each of them in turn. We're going to ask, what is it and how do we use it to defeat evil schemes? Verse 14, the belt of truth. What is the belt of truth?

[30 : 35] Let's think about how Paul has already spoken about truth. If we look back to chapter 1 verse 13 he says, in Jesus also when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation and believed in him, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

The word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Now, Paul isn't particularly concerned with 2 plus 2 equals 4 being true.

He's concerned with Christ risen from the grave for sinners like you and me being true. The truth is the gospel.

That's what the truth is. That's what the belt of truth is. So what do we do with it to ward off the subtle schemes of the enemy?

Right after Paul explained the deceitful schemes in chapter 4 verse 14, he says this, rather, speaking the truth in love.

[31 : 38] We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

So the belt of truth, it is the message of the truth of the gospel. Our salvation in Jesus Christ, by God's grace, through our faith in him.

And what do we do with it? We speak that message in love to one another to build each other up. Great, but how is that armor, how does that protect us from evil schemes, from subtle schemes? schemes. Here's a quote from a song we sang last week called Before the Throne of God Above. When Satan tempts me to despair.

Now that sounds a lot like a subtle scheme, doesn't it? When Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within, and here I think we can include, and tells me of my hopelessness, and directs my gaze at distractions, and tempts me to find my satisfaction elsewhere, when Satan tempts me to despair and directs my focus there, what is the next line?

[33 : 04] Upward, I look and see him there who made an end of all my sin. Does the belt of truth help us in our hour of need?

Yes. Jesus looks most beautiful when we see him interceding on our behalf, so we won't look for hope elsewhere. Jesus looks most powerful when we see him risen from the grave, standing in heaven, so we do not despair.

Jesus looks most satisfying when we see him as God above all who is for us, so we don't look to fill up on empty things.

When Jesus looks beautiful, powerful, and satisfying, no lie of Satan will sway us. That's armor. Again, verse 14, having put on the breastplate of righteousness.

Again, Paul has already told us what righteousness is and what we do with it. He did both actually at the same time in chapter 4, starting in verse 22. Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life, and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, verse 24, and put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

[34 : 28] Paul's even reusing the language here of putting on righteousness when he calls it armor here in chapter 6. Righteousness In chapter 4, 24, is created after the likeness of God.

What happens when day to day you put on the righteous new man full of activity that imitates Jesus?

What happens when you do that? You're going to build habits, and you're going to build patterns that naturally act as a barrier, as armor, against sin, against temptation, against lies, against distraction.

Actively pursuing righteous living is a wonderful piece of armor against Satan's schemes. Verse 15, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

Paul first introduced us to the gospel of peace in his introduction, his very beginning greeting. Chapter 1, verse 2, grace to you and peace. From God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[35 : 43] He goes on further. If you look in chapter 1 to verse 7, that peace looks like redemption and forgiveness. Now those are relationship terms, aren't they?

The peace Paul's talking about here isn't just some inner tranquility. It's not zen. It's a peace between a holy God and a sinful man.

God's How is that armor? Especially, how is that armor on our feet that kind of leads us to ask the question, what mobilizes you?

If it's not your ongoing relationship with God, and remember, peace is a relational term, you're in danger of falling into the devil's schemes.

But if you're daily strapping on the gospel of peace, clothing yourself in active relationship with God, you'll be ready to stand.

[36 : 48] Paul Tripp put it this way, the result of the gospel first is that we have peace with God. This leads to an inner peace that allows us to rest even in the midst of calamity.

And that right there is one of Satan's schemes hurting us in the midst of calamity. So peace with other people, he says, inevitably follows. We don't need to be at war with another person.

Verse 16, in all circumstances, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one. Now, the word faith is all over Paul's writing, isn't it?

But what does he mean when he says it? Let's look at some Old Testament context. Psalm 18, you don't have to turn there with me, but if you did, you'd see an awesome picture of a living faith.

And interestingly enough, it's another armor metaphor. Psalm 18, verse 1, I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

[37 : 59] I call upon the Lord who is worthy to be saved, and I am saved, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies. Putting your faith in God is running to him for refuge.

Now, how does that extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one? Paul actually already explained this, Ephesians chapter 3, verse 12, in him we have boldness and access to God with confidence through our faith, through our faith.

So I ask you not to lose heart. Did you catch that? Through our faith, we have access to God. And because we have access to God, we don't need to lose heart.

When Satan attacks us day by day with subtle schemes designed to wear us down and take us out of the fight, we have access to God through our faith.

heart. So we don't need to lose heart. We can stay in the fight. Verse 17, take the helmet of salvation.

