



## The Battle against Evil

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How do you describe Christian experience? An answer to that based on New Testament concepts will have to be very detailed and multi-faceted. Within the pages of the New Testament Christian discipleship is described with a multitude of metaphors and images often taken from everyday life experience. In our passage, to be a Christian is to be a Roman soldier outfitted and ready for battle. Thus knowing something about Roman soldier life in the first century becomes helpful to interpreting the passage. G.L. Thompson (“Roman Military,” *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, Logos Systems) provides this helpful summary of the Roman Legionaries:

While Roman citizenship was a prerequisite for service as a legionary, by the early first century one-third came from outside Italy, and by the end of the century Roman citizens from the provinces made up 80 percent of all legionaries. Recruits had to be in good health, have an adequate physique with a minimum height of 6 Roman feet (5'10”), and were usually eighteen to twenty-three years old. A candidate with all the qualifications except citizenship could be awarded the latter during the interview process (*probatio*); he was enrolled in the Pollian tribe with his birthplace given as the military camp (*castra*). All recruits would take an oath of loyalty (*sacramentum*) to the legionary standards and to the emperor as commander-in-chief, swearing to obey his orders and to protect the state. Breaking this oath was a religious as well as a military crime. The recruit would then receive traveling money to reach his unit. His training would include marching in step, parading, traveling twenty miles in five hours, swimming, basic tactics, battle maneuvers and hand-to-hand combat.

The legionary wore a linen undergarment covered by a knee-length woolen tunic, and he wore boots. His battle armor (*panoplia*, Eph 6:11, 13) included a breastplate (*thōrax*, Eph 6:14) of mail or, from Claudius on, of articulated iron strips, and an iron or bronze helmet (*perikephalaia*, Eph 6:17) with long cheek protectors and a wide flaring neck protector in the back. He carried a large rectangular shield (*scutum*, *thyreos*, Eph 6:16) and two six-foot javelins (*logchē*, Jn 19:34), and he had a short two-edged sword (*gladius*, *machaira*, Eph 6:17), as well as a dagger at his belt.



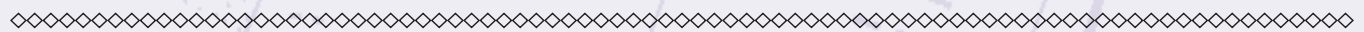
Rank and special honors were indicated by armbands, gold or silver bosses or similar military decorations. A legionary who was first into a besieged town, saved the life of a citizen or did some other heroic act might

be awarded a crown. The spoils of war distributed to the troops during the republic were for the most part replaced by imperial donatives given on an emperor's accession and on other special occasions. The triumph (see Roman Triumph) granted republican commanders and their armies for extraordinary victories turned into imperial propaganda parades (cf. 2 Cor 2:14; Col 2:15); a scaled-down version was the ovation.

The next question is "How?" In what way is a Christian to be like a Roman soldier? Does this imply a militancy posture built into Christian commitment? Some preachers in our day seem to think so, but the scripture text implies no such thing. It was not the soldier's attitude that Paul used to compare to Christianity. Instead, it was his uniform and equipment that formed the symbolic backdrop for Paul's description of the Christian's life. The attitude and posture of the believer is to be dramatically different than the Roman soldier who was finely trained to kill people without blinking an eyelid. The source of Paul's imagery will be explored further under Literary Genre below, and we will see that it is much richer and more diverse than often popularly understood today.

## I. Context

We continue to draw upon the insights gleaned from [previous studies](#) in Ephesians for this lesson. For the most detailed exploration of the background material see [the study](#) "Praise be to God" from Eph. 1:3-14. Only a summary of these details will be provided here.



### a. Historical

#### External History.

Ephesians was most likely dictated to a writing secretary sometime during the two plus years of Paul's imprisonment in the eastern Mediterranean coastal city of Caesarea by the Roman governors Felix and Festus (cf. Acts. 23:26-26:32). This would have been sometime between AD 58 and 60. The actual writer of the original document is unknown, but during this period Paul had numerous very capable individuals helping take care of him during his confinement at the hands of the Romans, including Luke, Silas, and other associates.

The trip from Caesarea to Ephesus via sea was not a lengthy journey for Tychicus, Onesimus, and others to make as they carried this letter, along with the one to the Colossians and the third one to Philemon who lived in Colossae. Ephesians was to be the first letter to be read as a quasi "cover" letter, thus setting a tone for the other letters. Consequently the contents of the letter probe some of the most profound aspects of being a Christian. A tone of celebrating Christian experience also permeates the letter. The importance of being a part of the com-



munity, the body of Christ, is highlighted.

**Internal History.** The internal time and place markers are largely limited to the illustration of the Roman soldier, and to Paul's request for prayer in vv. 18-20. These will be explored in detail in the exegesis section below since they pose no major interpretative issue impacting the understanding of the text as a unit of expression. The issue of the Roman soldier relates to the highly selective reference to only a small portion of the military gear of the soldier. The reference to being in chains in verse

20 depends upon the understanding of the time and place of the writing of Ephesians.

## b. Literary

**Genre.** As a letter, Ephesians follows both the style of ancient letters in general and those in the Pauline collection of letters in the New Testament. The typical elements of Praescriptio (1:1-2); Proem (1:3-23); Body (2:1-6:20); Conclusio (6:21-24) are found.

Eph. 6:10-20 comes -- as explained below -- in the second paraenetical section of the letter Body. As such its nature is moral admonition given to Christians.

But 6:10-20 also follows rather closely an ancient Greco-Roman rhetorical pattern in the art of persuasive speech. This background becomes very important to proper interpretation of the verses. Andrew T. Lincoln (*Word Biblical Commentary*, Logos Systems) has a massive treatment of this distinctive literary genre for verses 10-20. I cite only a portion of his discussion in order to provide the necessary background.

6:10-20 is both the concluding element of the paraenesis which had begun in 4:1 and the concluding section of the main part of the letter as a whole. In terms of a rhetorical analysis of the letter as a persuasive communication that would be read out loud to its recipients, this section functions as the *peroratio*. In the *peroratio* (cf. Quintilian 6.1.1) an author not only sought to bring his address to an appropriate conclusion but also to do so in a way which would arouse the audience's emotions. According to Aristotle (*Rhet.* 3.19) the *epilogos*—his equivalent term—had four parts: making the audience well-disposed toward the speaker and ill-disposed toward any opposition, magnifying or minimizing leading facts, exciting the required kind of emotion in the hearers, and refreshing their memories by means of recapitulation. There is no particular reason why *all* these factors should be found in this conclusion, but they can provide a convenient point of comparison, and the writer does appear to have fashioned his own version of them.

