

## Spiritual Warfare and the Armor of God

### Ephesians 6:10-20

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**Introduction:** Satan has embedded his ideas, philosophies, characteristics—his spiritual DNA—into the systems of this world. This is the “cosmos” referred to in 1 John 2:15-17. The world’s government, commerce, education, entertainment and religious entities have been infiltrated and infected by Satanic deception. The Lord Jesus Christ exposes Satan to be “a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44). The result is wholesale, colossal deception of the masses. Satan’s downfall was his pride and desire to be like God, and to be in charge of creation. That same pride and desire to control (independent of God and His plan) now completely characterizes the world’s systems of government and the world’s power centers. Believers can see the intensity, pace and volume of the world’s pride and rebellion against God rapidly increasing. Satan is behind this rebellion. Those who are victim of his lies and following their own lusts and desires need to hear the gospel and respond to God’s offer of eternal life through faith in His risen Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But what about those who have been born again and now belong to God? Does the believer have to deal with the master deceiver and his dark power? Yes we do, as Scripture is clear on this matter. Satan and those fallen angelic beings who joined his rebellion continue to attack the people and purposes of God. I see no evidence in Scripture that

Satan or demons can possess a child of God, but there is much Scriptural evidence that demons severely afflict some of God’s people. This interaction between Satan and the dark spirits of his domain and the people of God is often described as “spiritual warfare.” Ephesians 6:10-20 is a passage that attests that this is an accurate label and that the struggle is a very real one!

Though this warfare is often a “behind-the-scenes” struggle, the darkness is blatantly obvious in some places. Consider the statistics below, from the entertainment industry and from international politics:

*Top streams on Netflix in 2022 (hours):*

1. **Stranger Things (dark sci-fi)**
2. **Wednesday (dark fantasy, violent)**
3. **Dahmer (dark, violent, evil)**
4. Bridgerton (regency, romance)
5. Inventing Anna (true story of a fraudster)
6. Ozark (a money launderer in hiding)
7. **The Watcher (mystery thriller)**
8. **The Sandman (dream darkness)**
9. **The Umbrella Academy (wizardry, dysfunctional superheroes, imminent apocalypse)**
10. The Virgin River (romantic drama)

This begs a question: “Why such darkness?” I am convinced that the film/television industry is firmly in the grasp of dark forces. The masses are being conditioned to accept the occult as entertaining and “normal,” and to believe that evil can also be good. The Bible prophesies that these activities will increase in the final segment of the church age. Paul tells Timothy that the “*last days*” will be characterized by “*perilous times*,” [both literally and spiritually] and the trends of the last days are being shaped by these powerful media that we call entertainment and news (2 Tim. 3:1-5). Thus, we see that the enemy is in the background of much that is transpiring! (Note: mass “disappearances” and apocalyptic themes are trending as themes in popular entertainment as well.)

Here is a second illustration and some statistics that reveal the powers of darkness at work, right in plain view! Consider this insight from the operations of the United Nations:

- “From 2015 through 2022, including the above, the UN General Assembly has adopted 140 resolutions on Israel and 68 on other countries...The UN Watch Database also documents that from 2006 through 2022, the UN Human Rights Council has adopted 99 resolutions against Israel, 41 against Syria, 13 against Iran, 4 against Russia, and 3 against Venezuela.”

- “NEW YORK — The United Nations General Assembly passed more resolutions critical of Israel than against all other nations combined in 2022, contributing to what observers call an ongoing lopsided focus on the Jewish state at the world body. The General Assembly approved 15 anti-Israel resolutions last year, versus 13 resolutions criticizing other countries, according to a tally by the pro-Israel monitoring group UN Watch.” Last year, by comparison, Russia was the focus of six resolutions condemning its invasion of Ukraine. North Korea, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Syria, Iran and the US were hit with one resolution each. The US has used its veto power 14 times since 2000. Of the 14 vetoes, 12 were to protect Israel from biased or destructive resolutions.”

Why does the international body target so much of its energy in opposing Israel? This is more evidence of dark forces at work. Thus, Paul’s instructions for spiritual warfare are practical and vital.

