

Ephesians 6:10-24

1. Scripture describes the attack used by Satan (and the rulers, authorities, cosmic powers and spiritual forces): his deliberate and calculated schemes (Eph 6:11; 2 Cor 2:11) include accusation of believers (Rev 12:10), sowing discord (Eph 4:26-27), and “blinding the minds of unbelievers” in order to keep them from Christ and mire them in sin (Eph 2:1-3; 4:17-232).

From elsewhere in Scripture we know that our response should include (a) an **awareness** of Satan’s schemes (2 Cor 2:11); (b) **examining our thoughts** and scrutinizing our patterns of thought and philosophies (2 Cor 10:3-5); (c) **forgiving** one another (Eph 4:27); and (d) **knowing Scripture** (Mt 4:1-11); (e) **prayer** against Satan (Jn 17:15) and his temptations (Mt 6:9-13).

Ephesians 6 adds to this the “armor of God”: **truth, righteousness**, readiness to **proclaim the gospel, faith, salvation, the word** of God¹, and **prayer** in the Spirit. Paul apparently intends that at this point we will recall those places in earlier in Ephesians where they were mentioned more explicitly, such as:

- **Truth**: “speaking the **truth** in love we must grow up in every way” (4:15); “they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God...that is not the way you learned in Christ! For surely you have heard about him and were taught in him, as **truth** is in Christ” (4:18, 20-21)
- **Righteousness**: “clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true **righteousness** and holiness” (4:24)
- **Faith**: “...so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who **believe**, according to the working of his great power” (Eph 1:18-19)

So far, so good. But how about the rest?

- a) We know Satan tends to attack those who are spreading the gospel, so how does “readiness to proclaim the gospel” serve as armor?
- b) What does Paul intend by “prayer in the Spirit”?²

2. Calvin writes of this passage,

The Lord offers to us arms for repelling every kind of attack. It remains for us to apply them to use, and not leave them hanging on the wall. To quicken our vigilance, he reminds us that we must not only engage in open warfare, but that we have a crafty and insidious foe to encounter, who frequently lies in ambush...

¹ Paul typically uses “the word of God” to refer not to the Bible but to gospel; c.f. 1 Thes 1:8, 1 Thess 2:13, 2 Thess 3:1, 1 Cor 14:36, 2 Cor 2:17, 2 Cor 4:2, Col 1:25, Col 3:16, so this is likely a reference to the truth of the gospel or to evangelism (Fee, 728-9).

² Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence* (730): “There is every good reason to think that Paul intends this phrase precisely as he has used it elsewhere—especially in 1 Cor 14:14-15 (cf. Rom 8:26-27)—to refer specifically to that form of prayer in which the Spirit assumes a special role in the prayer, especially, though probably not exclusively, praying in tongues.”

While some of the armor might come from seeking spiritual growth and service to others in Christ's name (e.g., clothing ourselves with the new self as a way of embracing righteousness), Paul clearly wants us to be aware that we have an enemy and that enemy has a strategy and is seeking our destruction (1 Pet 5:8; Jn 8:44). What proactive steps should we take as believers to counter the enemy? What price is paid for ignoring Paul's advice?

3. Paul also refers to the armor of God in 1 Thess 5:1-11. In this passage Paul makes it clear that this is not just a way we prepare for occasional skirmishes, but is a way of life in the end times. McCallum³ compares this to the mindset Americans had during World War 2, which is drastically different from a peacetime mentality:

Peacetime mentality

It's okay, even healthy, to enjoy accumulation of goods

We avoid suffering and hardship

It's my business whether or not to show up and participate

I decide what goals to pursue

There's no particular threat

I can engage in activities until I am tired, and can take breaks as I desire

Wartime mentality

It's essential to mobilize everything we can for the struggle; waste is unacceptable

Suffering and hardship are part of war

Failure to do your "bit" may be the difference between victory and defeat, and others will suffer

We follow a unified strategy set from above

We face mortal danger, even daily

There may not be the opportunity rest, and exertion may be to the point of utter exhaustion

Did Jesus have a peacetime or wartime mentality?

4. What themes of Ephesians does this passage address, which make it a fitting culmination to the letter? (And—bonus question—why the household code just before it?)

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Fun fact: The Bible makes 180 references to Satan, and the majority of these (over 100) are due to Jesus.

Further fun fact: Christian was equipped in the armory of the House Beautiful for his conflict with Apollyon. In Bunyan's account no armor is provided for the back so that Christian had no option but "to venture and stand his ground."

³ <https://www.xenos.org/teachings/?teaching=2100>.

Leader's Intro:

This passage is the intersection of several things which make us uncomfortable as modern believers. First, it involves Satan and doesn't give our modern rational selves a lot of wiggle room. Second, it is a passage which is a favorite among youth programs because it combines a simple metaphor with a list of things. Third, that metaphor is one which doesn't resonate much with the modern West, where most of us don't wear armor. We might as well be reading about shoelaces of justice and the greaves of liturgical chant.

As a result, we are caught between the likes of John Stott and CS Lewis on the one hand, and decades of sitcom-style devils in red jump suits on the other, and it doesn't help that we probably have a hard time remembering any sermon on this topic which has been actually useful. By the time someone points out something useful, like that in much of the Global South spiritual warfare is part of daily life, we find it easy to start

The keys to making this passage useful are (1) to read it in context, and figure out how it flows from the rest of the letter; (2) to treat it with the seriousness that Paul does, and not let ourselves off the hook just because it's uncomfortable.

Some Verses on Satan and "Spiritual Warfare"

- Rev 12:9: The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is 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.
- Rev 12:12: Rejoice then, you heavens and those who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, for the devil has come down to you with great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!
- 1 Pet 5:8: Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour.
- John 12:31 " Now judgment is upon this kosmos; now the ruler of this kosmos will be cast out."
- 1Jn 5:19 We know that we are children of God, and that the whole kosmos is under the control of the evil one.
- 2 Cor 10:3-5: Indeed, we live as human beings, but we do not wage war according to human standards; 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments 5 and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ.
- John 8:44 He [Satan] was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.
- 2Cor 2:11 so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes

The rulers (etc.)

- The devil (11)
 - 2 Cor 4:4: In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
- World Rulers (kosmoskatores)—only occurs here in the NT
 - Seems related to 1 Cor 2:6-8: Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. 7 But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.
- Authorities

- Rulers
 - Archon--
- Spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places

Leader's notes:

Paul lists the following element of armor; each one is on a topic he's referred to previously:

- Truth
 - In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit (1:13)
 - But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ (4:15)
 - For surely you have heard about him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus. 22 You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (4:21-25)
 - for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true (5:9)
- Righteousness
 - and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (4:24)
 - for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true (5:9)
 - Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right (6:1)
- Gospel preparation
 - In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit (1:13)
 - So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near (2:17)
 - that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel... Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ (3:6, 8)
 - The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers (4:11)
- Faith
 - Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus: (1:1)
 - In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit (1:13)
 - I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason (1:15)
 - and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power (1:19)
- Salvation
 - In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit (1:13)
 - even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— (2:5)
 - For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— (2:8)
 - For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior. (5:23)
- “Put on”
 - This is more than just something you do from time to time when facing attack; it's a way of life:
 - Rom 13:11-14: Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; 12 the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; 13 let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and

licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. 14 Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

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- “That evil day”
 - I think this is best explained/amplified by the parallel passage, 1 Thess 5:1-11:
 - Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. 2 For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 When they say, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! 4 But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; 5 for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. 6 So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; 7 for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.
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