But in addition to following the *peroratio* tradition, it also is marked by great similarities to the battlefield speeches, a sub-category of *peroratio*, of Roman generals as they sought to rally their troops in preparation for battle. Note Lincoln's additional observations:

This particular *peroratio* takes the form of a call to battle or, to be more precise, a call both to be ready for battle and to stand firm in the battle that is already in progress. As such, it also, not surprisingly, has features in common with speeches of generals before battle, urging their armies to deeds of valor in face of the impending dangers

of war. These hortatory speeches, called *παράινσεις*, "paraenesis," or *προτρεπτικός λόγος*, "advisory word or speech," can be found frequently in Greek literature, and were considered part of the epideictic genre of rhetoric (cf. esp. T. C. Burgess, "Epideictic Literature," *Studies in Classical Philology* 3 [1902] 209-14, 231-33). Representative of the range of these military speeches are those of Phormio in Thucydides 2.89, Cyrus in Xenophon, *Cyrop.* 1.4, Hannibal and Scipio in Polybius 3.63, Postumius in Dionysius of Halicarnassus 6.6, Nicias in Diodorus Siculus 18.15, Alexander in Arrian, *De Ex. Alex.* 2.83, Caesar in Dio Cassius 38.36-46, Antony and Augustus Caesar in Dio Cassius 50.16-30, and Severus in Herodianus 3.6 (cf. Burgess, "Epideictic Literature," 212-13). Among the topics dwelt on in these speeches are the soldiers' heritage, including their glorious achievements in the past, an exhortation not to disgrace this heritage by suffering defeat, a comparison with enemy forces with a reminder that it is ultimately valor and not numbers that will prevail, a detailing of the prizes that await the victors, a pointing to favorable auspices and to the gods as allies, an appeal to patriotism, a reminder that this enemy has been conquered before, a depicting of the wrongs inflicted by the enemy, and praise of the commander as superior to the leaders of the opposing forces. Such speeches in the various histories were well known as places where writers indulged their rhetorical powers, sometimes to excess. Plutarch (*Praec. Ger. Reip.* 6.7.803B) remarks of some of them, "but as for the rhetorical orations and periods of Ephorus, Theopompus, and Anaximenes, which they made after they had armed and arranged their armies, one may say: 'None talk so foolishly so near the sword.'"

Thus Paul found in the Greco-Roman side of his heritage a way to bring the letter to a close in the most appropriate manner. We will note, however, his dependence on the Hebrew side of his heritage



as his use of the Roman soldier's gear is shaped deeply by Old Testament military imagery, and in particular by passages from Isaiah.

**Literary Context.** The literary setting of 6:10-20 can be defined as follows.

**Praescriptio** (introductory materials): 1:1-2

The sender, recipients and greeting are contained in these initial two verses.

**Proem** (prayer expressions): 1:3-23

Comprised of two major sections, this passage begins with an eloquent praise to God in one long sentence in the Greek (**1:3-14**), and then moves to a more traditional prayer of thanksgiving and intercession for the readers (1:15-23).

**Body of the letter:** 2:1-6:22

**The first major segment** (2:1-3:21) focuses on the marvelous redemptive work of God through Christ Jesus that has lifted us out of sin and into spiritual union and fellowship with Almighty God. This is brought to a grand climax with another doxology of praise in 3:14-21.

**The second major segment** (4:1-6:22) focuses on moral exhortation, technically known as *paraenesis*. The 'how we should live' emphasis here flows naturally from the 'who we are spiritually' first section

in chapters two and three. Christian living has to be based upon spiritual relationship to the Heavenly Father for it to be authentic.

This section can be divided out into the following pericopes:

- (1) 4:1-16 (Christian unity as the collective Body of Christ);
- (2) 4:17-24 (The Old and New Ways of Living);
- (3) 4:25-5:5 (Guidelines for the New Way of Living);
- (4) 5:6-21 (Walking as Children of Light);
- (5) 5:22-6:9 (Living as a Christian Family);
- (6) 6:10-22 (Doing Battle with Evil).**

**Conclusio:** 6:23-24

The concluding prayer of blessing for peace and grace.

For further details see <http://cranfordville.com/letlstp.htm>.

Thus, our passage stands as the last pericope in the second division of the letter Body. As such it comes to summarize and bring to a climax not just the paraenetical section but the entire Body section of the letter. This is signified in part by the introductory expression Τοῦ λοιποῦ ("finally").

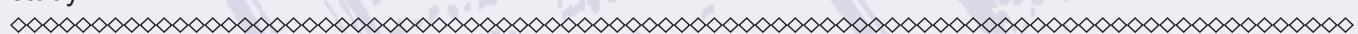
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## II. Message

**Literary Structure.** The structuring of the ideas in these verses is relatively easy to grasp. The first emphasis contains a series of admonitions in verses 10-13 to prepare for warfare. Then by drawing an inference from this preparation the reader is admonished to stand in battle fully prepared to fight on to victory (verses 14-20).

Although different opinions exist regarding the role of prayer in verses 18-20 as to whether it constitutes a separate segment or not, the existing syntax of the Greek text unquestionably attaches the idea of praying to the sword of the Spirit via the defining relative clause identifying this piece of military gear as the verbally preached message of God (ῥῆμα θεοῦ). We will follow the pattern of the Greek text in our study.



### a. Preparing for battle, vv. 10-13

#### Greek NT

10 Τοῦ λοιποῦ, ἐνδυναμοῦσθε ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ κράτει τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ. 11 ἐνδύσασθε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς τὸ δύνασθαι ὑμᾶς στήναι πρὸς τὰς μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου. 12 ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἡ πάλη πρὸς αἷμα καὶ σάρκα ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰς ἀρχάς, πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας, πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου, πρὸς

#### NASB

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness,

#### NRSV

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic

#### NLT

10 A final word: Be strong with the Lord's mighty power. 11 Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil. 12 For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world,

τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις. 13 διὰ τοῦτο ἀναλάβετε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα δυνηθῆτε ἀντιστῆναι ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς πονηρᾶς καὶ ἅπαντα κατεργασάμενοι στῆναι.

#### Notes:

The beginning phrase Τοῦ λοιποῦ marks a new topic being introduced. As such it is correctly translated as “finally” by most English translations. The Message interestingly renders it “And that about wraps it up.” The point made by this marker is to signal the end of the letter body.

All that will remain is the standard epistolary Conclusio, which is contained in verses 21-24 and contains the typical Pauline Letter Verification and Benedictio concluding prayer.

21 So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus will tell you everything. He is a dear brother and a faithful minister in the Lord. 22 I am sending him to you for this very purpose, to let you know how we are, and to encourage your hearts. 23 Peace be to the whole community, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace be with all who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ.

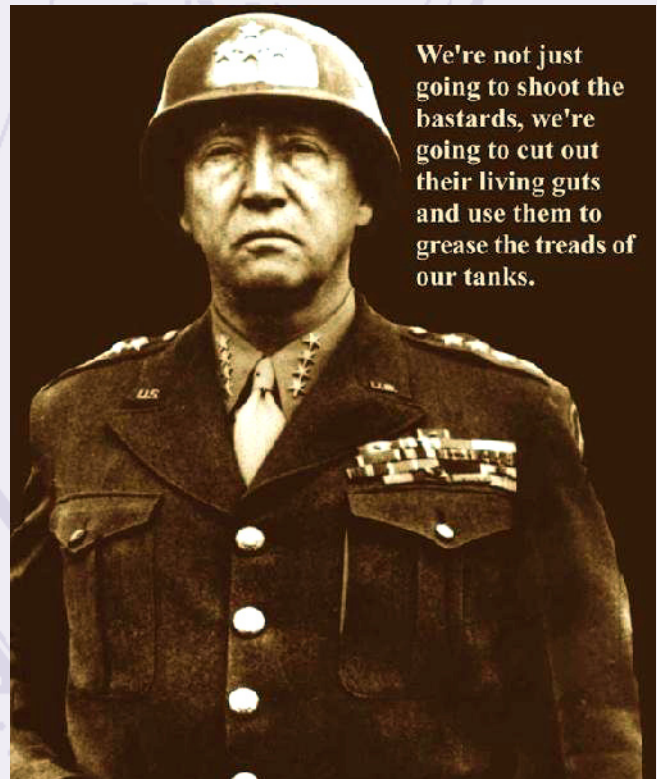
As the final segment of the body division of the letter, this passage serves a couple of purposes. It becomes a summary set of admonitions completing the paraenetical section begun in 4:1. See the [Literary Context](#) section above for more details. But its summarizing qualities extend to the entire body section of the letter which began at 2:1. The theological foundation laid in chapters two and three serve as the basis for the six sets of admonitions in chapters three through six. Our passage, 6:10-20, seeks to wrap up that larger discussion in a dramatic appeal to the readers to prepare to live as disciples of Christ in a hostile world. Paul chose to emulate the battle field pep talk typically given by Roman military generals to the troops on the eve of major battles. See [Literary Genre](#) for more details. While Paul utilized this type of speech of persuasion, he did not go to

against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.



powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms. 13 Use every piece of God’s armor to resist the enemy in the time of evil, so that after the battle you will still be standing firm.