**Context:** Ephesians 1-3 gives rich deposits of fundamental doctrines to know, believe and possess by faith. Chs. 4-6 instruct the believer to “*walk worthy*” of his or her calling (Eph. 4:1), with teaching on the Spirit-filled life. The subject of Ch. 6 is the Christian as a soldier who is carrying out the mission and work of Christ in this hostile spiritual environment. Eph. 6:1-9 gives instructions on the soldier’s training and relationships. Eph. 6:10-20 can be outlined as follows:

The Soldier’s Power (v. 10)

The Soldier’s Enemy (vs. 11-12)

The Soldier’s Protection (vs. 13-18)

The Soldier’s Example (vs. 19-22)

Note: For additional resources (and to see where I learned some of the truths contained in these lessons), I would encourage you to check out Dr. Thomas L. Constable’s notes/commentary on Ephesians, available free online at <https://www.planbiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/html/nt/ephesians/ephesians.htm>.

## 1. THE SOLDIER’S POWER (v. 10)

Jesus Christ is the believer’s endless source of life and power, for any and all needs, including the needs arising from spiritual warfare. This reality is a major distinctive of the church age (“*Christ in you, the hope of glory*” -Col 1:27b), and this positional reality of the believer is a major emphasis of Paul’s letter to Ephesus. Paul uses the expression “*in Christ*” or “*in Him*” seven times in the first 11 verses of this epistle, emphasizing the truth that one of the distinct characteristics of the church is the believer’s union with Christ. “*For we are members of His body, of His flesh and bones*” (Eph. 5:30). This is why the warfare passage begins with a reminder of both the Christian’s position in the Lord and his access to “*the power of His might*” (v. 10). That’s limitless power!

Paul’s prayer for the Ephesian believers was, in part, that “*the eyes of your understanding [hearts] being enlightened...[to]...what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power*” (Eph. 1:18,19). Christ is now seated at God’s right hand “*in the heavenly places*” (Eph. 1:20), but Christians, by faith, have access to the power of this place! It is so very encouraging to know that heaven is open, and its joys and powers are flowing through Christ! (John 1:51).

The illustration that Paul utilizes in this passage (the armor and weapon of a Roman soldier) helps to explain what it means to “*put on the Lord Jesus Christ*” (Rom. 13:14). Each piece of the armor gives

insight into the power of Christ that is available to the believer. Remembering how this passage begins, with this emphasis on the *“power of His might”* will keep the Bible student balanced and protected from an unhealthy fixation or debilitating fear of the dark world of Satan.

## 2. THE SOLDIER’S ENEMY

The passage we are studying teaches the Christian how to *“stand against the wiles of the devil”* (v. 11). Verses 11 and 12 give some insight into the devil, and this information can be added to many other facts about the devil that are provided in Scripture.

a. *“the devil”* – The key passages to understanding the “back story” as to the origin, original purpose, and the fall of Satan are Ezekiel 28:11-19 and Isaiah 14:12-15. Though these prophecies and proclamations are directly connected to prideful earthly kings, the Spirit of God is also obviously point past of the direct application to the King of Babylon (in Isa. 14) and the King of Tyre (in Ezek. 28) to *“Lucifer”* (Isa. 14:12). In addition to being called the *“devil”* and *“Lucifer,”* this powerful fallen angel is also in the Scripture called *“Satan”* and *“serpent”* (and given other descriptive labels). 2 Cor. 11:14 gives this chilling reminder that Satan’s effectiveness comes through his ability to mask his true nature: *“For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.”*

Ezekiel 28:11-19 tells what Satan was like before his fall:

- *“the anointed cherub who covers”* (v. 14). Cherubim are powerful angels. “They are celestial beings who guard and vindicate the righteousness of God” (Scofield note on Ezek. 1:22). In addition to being described in Ezekiel 1, cherubim are very likely the same as *“the living creatures”* of Rev. 4.
- *“established”* by God and assigned to his position *“on the holy mountain of God”* (v. 14)
- Had access to the innermost parts of heaven (*“walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones”* v. 14).
- Was *“perfect”* in his ways (v. 15).
- Is a created being (v. 15)
- Fell into *“iniquity”* (v. 15) because he became prideful about his beauty and wisdom (v. 17).