[39 : 10] When we spoke about salvation in the opening chapters of Ephesians, what did we say it was? It had two components, at least, to it.

It had to do with who we are and where we stand. Our salvation first makes us God's adopted sons and daughters. That's who we are.

And our salvation unites us to Christ. That's where we stand. Our salvation revolutionizes both who we are and where we stand. How is that armor?

What do we do with that? The helmet of salvation tells us about our identity. And that's fixed forever if we are in Christ as children of God.

That means that when the enemy comes with lies, we know how to counter them. When Satan tempts us to sin, we can say, I am a child of God and that is not how I get my kicks.

[40 : 16] When Satan lies and says our situation is hopeless, we can say, I have been blessed by God with every spiritual blessing and seated with Christ who reigns over all the universe.

Today might look hopeless, but I know it's not. And for every attack Satan has, our position with the king, our identity in Jesus, that the helmet of salvation deflects the lies with a reply of truth about who we are in Jesus Christ.

Verse 17, the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. The final article in the armor of God isn't a piece of armor at all. It's a weapon.

So let's talk about offense. Now, if we're moving to offense, is this where Steven Spielberg comes in? With his special effects?

Not quite. There are three components to Paul's instructions for our offensive strategy. First, he tells us to pray. Secondly, he says to do it as a community project.

[41 : 31] And third, he preaches the gospel. Quickly, pray. Paul tells us that we have a sword. How should we use it? He immediately turns and says that it should drive us, verse 18, to prayer.

sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit. So let's pray that we see the schemes of the devil.

Let's pray that we would faithfully use all the pieces of the armor of God. Prayer is direct contact with God. It's the best way to thwart the enemy's schemes.

And then Paul gives our focus. He says, pray for all the saints. That means that spiritual warfare isn't a mano e mano sort of situation.

It's not a super Christian standing toe-to-toe with the devil. But that's our Hollywood trained image, isn't it? It's the lone priest fending off the onslaught of the devil in a dark place.

[42 : 40] And that's actually the complete opposite of what Paul's vision for spiritual warfare is. One pastor put it this way. If one person fights another person, that's not a war. That's not warfare, spiritual warfare.

It's just a fight. War is when armies do battle. So how do we fight as an army? Well, we need to be united.

We need to look out for the devil's schemes as a community. community. And it means we need to know each other's lives, doesn't it? Our temptations, our weaknesses, it means that we pray for each other, we encourage each other to strap on the armor of God in those specific areas.

Fellowship, that's encouragement. And actually, that's what Paul is talking about in verses 21 to 22. He's sent Tychicus to encourage their hearts with two things.

First, to report about Paul so that they could pray for him. And second, to deliver this message, the letter of Ephesians, to encourage them with these exact truths.

[43 : 53] And that's what we should do. So fellowship, prayer, and encouragement, that's how the church, the army of God, wages war. Finally, the war isn't just internal.

We aren't looking out only for the schemes of the devil in our own lives. We are looking to push back the darkness. How does Paul use the word of God in verse 19?

He says, pray for me. Now, he doesn't say pray for me as I go to battle with the devil by slaying demons. That's not what he says.

He says, pray also for me that words may be given to me in the opening of 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.

Why? Preaching the gospel is the ultimate act of spiritual warfare. It drives back the darkness and brings new people into the light.

[44 : 59] It doesn't just slay the enemy. enemy. The gospel is the message through which God uses to take people out of Satan's domain.

He doesn't destroy them. He doesn't slay them, but he makes them his own. That is the ultimate act of warfare. I take one of yours and make him mine.

I don't just take him out of the battle. I keep him in the battle on my side. I take your guns and your soldiers and your strategies. I take your people and I make them part of my army.

And that's where we are today, sitting in these seats. If preaching the gospel where it has not been heard is the ultimate act of spiritual warfare, then church planting is the front lines.

So let's put on the whole armor of God so that we may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil so we can pray, so we can proclaim the gospel.

[46 : 10] And Paul concludes, verse 23, peace be to the brothers and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible. Amen. Let's pray.

Father in heaven, you have equipped us in so many ways to stand against the schemes of our enemy.

Lord, I pray that we would not lose heart, that we would not despair. And when Satan does tempt us to despair because of our sin, because of our hopelessness, because of our temptation, because of whatever, that upward we would look and see Jesus there, who made an end of all our sin.

Amen. Amen. Would you stand with me, friends? When it boils down to it, you don't have victory.