We're not just going to shoot the bastards, we're going to cut out their living guts and use them to grease the treads of our tanks.

the extremes that Roman military generals often did in exaggerating the dangers and in using false promises to fire up the troops. Of course, military generals have followed that approach down to our day, as the clip from General Patton’s speech to his troops in WWII illustrates. Paul gives an honest assessment of the spiritual reality that we face in a world under the domination of Satan and of evil. He has already laid down the theological foundation for this call to arms in chapters two and three of the letter body.

As a battle field speech Eph. 6:10-20 calls disciples to be prepared for facing a hostile world.

Central to this preparation is to acquire supra-human resources. The challenge facing us is supra-human in nature. Thus the resources needed for successful defense go beyond what can be acquired from human sources. The 16th century Reformer Martin Luther captured the essence of this need in

his most famous hymn, *A Mighty Fortress*:

Did we in our own strength confide,  
Our striving would be losing;  
Were not the right man on our side,  
The man of God's own choosing.  
Dost ask who that may be?  
Christ Jesus, it is he;  
Lord Sabaoth his name,  
From age to age the same,  
And he must win the battle.

The first two admonitions in verses 10-11 underscore this need:

1. ἐνδυναμοῦσθε ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ κράτει τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ. “Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. “The present tense imperative Greek verb use here conveys the sense of “be continually being infused with power.” In modern analogy, we need repeated spiritual B-12 shots to bring our energy and strength levels up to supra-human dimensions. Or from the world of sports, we need a spiritual steroid shot repeatedly to get us ready. Andrew Lincoln (*Word Biblical Commentary*, Logos Systems) provides a helpful summation of this admonition:

The call to “be strong” in the context of battle is reminiscent of similar calls to, for example, Joshua—“Be strong and of good courage” (Josh 1:6, 7, 9)—or the Qumran community—“Be strong and valiant; be warriors!... Do not fall back” (1QM 15.6–8). Paul also had appealed at the close of 1 Corinthians for the readers to be strong (cf. 1 Cor 16:13, κραταιοῦσθε). Although the imperative could be construed as a middle (cf. Bruce, *Epistles*, 403), it is more likely that it should be taken as a passive with the sense of “be strengthened, be empowered,” reinforcing the notion that the strength is to be drawn from an external source and corresponding to the passive in the prayer of 3:16, δυνάμει κραταιωθῆναι, “to be strengthened with might.” Here the external source is “the Lord,” and the wording is again reminiscent of the OT (cf. 1 Sam 30:6, “David strengthened himself in the Lord his God”; Zech 10:12, “I will make them strong in the Lord”). Now, however, the Lord is Christ. The relationship to him is described in terms of ἐν κυρίῳ, “in the Lord” (cf. also 2:21; 4:17; 5:8, 6:1, 21), which conforms to the overall tendency in this letter for what believers are in relation to Christ to be expressed in terms of ἐν Χριστῷ, “in Christ,” and what they are to become or to do in relation to him to be expressed in terms of ἐν κυρίῳ, “in the Lord” (see *Comment* on 2:21). Believers’ relationship to Christ gives them access to his power. The exhortation takes

up the language of the intercessory prayer-report of Col 1:11, “being strengthened with all power according to the might of his glory.” But it recalls also the ideas of this letter’s earlier prayer-reports about the experience of the power of God operative in Christ’s resurrection and exaltation and in the rescue of believers

from the death and bondage of the past (cf. 1:19–2:10 with its earlier combination in 1:19 of the same synonyms in a genitive construction, “the strength of his might”) and about strengthening through the Spirit (cf. 3:16). Now this final reminder is of the need to appropriate and rely on Christ’s power.

2. ἐνδύσασθε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς τὸ δύνασθαι ὑμᾶς στῆναι πρὸς τὰς μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου. “Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” The admonition stresses dressing ourselves with God’s armor, rather than one that we could build for ourselves. Thus we equip ourselves with God’s provision. The image of “God’s armor” suggests both defensive and offensive postures for the soldiers. It is more than just defending ourselves against attack that Paul has in mind here.

Where did Paul gain such an image? The Old Testament portrays God’s armor in numerous passages. Albrecht Oepke (*Kittel’s Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Logos Systems) gives this summation:

In the OT Yahweh, too, appears fully armed (cf. Is. 42:13, Yahweh as a man of war). But in the texts as we have them the concept is spiritualised. Among the oldest is Is. 59:17: “Yahweh put on righteousness as a breastplate (בַּשָּׂרָף וְכִסָּתוֹ אֶת הַחֹמֶשׁ) and (put on) the helmet of salvation עֲבֹד עֲבֹד הַעֲשֵׂי הַפֶּרֶץ הַיְהוָה (περικεφαλαίαν σωτηρίου) on his head.” A post-exilic psalmist prays: “Yahweh ... fight against them that fight against me. Take hold of target (הַגָּן הַיְהוָה) and shield (שָׂרֵי הַיְהוָה) before the battle), ... draw also the spear (הַיְהוָה) LXX inaccurately ῥομφαίαν and battle-axe (? Mas. הַיְהוָה, LXX σύγκλεισον, read perhaps הַיְהוָה, cf. σάγαρις, the battle-axe of the Scythians, Hdt., I, 215) against them that persecute me,” Ps. 35:1 ff. Both passages are poetic. They do not try to give a full description, but a fairly complete picture emerges when they are combined. Repeated mention is also made of Yahweh’s sword, javelin and bow (Is. 34:6; Ez. 21:8 ff.; Ps. 7:12 f.; Hab. 3:9 ff.,<sup>10</sup> → III, 340). Finally there is an explicit and comprehensive depiction in Wis. 5:17–22, where creation—this ancient view

is surprising in so late a document—is presented as Yahweh’s levy against the powers of the deep: λήμψεται πανοπλίαν ... και όπλοποιήσει τήν κτίσιν εις άμυναν έχθρών· ένδύσεται θώρακα δικαιοσύνην και περιθήσεται κόρυθα κρίσιν ... λήμψεται άσπίδα άκαταμάχητον όσιότητα, όξυνεί δέ ... όργήν εις ρομφαίαν ... πορεύσονται ... βολίδες άστραπών και ώς άπό εύκύκλου τόξου τών νεφών επί σκοπόν άλοϋνται, και έκ πετροβόλου θυμού πλήρεις πιφήσονται χάλαζαι. Off-shoots may still be found in Rev. 1:16; 2:12, 16; 6:1 ff.; 19:11–21.

The nature of the struggle is clearly indicated in the purpose statement “so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” (πρός τό δύνασθαι ύμās στήναι προς τās μεθοδείας τού διαβόλου). Our fight is a spiritual warfare against the Devil. God’s armor is essential for successful fighting of the Devil.