Isaiah 14:12-15 gives an biopsy of the sin that was in Lucifer’s heart:

- “I will ascend into heaven”*
- “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God”*
- “I will sit on the mount of congregation”*
- “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds”*
- “I will be like the Most High”*

Lucifer needed a kingdom in which to activate his plan to lead. He targeted Adam/Eve/earth, and accomplished his objective of becoming (for a limited time) the *“prince of this world”* (John 14:30). The devil is not omnipotent as is the Almighty God that he seeks to emulate, but the enemy has many crafty strategies that extend His reach.

### b. *“the wiles (methods, strategies) of the devil”*

This is a brilliant creature, far beyond any of us, and he has studied our tendencies and our weaknesses since the garden. Thus, his world system, and his attacks on the predictable reactions of the human mind, are described as traps. He works tirelessly to blind the hearts and minds of the masses, and he works tirelessly to damage and destroy the ministries and testimonies of God’s very elect! Joining him in this savage battle for the souls of men are the fallen angels (very likely the “daimonia” or demons that the Lord Jesus confronted and cast out). There is one “diabolos” or devil, but many demons. These demons, as inferred from v. 11 have different degrees of power and rank. Also, in Daniel 10:12-13 the curtain is pulled back on this spiritual war to reveal these supernatural creatures have territorial assignments.

In a recent mission trip to Nigeria, we encountered different spiritual terrain/battlefield, as different dark powers and strategies are at work to choke out the light than those that are in play here in my home community. Also, I have seen different manifestations of spiritual warfare in the state prison system than what we typically see in the flow of our “free-world” Southern culture. The only time I have directly heard the sound and have seen the physical effects of a demon in a man have been there in the prison.

**APPLICATION:** Given the reality presented in v. 11 (*"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood"*), it is a waste of energy to be given over to anger against the inept and anti-god world leaders. The reality is that they are puppets, and their followers are blind! This reality also gives more insight into Paul's instructions that Christians are to pray for *"all who are in authority"* (1 Tim. 2:2). Our battle is spiritual. The politicians and so-called power brokers. The filmmakers and so-called stars are merely pawns!

**A quickguide to his wiles:** The enemy has a thick playbook to use against the human race and especially against God's elect. He has legions of dark powers following him to the end (which is to spend eternity in torment in *"the lake of fire"* as is spelled out in Revelation 20). However, Lucifer doesn't often go to great lengths in baiting and trapping. From his playbook he has a few plays that he runs very well, and they work! Here are some of his most effective strategies:

### **1. Doubt**

Always remember the effective strategy the devil used against Eve: *"Has God indeed said?"* (Gen. 3:1). Eve began to doubt the word of God, and the devil pounced! Israel began to doubt the word of God, and the devil pounced! The so-called higher critics within seminaries of western civilization began to doubt the word of God, and the devil pounced! And today, as I preach, only a very few churches have pulpits today proclaiming *"Thus saith the Lord!"*

I know many believers who are paralyzed by doubt regarding their spiritual standing and assurance before God, and they are *"wallowing"* in doubt to the point of being disabled.

### **2. Discouragement**

The enemy works to discourage Christians and take us out of active duty and away from other Christians.

### **3. Deception**

The devil is a liar and a counterfeiter, and he is effective in his craft. His most effective strategy is the range of counterfeit religions that have deceived the masses. This is done in disguise as *"an angel of light."*

### **4. Distraction**

Satan distracts unbelievers in the pursuits and pleasures of this world in a patient campaign to keep the focus of people away the important matters of eternity. Satan also works to distract Christians. He sets traps and *"entangles [Christians] in the affairs of this life"* (2 Tim. 4), and we become lazy, ineffective soldiers of Jesus Christ.

### **5. Division**

Our Lord Jesus exposed this effective method of Satan when he rebuked the Pharisees for daring to claim that our Lord's power was Satanic. *"Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand"* (Mt. 12:25). Paul confronted the Corinthian church regarding division in the church; in fact, this was Paul's first priority in addressing a church that had many problems (1 Cor. 1:10-13). I see the growing division amongst the population in the United States as evidence of spiritual attack upon this country. Should this persist, the country will fall.