The strategy of the Devil is depicted as τās μεθοδείας. This will be translated in different ways in the English Bible: 1) “the wiles” (KJV, RSV, NRSV, ASV, AV, NKJV); 2) “the schemes” (ESV, NET Bible, NASB, NIV, TNIV); 3) “the evil tricks” (TEV, NCV); 4) “the tactics” (HCSB); 5) “the devil’s strategies” (ISV); 6) “everything the Devil throws your way” (Message); 7) “all strategies and tricks” (NLT). The word is also used in 4:14 where it alludes to the tactics of deceit intended to misrepresent divine truth. In 4:27, Paul admonished his readers to never ever give the Devil an opportunity to gain entrance into one’s life. Now, in summary, Paul comes back to warn his readers that the ability of the Devil (ό διάβολος itself means deceiver) trick and deceive is at a level above human ability to detect. His battle field tactics are more skillful than any those any Roman military general could have ever devised.

As an elaboration on this reference to the battle field tactics of the Devil, Paul moves in verse 12 to elaborate in greater detail those strategies:

For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

First, the battle is defined as ή πάλη. Sometime this term was used of a wrestling match, but also it referred to a military battle. The angle emphasized by the term is more in the direction of the modern label “hand-to-hand combat.” The battle is personal, close up and unavoidable.

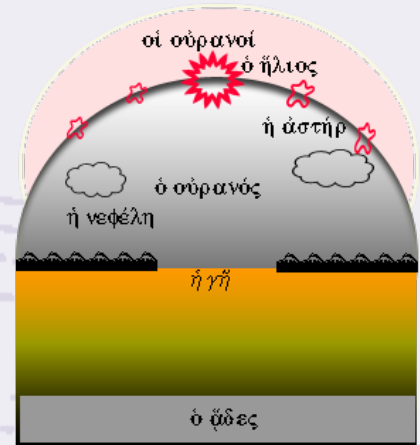
Next, Paul stresses that it is not a πάλη against “flesh and blood” (πρός αίμα και σάρκα). While

men do oppose the Gospel and Christians -- Paul felt this opposition while composing this letter as a prisoner for his faith -- the struggle is larger than between humans. Believers are caught in a cosmic struggle between God and the Devil.

Finally, the cosmic dimensions of the struggle are defined as:

- 1) against the rulers, προς τās άρχάς,
- 2) against the authorities, προς τās έξουσίας,
- 3) against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, προς τούς κοσμοκράτορας τού σκότους τούτου,
- 4) against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. προς τά πνευματικά τής πονηρίας έν τούτς έπουρανίοις.

These are spiritual forces launching their attacks from the air above against believers on earth. The four sets of designations are intended to be inclusive



and dramatic in referring to the demonic world under the Devil's control. The good news is that "God put this power [His power] to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule [ἀρχῆς] and authority [ἐξουσίας] and power [δυνάμεις] and dominion [κυριότητος], and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come." (Eph. 1:20-21). To be sure, the Devil is still "the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient" (Eph. 2:2). The church is the vehicle of divine declaration of God's superior wisdom as asserted in 3:10: "so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." God in Christ and through the community of believers has made it clear to these supernatural powers that He is supreme and possesses wisdom far superior to any schemes of deception that they might devise to defeat His people. But His people must depend on His wisdom and strength to outwit the Devil and his forces in this cosmic struggle. They can't do it on their own.

In verse 13, Paul issues the challenge again for God's people to take up the full armor of God. This is because (διὰ τοῦτο) of the cosmic nature of the struggle. The objective is restated with slightly different wording: "so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day" (ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ πονηρᾷ). The timing of this day is variously understood. Ernst Best (*ICC* new series, Logos Systems) offers a summary of the viewpoints:

What and when is the evil day? The same words, but in the plural, were interpreted in 5:16 to refer to the moral decadence Christians believed lay around them outside the church. However, the singular, and often the plural when qualified, normally refer to the parousia, the day of judgement or the end of the world, times which though good for some would be evil for others (Amos 5:18-20; Joel 1:15; 2:32; Zech 14; Dan 12:1; *T Levi* 5:5; *1 En* 55:3; 96:2; *T Moses* 1:18; *Apoc Abr* 19:8f, *1QM* 1:10-13; 1 Cor 1:8; 1 Th 5:2-4).<sup>115</sup> If the singular is stressed what particular day would be in mind? Suggestions include the day of death (Erasmus) or, what is almost the same, the time of the passage of the soul to heaven; in neither case is there evidence elsewhere for the need of weapons on that day. If the reference to standing implies standing before God, or Christ, on the day of judgement (Jerome), this would normally have been made explicit through the introduction of the name of God or Christ (cf Schnackenburg), and it

<sup>115</sup> Cf G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* II, Edinburgh, 1965, 119-25; E. Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, London, 1958, 317ff; D. S. Russell, *The Meaning and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, London, 1964, 92-6, 264ff.

would also entail an unusual change in the meaning of the verb from v. 11 (and v. 14). It is much more probable that the singular, if stressed, should be taken apocalyptically and refer to the End. Yet Ephesians says relatively little about the End and the conflict is one already in process; the weapons are needed now. Jewish apocalyptic however sometimes envisaged a period of severe oppression leading up to, and immediately prior to, the End, the birth pangs of the Messiah (Dan 7:21ff; 12:1; Joel 2; 4 Ezra 13:16-19; 2 Bar 25; 68; *Jub* 23:13ff; Mk 13; Rev 7:14; 12:3, 7, 13; cf H. Schlier, <sup>2</sup>*TWNT*, III, 139-48; Russell, op.cit., 272ff). In 1 Th 5:8 Paul counsels believers to put on armour in a context relating to the final days, and though in Rom 13:12 the armour is not particularised the context is again eschatological. Perhaps then AE sees the present struggle of believers as part of, or as leading to, the final eschatological conflict (Hugedé); as Schnackenburg notes, AE's eschatology is somewhat hazy. There may be a parallel with his conception of redemption (so Lincoln) where he both envisages believers as already sitting in heaven (2:6) and also, as his exhortations to good behaviour show, engaged at the same time in a perpetual struggle against evil. Fischer, 166, offers no real evidence other than the difficulty of the expression for his supposition that AE used here a piece of tradition which was apocalyptically oriented, presumably without realising what he was doing. If however the apocalyptic colouring of the phrase needs to be entirely eliminated and the present nature of the struggle emphasised, then it should probably be taken as referring to moments of particular danger or crisis (NEB 'when things are at their worst'; Beare suggests the time of a bad horoscope); yet since such days would recur this interpretation would properly require the elimination of the article and we should have 'an evil day' and not 'the evil day'. Probably the best solution is to see believers as already within the period leading up to the End, even though AE never suggests that it is close.

We indeed stand in the last days when evil seems to be growing stronger and wreaking havoc increasingly all around our world. The future prospect is that things will get worse before they get better. Thus we urgently need to outfit ourselves with God's armor. Although the participle ἅπαντα κατεργασάμενοι can mean "vanish" or "overcome" its 21 other Pauline uses consistently mean "accomplish" or "carry out." So taken here the mean-

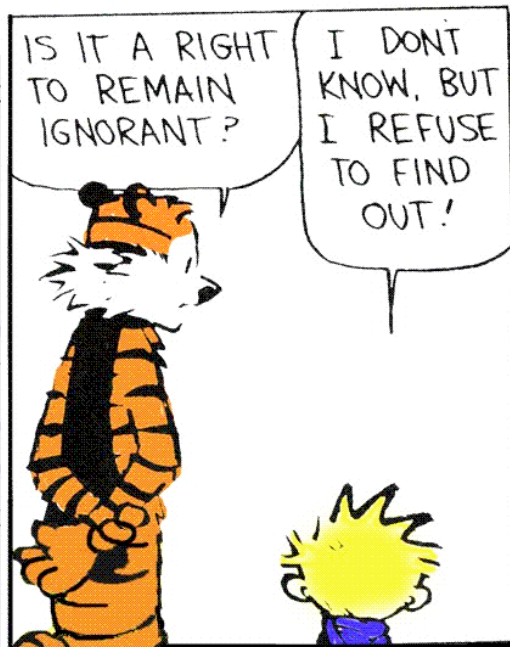


<sup>2</sup>*TWNT Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, Stuttgart, 1933ff



ing becomes: once we've got our armor in place, then we need to head to the battle field to take our stand for Christ. We're now prepared.