### **Conclusion:**

Adamic Covenant (Gen. 3:15) promises the defeat of Satan by the *"Seed of the woman,"* our Lord Jesus Christ. No surprise, the *"Seed of the woman"* has likewise defeated sin and death!

He is defeated! Satan and evil will not rule forever! He is already doomed! This happened when the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose again!

## **3. THE SOLDIER'S PROTECTION**

Due to the constant challenges of living in a sin-sick world, inside depraved bodies, while targeted by the wiles of a powerful enemy, the Christian is always under attack—from within and from without. As the late Adrian Rogers labeled it: we deal with pressures from the internal (the flesh), the external (the world) and the infernal (the devil). Succumbing to sin (regardless of where the temptation originates) brings the consequence of separation from fellowship with God. Being out of fellowship with the Father brings many negative consequences: loss of joy, loss of the filling of the Spirit, the unleashing of the spiritual law of sowing and reaping, and increasing cycles of discipline. Thus, the weakened soldier is ineffective. The enemy, of course, knows this, and works tirelessly to ensnare believers.

The Father, of course, has His strong answer to these challenges in the Word of God:

- Regarding the internal enemy, the flesh: *“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts”* (Rom. 13:14).
- Regarding the infernal enemy and his external, counterfeit world system: *“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world”* (1 John 4:4).

The Father’s unfailing answer to these threats is the indwelling resources of Christ, originating from the believer’s position in the body Christ. By means of spiritual baptism, the believer is placed into union with Christ, and the spiritual lifeflow of this union is expressed by means of the indwelling Holy Spirit. This key spiritual warfare passage we are studying is teaching from the apostle Paul that helps us to understand what it means *“to put on Christ”* and to stand in Christ and in His power against the wiles of the devil. To put on *“the whole armor of God”* (v. 11) is the believer drawing from the limitless resources available in Christ. To *“take up the whole armor of God”* (v. 13) is the believer depending upon Christ for each and every threat upon his intimacy with the Father and his usefulness in the Father’s service.

The illustration for “breaking down” this truth is here in the text itself, with Paul bringing to mind an image that the Ephesians (and all inhabitants of the Europe and the Mediterranean regions!) would be all-too familiar with—the image of a Roman soldier and his uniform, weaponry and equipment. Paul himself was well acquainted with Roman soldiers, as his periods of imprisonment brought him into close contact with soldiers and their commanders. With this illustration, the believer gains understanding into the always accessible, never diminished, resources of Christ. The believer must put on the full armor of God.

### **Stand!**

Before looking at how Paul uses the Roman soldier’s gear and clothing to teach about Christ’s power, let’s first examine the very clear objective that Paul sets forth. The apostle Paul commands the believer to *“stand,”* and uses repetition evidently for great emphasis (four uses of “stand” in vs. 11, 13, 14). The believer is not fighting with a goal of trying to obtain the victory; the believer is standing and maintaining a position of victory. Thus, Paul does not command the believer to march, to attack, or to advance or retreat. Paul tells the believer simply to stand in Christ when under the duress and assault of the wily devil.

*Illustration:* In athletic competition, coaches emphasize proper stances (think of the shortstop in baseball, the linebacker in football, and the tennis player preparing to receive a serve). The reason for this emphasis is that athletes absorb much incoming force and pressure and must be grounded to perform. Likewise, the believer is to stand, and to depend on the *“whole armor of God”* as the onslaught of evil and darkness approaches and attacks.

- **The belt of truth (v. 14a)**

This piece of equipment—the belt or the girdle of the soldier—is a picture of truth. The Lord Jesus Christ is truth, and God’s Word is truth. To prepare for battle, the Roman soldier first put on a tunic (loose flowing garment that went down to the knees). Over that he would don his belt/girdle device, to which the breastplate and the scabbard for his sword would be attached. This belt was foundational to the soldier’s equipment and held his equipment and garments against his body. The soldier would have to “gird up” by means of this belt in preparation for action (hence the idiom in the KJV *“gird up the loins”* used in 1 Peter

1:13 and in other instances). This is the function of Biblical truth in the Christian's walk and battles. Just as the soldier's belt holds all of his uniform and equipment together, the Word of God reveals what the Christian needs to know and believe about the saving life of Jesus Christ, who taught: *"I am the way, the truth and the life"* (John 14:6). Our Lord even states this important truth this in His prayer request from the Father for His disciples (and us!): *"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word [logos] is truth"* (John 17:17).

Without the belt, the soldier would be disabled and exposed. When God's Word is doubted or neglected, the Christian is disabled and exposed. When the believer grabs hold of God's Word by faith, he is putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is walking in truth and thus walking in the light! (John 12:35-36) Just as Jesus Christ and truth are connected in the Bible, truth and light are connected in the Bible. The belt of truth speaks of the Bible's critical significance in the revelation of the truth of Jesus Christ, and the light that radiates from Him out into a world of darkness and lies. How we need to reflect His light in these dark days! *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path"* (Ps. 119:105). *"Your word is truth"* (John 17:17).

**APPLICATION:** Christian parents have in many cases failed to communicate truth to our children, with devastating results. Spiritual apathy (parents interested in their own pursuits) and idolatry (parents wanting the world's acclaim for their children) are major factors in this breakdown. The way to prepare our children for the increasingly hostile spiritual terrain of this world is to teach them the doctrines of the Word of God!

**APPLICATION:** The Spirit-controlled Christian will himself walk in the truth and radiate integrity and truth in his life. The lifestyle of truth brings freedom and is itself a defense against Satanic forces (remember that Satan is a master at getting maximum pain out of a lie, as David learned in his lies involving his sin against the Lord when he took Bathsheba).

- **The breastplate of righteousness** (v. 14b)

The Romans benefitted from equipment and weapons that were more advanced than their enemies, which allowed Roman legions to rout armies vastly superior to them in numbers. The breastplate was light-but-tough metal that covered the soldier from his neck to his thighs (there was a back piece as well). This piece was usually made of bronze or chain mail and provided protection for the critical organs of the soldier. The piece of armor brings attention to one of the most beautiful doctrines in all of the Word of God—the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. Standing on the truth of this doctrine will repel the Satanic devices used to bring doubt and discouragement. Here is the what the Bible teaches:

1. Through the new birth, the sinner is washed clean of his sins. His sins are forgiven! *"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace"* (Eph. 1:7).

2. However, being washed clean of our sins is not the only gracious blessing of the new birth. The sinner not only needs forgiveness, he needs righteousness. By God's grace and through the new birth, the very righteousness of Jesus Christ is given to the believer. It is a glorious part of the gift of salvation! The very righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer at the instant of salvation. This is carefully explained by Paul in Rom. 4:3-8 and succinctly explained in 2 Cor. 5:21: *"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become [be made] the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Cor. 5:21).

Positionally, God sees His child as wrapped in the robe of Christ's righteousness. This doctrine is important in spiritual warfare because trusting this reality defends the believer against these types of Satanic imaginations:

- *Are you really saved? You sure are doing a terrible job in your daily walk and in your thought life.*
- *You really aren't anything but a failure and a pile of moral trash—it's laughable to think that God really honored your faith in His Son with true salvation.*

- *How God could still use you. You've let Him down so many times. Maybe it would be best if you just got out of the way of the real Christians and just stay home, or...*

This type of thinking is a one of Satan's most effective devices to pull the child of God into a life that is based on emotions and experiences instead of basing life and reality on the truths of Scripture. Because of poor doctrinal grounding (due in part to believer's lack of personal Bible study commitment as well as a scarcity of expository preaching), many Christians are being deceived by these feelings and are not standing as good soldiers. Emotionally led Christians are not active in the battle but are instead living bound up in their own feelings. Our defense from this is our position in Christ and our position/standing before God as righteous in Him. God has declared this to be true! "...He made us accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6). The believer is to "*Stand...having put on the breastplate of righteousness*" (v. 14b). This is a key piece of the armor.