Wow! What a picture! As we go about our daily lives usually rather quietly and routinely, are we really engaged in such a dramatic conflict? From a purely human angle it may not seem so at first thought. Yet, take a close look at the newspaper. Watch consistently the evening 6:00



local and 6:30 national news. Click on to some international news media outlets on the internet and read about current events in other parts of our globe. Even without much spiritual awareness one can sense a staggering amount of evil running rampant over the lives of millions of people. Then read Eph. 6:10-13 against that dark backdrop. Yes, we're in the middle of a cosmic warfare against supernatural evil forces whose powers are huge. We can't opt out of it like Calvin would like.

**b. Fighting a good fight, vv. 14-20**

**Greek NT**

14 στήτε οὖν περιζωσάμενοι τὴν ὀσφὺν ὑμῶν ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν θώρακα τῆς δικαιοσύνης 15 καὶ ὑποδησάμενοι τοὺς πόδας ἐν ἐτοιμασίᾳ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνης, 16 ἐν πᾶσιν ἀναλαμβάνοντες τὸν θυρεὸν τῆς πίστεως, ἐν ᾧ δυνήσεσθε πάντα τὰ βέλη τοῦ πονηροῦ [τὰ] πεπυρωμένα σβέσαι 17 καὶ τὴν περιεφραλαίαν τοῦ σωτηρίου δέξασθε καὶ τὴν μάχαιραν τοῦ πνεύματος, ὃ ἐστὶν ῥῆμα θεοῦ. 18 Διὰ πάσης προσευχῆς καὶ δεήσεως προσευχόμενοι ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ ἐν πνεύματι, καὶ εἰς αὐτὸ ἀγρυπνοῦντες ἐν πάσῃ προσκαρτερήσει καὶ δεήσει περὶ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων 19 καὶ ὑπὲρ ἑμοῦ, ἵνα μοι δοθῇ λόγος ἐν ἀνοίξει τοῦ στόματός μου, ἐν παρρησίᾳ γνω-

**NASB**

14 Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, 15 and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, 19 and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an

**NRSV**

14 Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. 15 As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. 16 With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. 19 Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in

**NASB**

14 Stand your ground, putting on the sturdy belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. 15 For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News, so that you will be fully prepared. 16 In every battle you will need faith as your shield to stop the fiery arrows aimed at you by Satan. 17 Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 Pray at all times and on every occasion in the power of the Holy Spirit. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all Christians everywhere. 19 And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words as I boldly explain God's secret plan that the Good News is for the Gentiles, too. 20 I am in chains now for preaching this message as God's ambas-

ρίσαι τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, 20 ὑπὲρ οὗ πρεσβεύω ἐν ἀλύσει, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῷ παρρησιάσωμαι ὡς δεῖ με λαλήσαι.

ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

sador. But pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should.

#### Notes:

Implicit (οὐκ) in his previous admonitions was the need for various military gear for this spiritual combat. Paul now turns to this gear based upon his admonition to take a stand in battle.

The significance of the admonition to stand firm is explained by Andrew Lincoln (WBC, Logos Systems):

The exhortation about the need to “stand” is reiterated (cf. vv 11, 13c and also “to withstand” in v 13b), but this time it takes the form of an imperative. The verb has the same force throughout (cf. also Gniska, 310; pace Meyer, 333), suggesting the stance of the soldier in combat, standing firm, resisting, and prevailing against the enemy. It is clearly a vital notion for the writer, and it is worth noting that it was also important in Paul’s writings. 1 Thess 3:8 speaks of standing fast in the Lord, while 2 Thess 2:15 exhorts “stand firm” and Gal 5:1 “stand fast therefore.” In 1 Corinthians Paul speaks of some who think they stand needing to take heed lest they fall (10:12) and of the gospel in which the Corinthians stand (15:1), and exhorts them to stand firm in their faith (16:13; cf. also 2 Cor 1:24). In Romans he talks of “this grace in which we stand” (5:2) and warns Gentile Christians that they “stand fast only through faith . . . stand in awe” (11:20). In Philipians the apostle wants to know that his readers stand firm in one spirit, not frightened by their opponents (1:27, 28), and exhorts them to stand firm in the Lord (4:1). In Col 4:12 Epaphras’ prayer for the Colossians is that they may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. Here in Ephesians, the thought also is of the readers taking up by faith and occupying steadfastly the position which is theirs through their experience of the gospel of God’s grace in Christ.

Thus we are called upon to get into the playing field and to engage the enemy. Christianity means standing for something strong and deeply held. Spineless, gutless Christianity is an oxymoron biblically speaking. But such is not to legitimize arrogance. Something we see lots of from TV preachers these days. Standing firm for unbiblical or twisted biblical concepts is no virtue either. We do indeed come off looking like dumb red-necks in such instances. Paul neither advocates nor condones either of these pseudo-Christian stances.



We engage our spiritual enemy fully equipped with God’s armor. We need nothing else.

Paul’s use of various pieces of military gear needs some explanation. Rudolph Schnackenburg (*Ephesians: A Commentary*, Logos Systems) offers this perspective:

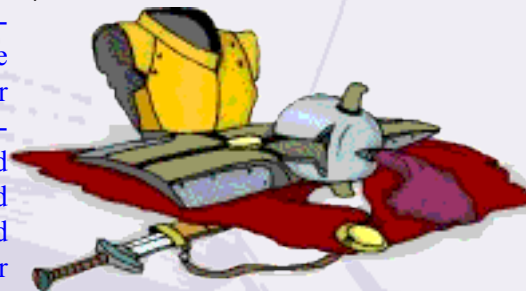
But why does he offer this portrayal of God’s armour? The following is important for our understanding: (1) The author takes pains to describe *all-round* equipment which protects the fighter on all sides and makes him able for battle. He begins in the middle of the body (loins, breast), takes the feet into account, goes on to the shield which protects the whole body, turns to the head (the helmet of salvation) and finally mentions the sword as a sharp offensive weapon. Does he intend to name the most important weapons? The belt and shoes are not weapons in the real sense but simply belong to the warrior’s clothing. If the weapons do correspond to the picture of a Roman legionary, other interests are revealed in features which interrupt the picture (readiness for the Gospel of peace, the ‘fiery’ arrows). (2) The author is less concerned with the weapons or articles of clothing themselves ‘than with the function which is indicated for each of them: the belt (‘the truth’) surrounds and stiffens the body; the breastplate protects the warrior; the shoes indicate the readiness to spread peace etc. It is a symbolic representation of the battle of the Christians against the evil in the world. (3) The whole description is marked by allusions to scriptural passages or reminiscences of biblical expressions. This is not only an enrichment from the language of the Bible with which the author is familiar but above all a description of how the Christian is equipped by *God*. The power of God, which

is superior to all the forces of evil, must be shown to advantage under symbols which are testified to by the OT. The old picture of the ‘Warrior of Yahweh’ lies at the most far in the background<sup>327</sup> since to speak up for the Gospel of Christ is a prerequisite of God’s soldier (cf. vv. 15 and 19). What the metaphor means is: The Christian does not have just any indeterminate weapons at his disposal but the weapons *of God* revealed in the Scriptures. It is the same line of thought as in Paul’s saying: The weapons of our campaign are not human (σαρκικά) but are powerful through God ...’ 2 Cor. 10:4).