- **The shoes of the gospel** (v. 15)

The Roman soldier would be equipped with good sandals. They would be strong enough to withstand the sharpened sticks and other defensive traps that were often laid, and the shoes would also be metal-studded, much like cleats, for traction. This passage emphasizes the need for the Christian soldier to "stand!", and these cleated sandals "grab hold" of the terrain. Paul links the shoes of the soldier to the gospel. In doing so, Paul emphasizes the critical importance of the gospel (it's hard to get anything accomplished without the right shoes!). The gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-4) is our rock-solid fallback point if the battle gets confusing. We can preach the gospel to others. At times, I preach the gospel to myself, just to keep focused on the grace of God and His mighty work of redemption. Focusing on the gospel brings great balance and peace to my life.

- **The shield of faith** (v. 16)

Paul equates the soldier's operation of the shield to the believer's operation of faith in the Christian walk and the accompanying battles. The Roman shield was about 2 and ½ feet wide and 4 feet tall. It was wrapped in leather to improve flame resistance (and that leather was even saturated in water in battles where fiery arrows were anticipated). By interlocking shields, Roman armies could create a mobile wall that was very effective at blunting swords, arrows, and even spears. As the Christian exercised faith in the promises and power of God, the Christian is shielded from the "*all the fiery darts of the wicked one.*" Simple faith has always been God's requirement, as God desires and deserved to be believed. Spiritual breakdowns and failures are connected to failure to trust the promises of God, to instead exercise faith in one's own plans, goals, and strengths. In spiritual warfare, "*the shield of faith*" is simply depending on the good promises of our good Father. We will also see in this passage that the promises of God's Word give us the catalysts and opportunities to exercise faith in God's promises. "*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*" (Rom. 10:17).

- **The helmet of salvation** (v. 17a)

This piece of equipment is vital, obviously, because if the head is struck, the body is disabled or killed! How encouraging it is to know that God's salvation protects His child from any mortal blow of the enemy. May we also be reminded of the reach of God's "*so great a salvation*" (Heb. 2:3).

1. By God's grace, the sinner is saved from the penalty of past sin and will not face "*the second death,*" which is to be cast into "*the lake of fire*" and suffer eternal torment (John 3:16-18, Rev. 20:14).
2. By God's grace, the sinner is saved from the present grip of sin by means of the indwelling, saving life of Christ (Rom. 5:10).
3. By God's grace, the sinner will one day in the future be saved from the very presence of sin as an inhabitant of a place called "*New Jerusalem,*" or heaven (Rev. 21:2).

Confidence in this salvation that has been provided by the work of the Son of God should guard our mind when we are under attack by the agents of the evil one. In our day-to-day battles with the flesh and the

“wiles of the devil” (v. 11), our confidence in God brings forth His power to save and to protect our thoughts while we are encountering temptation or under attack.

- **The Sword of the Spirit** (v. 17b)



Now we come to a weapon that is both offensive and defensive—the sword. The Roman soldier’s sword was short, and sharp on both sides (Heb. 4:12). This short sword was a big part of the Roman advantage on the battlefield. In the metaphor of “*the whole armor of God*” (v. 11), Paul connects the sword with “*the word of God*.” This is also where insight into the original language (Greek) is important, for “*word*” here in verse 18 is not *logos* (as in John 1:1). Instead, Paul uses the word *rhema*. *Rhema* means “sayings” or “utterances.” Here are helpful explanations:

The word “word” (Gr. *rhema*) here refers to the utterance of God rather than to the written Word or the living Word of God (Gr. *logos*). It seems most likely to refer to the spoken or applied words of Scripture that we use to counteract the particular temptation that we face. It is the appropriate Scripture spoken or put to use by the Christian in a given instance of temptation that is in view (e.g., Matt. 4:4, 6, 10). The Holy Spirit both gives the word (*rhema*) and empowers it as we use it. It is His sword (cf. Isa. 49:2) (Tom Constable).

“Do not make a mistake here; the sword of the Spirit is not the Bible. This Bible is not the sword of the Spirit, it is the armory. There are thousands of swords in here and every one of them is powerful and two-edged” (Harry Ironside).

“As Jesus used the words of Scripture to repulse the tempter (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10), so must the Christian the words the Spirit has inspired to drive away Satan” (John Allen).

One of my mentors has pushed me for the past 30 years to memorize Scripture. I am grateful he continues to encourage me to do this, because this enables me to have an arsenal of weapons within reach as I deal with the struggles of my earthly sojourn. One of the greatest thrills of my life is experiencing God apply His living Word (Heb. 4:12) to a very present need. This is a special way that God demonstrates His faithfulness to His child.

**Praying Always...Being Watchful** (v. 18)

Prayer to the Father (in the name of the Son and in the power of the Holy Spirit) is an important way the Christian “appropriates” or “takes up” the armor of God at the point of need. Prayer is one of the ways the child of God draws from the mighty resources of the loving Father. Paul emphasizes in this verse that:

- prayer is constant (“*praying always*”) at each point of need in the battle.
- prayer is “*in the Spirit*.” The Holy Spirit will guide our prayers aright and keep the Spirit-filled believer in harmony with God’s plans and purposes (Rom. 8:26-27, Gal. 4:6, Jude 20).
- prayer is the by-product of watchfulness or alertness (remember, we are in spiritual warfare).
- prayer is characterized by perseverance (aptly described in the expression “praying it through!”)
- prayer is asking God to supply the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ.



Paul—with the words “*always*” and “*all*”—stresses that the need for prayer is constant. “Satan trembles when he sees / the weakest saint upon his knees” (anonymous).

#### 4. THE SOLDIER’S EXAMPLE (vs. 19-20)

Paul gives instructions on how to pray for him. So what prayer requests does this apostle/missionary/church planter convey? Paul’s requests to the Ephesians relate to spiritual matters [a focus that is commonly reflected in Paul’s prayers contained in his letters (Eph. 1:17-19, 3:16-19, Col. 1:9-11)]. His requests seem to be connected to his pending appearance before the Roman Emperor Nero (54-68 A.D.). So what specific prayer requests did Paul ask of the Ephesians:

##### 1. *Paul desires God to give him the right “utterance”*

The word “*utterance*” could also be translated “speech,” “words,” or “message.” Paul desires to be led by God as to what to say to Nero (and to the other Roman authorities making inquisition of him) while Paul is imprisoned. The Romans were hostile to the Christians, believing Christianity to be a sect of Judaism or a fringe group that was anti-Rome. The vast majority of the Jews considered the early Christians to be heretics. Because of these factors, Paul regularly addressed hostile audiences and expresses his desire to be led by God when he speaks.

##### 2. *Paul desires God to give him the right attitude*

When the time comes to stand before the authorities, Paul want to speak boldly, frankly and with a relaxed attitude. There are many examples in the Bible of God’s men speaking “*boldly*”: (Acts 4:13, 29, 31; 9:27-29; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8; 13:46; 2 Cor. 3:12).

##### 3. *Paul desires God to give him the right priority*

Paul’s primary calling is to carry the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). In carrying out this responsibility, Paul is leading the efforts to break new ground in God’s majestic plan of revealing His glory to mankind through the work of taking the gospel to the Gentiles. This work involved much suffering, a reality the Lord had revealed to Paul at the time of his conversion. Paul is dealing with suffering even as he wrote this letter, and he is striving to stay focused on his calling. Paul’s calling is “*to make known the mystery of the gospel*” (v. 19). Paul has laid out the “mystery” (a truth from God that had been hidden) in Eph. 3:1-9. Paul’s work is to preach that the Christians are neither a heretical Jewish sect or a political opposition to Rome but are actually a new thing, a new entity called the church, the body of Christ, and made up of Jewish and Gentile believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

As Paul maintains, by faith, his heavenly calling and his heavenly connection to his Risen Savior, Paul is nothing short of an “*ambassador*” for God Himself—representing God’s heaven and God’s plans and purposes!—albeit, ironically from a human/earthly perspective, Paul is an “*ambassador in chains*.” As such, Paul asks his brothers and sisters in Ephesus to pray that he, through Christ, gives forth the right message regarding the gospel of Jesus Christ, with an attitude of boldness. Concerning “*the whole armor of God*” (v. 11), Paul practiced what he preached.