We are to take a stand with the following four pieces of military gear in place:

**1) Belt of truth:** *περιζωσάμενοι τὴν ὄσφυν ὑμῶν* ἐν ἀληθείᾳ. Note Andrew Lincoln’s description here (WBC, Logos System):

The first action necessary is fastening “the belt of truth around your waist.” To fasten clothing securely around the waist made rapid movement easier and was vital preparation for any vigorous activity. In Luke 12:35, 37; 17:8, for example, girding one’s loins is a sign of readiness for service. As we have seen under *Form/Structure/Setting*, the primary influence on the writer’s choice of terminology at this point is LXX Isa 11:5, where the Messiah-King is said to have righteousness girding his loins and truth clothing his sides. If the Roman soldier is also specifically in view, then, since it is the first item of equipment mentioned, the girdle will not be the metal-studded belt worn over the armor or the sword-belt, but rather the leather apron worn under the armor like breeches (cf. Oepke, *TDNT* 5 [1967] 303, 307). Other metaphorical uses of the terminology in the OT include Yahweh being girded with might (Ps 65:6) and Yahweh girding the psalmist with strength for the battle (Ps 18:32, 29), and in the NT the awkward mixed metaphor of 1 Pet 1:13 about girding up the loins of one’s mind. E. Levine (“The Wrestling-Belt Legacy in the New Testament,” *NTS* 28 [1982] 560–64) claims that all such references



still carry allusions to the belt-wrestling practices of the ancient Near East and that the wrestling belt became symbolic of soldiers ready for battle. Here in Ephesians, the belt which provides support and braces the soldier ready for action is truth. Since in LXX Isa 11:5 truth referred to faithfulness and loyalty and what was said there of the Messiah is now applied to believers, it is likely that that is also the force of “truth” in this verse. The qualities to which the various pieces of armor point are used rather generally and loosely and cannot always be pinned down precisely.

**2) Breastplate:** *ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν θώρακα τῆς δικαιοσύνης*. Again Lincoln’s comments are helpful (WBC, Logos Systems):

“The breastplate of righteousness” was part of Yahweh’s armor in the depictions found in Isa 59:17 and Wis 5:18 (cf. also Isa 11:5, where righteousness is the Messiah’s girdle). The righteousness or justice of Yahweh is an attribute that it is now essential for the believer to display. This is not the justifying righteousness of Rom 3:21–26 (pace Barth, 796; Oepke, *TDNT* 5 [1967] 310) but an ethical quality (cf. the earlier use of the term in 4:24; 5:9 and δίκαιος in 6:1; cf. also Meyer, 334; Westcott, 96; Abbott, 185; Schnackenburg, 284). In terms of the armor of the Roman soldier, the θώραξ was the frontal metal piece vital for the protection of chest, lungs, and heart. Doing right and practicing justice is equally vital for the Christian soldier in his or her battle against the powers of evil. In 1 Thess 5:8 Paul had made the virtues of faith and love the Christian’s breastplate, but he also depicted righteousness as necessary for the battle when he spoke of “the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left” in 2 Cor 6:7.

**3) Sandals:** *ὑποδησάμενοι τοὺς πόδας* ἐν ἔτοιμασίᾳ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνης. Again, from Lincoln (WBC, Logos Systems):

Proper footwear is required if the soldier is to be ready for combat. ὑποδήματα, “sandals,” could be used of military sandals (cf. Xenophon, *Anab.* 4.5.14; Josephus, *J.W.* 6.1.8), and the Roman soldier frequently wore the *caliga*, a half-boot, which was part of the equipment for long marches and which could be studded with sharp nails to enable a firm grip. But it is significant that the writer does not refer directly to the footwear and instead talks of the feet being fitted or shod, showing again that he is primarily influenced by the language of an OT passage which mentions feet in connection with

<sup>327</sup> Cf. Is. 42:13; 59:17; Hab. 3:8f.; Ps. 35:1 ff.; Wis. Sol. 5, 17–22 et al. The features which describe God’s wrath and retaliation (cf. Is. 59, 17f.) which could not be taken over for the portrayal of the Christian soldier are significant. But for the OT, too, it holds true that the portrayal of Jahweh the Warrior is ‘already spiritual’ (A. Oepke, *TDNT* V, 297); cf. also Fischer, *Tendenz* 166.

proclaiming the gospel of peace. The text in question is LXX Isa 52:7, “as the feet of one preaching glad tidings of peace” (cf. also Nah 1:15). Paul had used this verse in connection with the preacher of the gospel in Rom 10:15, but this writer links the equipping of the feet not with the proclamation of the gospel of peace but with the ἐτοιμασία, “readiness,” of the gospel of peace. The force of this term is disputed. Some (e.g., A. F. Buscarlet, “The ‘Preparation’ of the Gospel of Peace,” *ExpTim* 9 [1897] 38–40, followed by E. H. Blakeney, *ExpTim* 55 [1944] 138; J. A. F. Gregg, *ExpTim* 56 [1944] 54; Barth, 797–99) link it with one of the connotations it has in the LXX of a prepared or solid foundation (cf. LXX Ps 88:14; Ezra 2:68) and transfer it to mean “firm footing” or “steadfastness.” In this way, a connection can be made with the overall exhortation to stand. But the term nowhere actually means “firm footing,” and its more usual sense is readiness, preparedness, or preparation (cf., e.g., LXX Ps 9:17; Wis 13:12; *Ep. Arist.* 182; Josephus, *Ant.* 10.1.2 § 9 *v.l.*). The reference is, therefore, not to readiness to proclaim the gospel (pace Schlier, 296; Oepke, *TDNT* 5 [1967] 312; Gnllka, 311–12; Ernst, 400) but to the readiness or preparedness for combat and for standing in the battle that is bestowed by the gospel of peace (cf. also Meyer, 334–35; Abbott, 185; Hendriksen, 277). The writer’s emphasis is paradoxical. It is the appropriation of the gospel of peace that makes one ready for war. As we have seen from 2:14–18, the gospel of peace is embodied in Christ who “is our peace,” and this is a peace with both vertical and horizontal axes: peace with God the Father and peace between human beings, Jews and Gentiles, who were formerly at enmity. Since such peace is the pledge of future cosmic harmony (cf. 1:10; 3:10), its realization in the Church not only sounds the death knell for opposing cosmic powers but also, in the meantime, leads to the intensification of their opposition. A continuing preservation and appropriation of the gospel of peace is, therefore, necessary if the powers are to be resisted and if believers are to be ready to make their stand in the world, the stand that is in line with their calling. Believers’ preparation for standing firm and prevailing against the alienating and fragmenting powers of evil is the harmony produced by the gospel.

**4) Shield:** ἐν πᾶσιν ἀναλαβόντες τὸν θυρεὸν τῆς πίστεως, ἐν ᾧ δυνήσεσθε πάντα τὰ βέλη τοῦ πονηροῦ [τὰ] πεπτρωμένα σβέσαι. Lincoln (WBC,

<sup>4</sup>*Ant.* Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*

Logos Systems) comments:

The last of the pieces of spiritual armor, which are virtues or attitudes to be practiced by the believer, is “the shield of faith.” In the OT, the shield was used as an image for God’s protection of his people (cf., e.g., Gen 15:1; Pss 5:2; 18:2, 30, 35; 28:7; 33:20; 35:2; 59:11; 91:4; 115:9–11; 144:1). Here the term employed is θυρεός or *scutum*, the large shield, four feet in length and two and a half feet in width, which is described by Polybius 6.23.2 as the first part of the Roman πανοπλία and which protected the whole body. This Roman shield was generally made of wood with a thick coating of leather (cf. also Homer, *Il.* 5.452; Herodotus 7.91; Pliny 8.39). It is to be distinguished from the ἀσπίς or *clipeus*, a small round buckler, which is the term found in the depiction of Yahweh’s armor in LXX Wis 5:19. Faith is mentioned throughout the letter (cf. 1:13, 15; 2:8; 3:12, 17; 4:5, 13; 6:23), and in this context it is the confident trust in and receptiveness to Christ and his power that protects the whole person (pace Oepke, *TDNT* 5 [1967] 314, who claims it is “an objective, divinely given reality”). Faith takes hold of God’s resources in the midst of the onslaughts of evil and produces the firm resolve which douses anything the enemy throws at the believer (cf. also 1 Thess 5:8, where faith is part of the breastplate, and 1 Pet 5:8, 9, where firm faith is necessary for resisting the devil).



In verse 17 the readers are encouraged to receive two more items. The **helmet** and the **sword** are these two items. Lincoln (WBC, Logos Systems) offers this explanation for the shift in presentation structure for these two items:

Believers are to “receive,” i.e., from God (v 13) who offers them, “the helmet” and “the sword.” Wild (CBQ 46 [1984] 297) is right to claim that “the shift from the string of participles in 6:14–16 to *dexasthe* in 6:17a is meant to signal a shift from a listing of virtues in a somewhat conventional sense as qualities which involve a certain degree of human effort to objects which are gifts in the purest sense, ‘salvation’ and ‘the word of God.’” The order of this verse, with the helmet being received before the sword, makes good sense, because the soldier who is being depicted already grasps the shield with his left hand. If he had taken the sword first, there would be no hand free to receive and put on the helmet (cf. also Meyer, 338).

The helmet, which for the Roman soldier was made of bronze and had cheek pieces, provided protection for another vital part, the head. The language of “the helmet of salvation” alludes again to LXX Isa 59:17 (cf. “the breastplate of righteousness” in v 14). It is this allusion that explains the use of σωτήριον rather than σωτηρία. The former term, which was employed frequently in the LXX for salvation, occurs nowhere else in the Pauline corpus (but cf. Luke 2:30; 3:6; Acts 28:28). In the OT God is himself salvation and deliverance for those oppressed (cf. also, e.g., Pss 18:2, 46–48; 35:3; 37:39, 40; 65:5; 70:4, 5; Isa 33:2, 6; 45:17; 46:13; 51:5, 6; Jer 31:33), and here in Ephesians believers are to receive the divine salvation. Paul in 1 Thess 5:8 had talked of the helmet as the hope of salvation, but in line with his more realized eschatology this writer again thinks of salvation as a present reality (cf. esp. 2:5, 8; pace Schlier, 297, who reads the idea of hope into 6:17, and Barth, 776, who claims that a decision between present and future salvation cannot be made). For him, what ultimately protects believers is that God has already rescued them from bondage to the prince of the realm of the air and seated

them with Christ in the heavenly realms (cf. 2:1–10). By appropriating this salvation as their helmet, believers have every reason to be confident of the outcome of the battle.

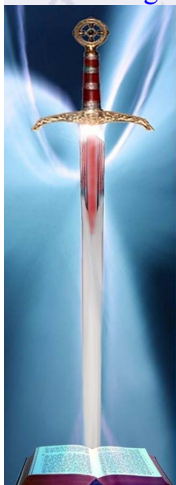
With the final piece of equipment, the writer’s emphasis shifts from the defensive to the offensive. The sharp short sword (μάχαιρα as opposed to ῥομφαία, the long sword) was the crucial offensive weapon in close combat. There is a corresponding stylistic shift. Whereas with the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, or the helmet of salvation, the former element represents the latter, this is not the case with

“the sword of the Spirit.” The sword stands not for the Spirit but for “the word of God.” In fact, the relative pronoun ὃ in the following clause, “which is the word of God,” refers back to the whole phrase “the sword of the Spirit.” The Spirit is not so much the one who supplies the sword (pace Meyer, 339)—both the helmet and the sword are to be received from God—but the one who gives it its effectiveness, its cutting edge (cf. also Schnackenburg, 286). Since the writer has already drawn on Isa 11:5 for v 14, he may well have been influenced in this verse by the imagery and language of LXX Isa 11:4, where the Spirit of God rests on the Messiah who “shall smite the earth with the word [λόγος] of his mouth, and with the breath [πνεῦμα]

through his lips shall he destroy the ungodly.” If this is so, an assertion about the Messiah would again be transferred to the Christian. Isa 11:4 is also taken up in 2 Thess 2:8, where the Lord Jesus will slay the lawless one with the breath of his mouth. In Revelation Christ wages war with the sword of his mouth, and his word reveals people’s deeds for what they are (cf. 1:16; 2:12, 16; 19:13, 15). In Ephesians, however, when the Christian soldier wields the sword of the word, it is not first of all the word of judgment but the good news of salvation. ῥῆμα here, not λόγος, refers to the gospel (cf. also 5:26; Rom 10:18; 1 Pet 1:25). This is “the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation” (1:13), “the gospel of peace” (6:15). This form of the word of God is also a sharp sword (cf. Heb 4:12), and the Spirit gives it its power and penetration (cf. 1 Thess 1:5). As believers take hold of and proclaim the gospel, they are enabled to overcome in the battle. And as regards the powers, that gospel does sound a note of judgment, for it announces their defeat. The paradox again is that it is the gospel of peace and reconciliation that is the sword that enables the *militia Christi* to advance. As the Church continues to be the reconciled and reconciling community, the gospel conquers the alienating hostile powers and brings about God’s saving purposes.

Prayer (vv. 18–20) becomes an essential part of this sword in the syntax of the Greek text. As a part of the offense, not only the preaching of the gospel but praying for God’s people, and for Paul in particular, are seen as two effective ways of advancing the cause of Christ. Both becomes “swords” to be used in pushing back the enemy.

What we need for effective discipleship God has provided! Our message is the gospel that is the only source of lasting peace with God and with others. God’s resources equip us to engage a cosmic enemy with confident expectation of crushing his efforts to destroy us and the gospel. Paul has given the troops a powerful “pep talk” before the battle. Let’s apply it to our service to God!



## Armour of God

**Greek NT**

10 Τοῦ λοιποῦ, ἐνδυναμοῦσθε ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ κράτει τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ. 11 ἐνδύσασθε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς τὸ δύνασθαι ὑμᾶς στήναι πρὸς τὰς μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου· 12 ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἡ πάλη πρὸς αἷμα καὶ σάρκα ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰς ἀρχάς, πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας, πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου, πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις. 13 διὰ τοῦτο ἀναλάβετε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα δυνηθῆτε ἀντιστῆναι ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ πονηρᾷ καὶ ἅπαντα κατεργασάμενοι στήναι. 14 στήτε οὖν περιζωσάμενοι τὴν ὄσφυν ὑμῶν ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν θώρακα τῆς δικαιοσύνης 15 καὶ ὑποδησάμενοι τοὺς πόδας ἐν ἐτοιμασίᾳ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνης, 16 ἐν πᾶσιν ἀναλαβόντες τὸν θυρεὸν τῆς πίστεως, ἐν ᾧ δυνήσεσθε πάντα τὰ βέλη τοῦ πονηροῦ [τὰ] πεπυρωμένα σβέσαι· 17 καὶ τὴν περικεφαλαίαν τοῦ σωτηρίου δέξασθε καὶ τὴν μάχιραν τοῦ πνεύματος, ὃ ἔστιν ῥῆμα θεοῦ. 18 διὰ πάσης προσευχῆς καὶ δεήσεως προσευχόμενοι ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ ἐν πνεύματι, καὶ εἰς αὐτὸ ἀγρυπνοῦντες ἐν πάσῃ

**NASB**

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRD-ED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, 15 and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, 19 and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make

**NRSV**

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. 15 As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. 16 With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. 19 Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with

**NLT**

10 A final word: Be strong with the Lord's mighty power. 11 Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil. 12 For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms. 13 Use every piece of God's armor to resist the enemy in the time of evil, so that after the battle you will still be standing firm. 14 Stand your ground, putting on the sturdy belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. 15 For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News, so that you will be fully prepared. 16 In every battle you will need faith as your shield to stop the fiery arrows aimed at you by Satan. 17 Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 Pray at all times and on every occasion in the power of the Holy Spirit. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all Christians everywhere. 19 And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words as I boldly explain God's secret

προσκαρτερήσει καὶ δε-  
ήσει περὶ πάντων τῶν  
ἀγίων 19 καὶ ὑπὲρ ἑμοῦ,  
ἵνα μοι δοθῇ λόγος ἐν  
ἀνοίξει τοῦ στόματός  
μου, ἐν παρρησίᾳ γνω-  
ρίσαι τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ  
εὐαγγελίου, 20 ὑπὲρ οὗ  
πρεσβεύω ἐν ἀλύσει, ἵνα  
ἐν αὐτῷ παρρησιάσωμαι  
ὡς δεῖ με λαλήσαι.

known with boldness  
the mystery of the gos-  
pel, 20 for which I am an  
ambassador in chains;  
that in proclaiming it I  
may speak boldly, as I  
ought to speak.

boldness the mystery of  
the gospel, 20 for which  
I am an ambassador in  
chains. Pray that I may  
declare it boldly, as I  
must speak.

plan that the Good News  
is for the Gentiles, too.  
20 I am in chains now  
for preaching this mes-  
sage as God's ambas-  
sador. But pray that I will  
keep on speaking boldly  
for him, as I should.

## Greek NT Diagram

- 10  
1 **ένδυναμοῦσθε** Τοῦ λοιποῦ  
έν κυρίῳ  
καί  
έν κράτει τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ.
- 11  
2 **ένδύσασθε τήν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ**  
πρός τὸ δύνασθαι ὑμᾶς στήναι  
πρός τὰς μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου·
- 12  
ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἡ παλὴ  
πρός αἷμα καὶ σάρκα,  
ἀλλὰ  
(ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἡ παλὴ)  
πρός τὰς ἀρχάς,  
πρός τὰς ἐξουσίας,  
πρός τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου,  
πρός τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας  
έν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις.
- 13  
3 **ἀναλάβετε τήν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ,**  
διὰ τοῦτο  
ἵνα δυηθηθῆτε ἀντιστήναι  
έν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ πονηρᾷ  
καί  
ἀπαντα κατεργασάμενοι
- 14  
4 **(δυνήσεσθε) στήναι.**  
οὖν
- 15  
5 **στήτε**  
περιζωσάμενοι τὴν ὀσφὺν ὑμῶν  
έν ἀληθείᾳ,  
καί  
ἐγδυσάμενοι τὸν θώρακα τῆς δικαιοσύνης,  
καί  
ὑποδησάμενοι τοὺς πόδας  
έν ἐτοιμασίᾳ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνης,  
έν πᾶσιν
- 16  
ἀναλαβόντες τὸν θυρεὸν τῆς πίστεως,  
έν ᾧ δυνήσεσθε πάντα τὰ βέλη τοῦ πονηροῦ τὰ πεπυρωμένα σβέσαι·
- 17  
6 **καὶ τὴν περικεφαλαίαν τοῦ σωτηρίου δέξασθε,**  
καὶ



7

τὴν μάχαιραν τοῦ πνεύματι (δέξασθε),

18

ὃ ἔστιν ῥῆμα θεοῦ,

διὰ πάσης προσευχῆς καὶ δεήσεως

προσευχόμενοι

ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ

ἐν πνεύματι,

καὶ

εἰς αὐτὸ

ἀγρυπνοῦντες

ἐν πάσῃ προσκατερήσει

καὶ

δεήσει

περὶ πάντων τῶν ἀγίων,

19

καὶ

ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ,

ἵνα μοι δοθῇ λόγος

ἐν ἀνοίξει τοῦ στόματός μου,

ἐν παρρησίᾳ

γνωρίσαι τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ εὐαγγελίου

20

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ὑπὲρ οὗ πρεσβεύω

ἐν ἀλύσει,

ἵνα ἐν αὐτῷ παρρησιάσωμαι

ὡς δεῖ με λαλήσαι.

## Semantic Diagram

			Τοῦ λοιποῦ					
	<b>1</b> -----	1	Pres	Dep	Imp+	2	P	(ὕμεῖς)
	<b>A</b> --							
		<b>2</b> -----	2	1 Aor	Dep	Imp+	2	P (ὕμεῖς)
<b>I</b> --			διὰ τοῦτο					
		<b>1</b> -----	3	2 Aor	Act	Imp+	2	P (ὕμεῖς)
	<b>B</b> --		καὶ					
		<b>2</b> -----	4	(Fut	dep	Ind	2	P ὕμεῖς)
			οὖν					
	<b>A</b> -----	5	1 Aor	Act	Imp+	2	P (ὕμεῖς)	
<b>II</b> --			καὶ					
	<b>1</b> -----	6	1 Aor	Dep	Imp+	2	P (ὕμεῖς)	
	<b>B</b> --		καὶ					
	<b>2</b> -----	7	(1 Aor	Dep	Imp+	2	P ὕμεῖς)	

## Summary of Rhetorical Structure

The thought structure of these verses is relatively clear. First, in verses 10-13 (statements 1-4), Paul admonishes his readers to be constantly strengthened with the spiritual resources provided by God. The reason is the nature of the spiritual warfare the believer is caught up in. In light of this he issues a command / promise: Be prepared for battle and God will enable you to be successful.

The second part, vv. 14-20 (#s 5-7), stresses standing firm in the midst of battle. Thus the core structure revolves around getting ready for battle and then fighting a good fight in battle. The literary genre of *peroratio*, and more specifically, a battle cry speech, largely determines the core emphasis. Paul followed this ancient rhetorical model for persuasive speech often used by Roman military generals to get their troops ready for battle. His prison experience of being chained to a Roman soldier during the composition of this letter brought this home to him as he approached the conclusion of the letter body of the document.

Some battle gear the soldier has to put on (statement 5), but some the soldier has to be given (statements 6 & 7). Those to put on include the belt, the breastplate, the sandals, and the shield. Those to be received are the helmet and the sword. These last two items are highlighted more than the previous ones.

Attached to the sword is prayer and its vital role in this warfare (vv. 18-20). Perhaps Paul ran out of military gear in his analogy and just tacked on prayer because he felt it so important. Or possibly he intentionally saw prayer very closely linked to the orally preached gospel so that he deliberately linked the two together under the symbol of the sword.