

Ephesians 6 (Part 2): 10-20 • Fighting Spiritual Battles

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And we're in Ephesians chapter 6. Follow along with me as I read. We're going to read down through verse 20.

“¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.” (ESV)

Stop there, Let's pray.

Holy Spirit, we open our hearts to you. We incline our ear to your voice and we invite you to minister this Word to us. Applying it to our hearts and equipping us.

Father, we believe that these are important words and so we want to pay attention to you. We ask you to be with us, and to direct our hearts, and to instruct us. In Jesus name we pray, amen.

This is about battles. I know that you may not like battles. I don't particularly like them either, but this passage is about fighting battles.

When I think about battles, what I naturally think of is, I go back to the Old Testament. And I think of the picture that God gave us in the Old Testament to our spiritual battles that we have today as believers in Jesus.

I think about the nation of Israel entering into the land that God had promised them for so many years. And it finally came to the point where they were entering into the land under the guidance of Joshua, and when they got into the land, they entered to find that there were multiple enemies dwelling there.

Of course, they knew that ahead of time, but now they came face to face with those enemies. And those enemies meant that there would be many battles that needed to be fought there in that land. In other words, they learned that in order to take hold of the promised blessings that God had made to them as a nation, it would involve engaging the enemy. It is no less true of us today. In order to take hold of the promised blessings, we are engaging an enemy.

Now, because the nation of Israel, as you'll remember, had a physical covenant with the Lord, they were given physical promises. Their physical promises were the land and all the things that came with it; the blessings around the land.

In the same way they had physical enemies. And that those were the enemies, those were the ones they had to deal with in order to take hold and possess what God had promised them.

Well, because we as Christians are in a spiritual covenant with God, through Jesus Christ, our promises, our blessings, are spiritual in nature. Therefore, we face a spiritual battle in possessing all that God has given us.

And we also have a spiritual enemy, which is a big, fat bummer, frankly. And we know that he's out to destroy our lives. Here's how Peter puts it. Let me put this on the screen for you, from 1 Peter 5, verse 8. It says,

1 Peter 5:8 (NIV)

Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

And we go, oh joy. It's wonderful news. And frankly, this is where we experience a major problem when it comes to the kind of spiritual warfare and spiritual battle that we are to fight in taking hold of the promises of God.

We are completely unprepared for a spiritual adversary. A physical adversary, I know how to deal, I mean, I'd be good at dealing with physical adversaries. But at least I know that I can punch him in the teeth or something like that, or hit him with a baseball bat or something, not to sound too violent. You know what I'm saying.

But a spiritual enemy, how do you fight a spiritual enemy? You can't duke it out, and I found out early in my Christian walk, you can't run from them either. Cause I tried it. I mean, physically, I tried running, running out the door. I'm telling you, I was literally in a spiritual battle and I thought...

I was in my twenties, I thought, I'm pretty fast and I literally bolted out the door of my house and ran down the block. And I got to the end of the block and I went, this isn't going to work. I don't know what I was thinking, but it was, but this is the problem in a nutshell. We are accustomed to dealing with physicalities as it relates to the enemies that we engage.

We're not accustomed to dealing with spiritual issues, and spiritual enemies, and the warfare that goes with it. We're just not prepared and that is why the apostle Paul wrote this section in the Book of Ephesians to help you and I to be equipped and to know how to fight those spiritual battles.

It's frankly something we have to learn. You don't just know it because you've become a Christian. You have to learn how to fight spiritually and fighting spiritually is very challenging for us.

Let me start by giving a little bit of a visual outline for those of you who are visual like me. An outline of what we're looking at in these verses.

Major Points of Paul's Remarks

- Be strong in the Lord
- Put on the (full) armor
- Take your stand
- Stay alert
- Keep praying

If you look here, you can see the points, I call these his major points. He says, essentially, **be strong in the Lord**. He talks about, **putting on the (full) armor of God**. He's talks about, **taking your stand**, and that's very important. He talks about, **staying alert**. And then finally, his exhortation is to, **keep praying**. And these are all elements of this whole idea of fighting our spiritual battles.

We're going to go through these, and we'll start by highlighting the first one on the list, which is, Be strong in the Lord.

Major Points of Paul's Remarks

- **Be strong in the Lord**
- Put on the (full) armor
- Take your stand
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Look with me in verse 10, once again, with me in your Bible. It says, *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.”*

And I got to tell you, starting off an exhortation on spiritual warfare, I'm so glad the apostle Paul started it with these words. He didn't just say to you and I, no, be strong. He could have said that.

I've had people say that to me in the past. In fact, seems like all my life people have been telling me to be strong. But they expected the strength to come from me. Be strong, Paul, and I wanted to say to them, I'm not, I'm not strong.

Notice what Paul says. He says, *“...be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.”*

Here's the point. Here's the point. The apostle Paul knows that you and I do not have the strength to fight spiritual battles. He knows right off the get go. And he lays that as the groundwork of what he's going to say for the rest of this period.

He says, *“...be strong in the Lord.”* You got battles that you're fighting, *“...be strong in the Lord.”* Don't be strong in yourself, you get the snot beat out of you. *“...be strong in the Lord,”* and in His power, and in His...

And so he begins to describe what we face beginning in verse 12. Look with me there in verse 12. He says, *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, ...”* That means you're not fighting people, *“...but against the rulers, against the*

authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, ...” And if you didn't understand all of that, check out this last phrase, “...against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” All right.

Obviously Paul is somewhat verbose in describing all of the enemies we face but if you remove all of the titles and you look at that verse without all of those extra titles Let me show you what it looks like. You just condense it down. He says,

Ephesians 6:12

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but...against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but...against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

That's the essence and that's what we battle against. And by the way, if you've been getting beat up lately, it could be that you've been fighting the wrong enemy, or engaging the wrong...

And you're not understanding that our battle is not “*against flesh and blood,*” but it's against those “*spiritual forces of evil in... heavenly places.*” All right. And because we are battling those spiritual forces, the expectation is that when we fight them, our power is going to come directly through the Lord, because that's the only way we're going to be able to engage the enemy.

I cannot swing and hit the devil, physically. I cannot speak to the devil and shame him or convince him to back off. I cannot cry enough tears, yell enough words. I cannot do anything on a physical level that is going to intimidate or stop the enemy in any way, it must be spiritual. The battle must be engaged on a spiritual plane.

Let's highlight now, the second point that Paul makes on this list of emphases. And he says, put on the full armor, and this is given for us in verse 11 and following.

Major Points of Paul's Remarks

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Look at verse 11, “*Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand* (and that's the point) *against the schemes of the devil.*” And this is a key verse.

I want you to notice just here in verse 11, look at all the things that it tells us:

- It tells us who the enemy is —the devil.
- It tells us what we're battling against —his schemes against us.
- It tells us what the goal of the battle is —that you may stand.
- And then finally, it tells us how we're to do that, —by putting on the full armor of God.

So we're given all that information and he reiterates our need and the goal. Then again in verse 13, look with me there again in your Bible. “*Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, (that's an interesting phrase, isn't it) and having done all, to stand firm.*”

Instead of the evil day, your Bible may say, “*the day of evil.*” And this is just simply the day when the enemy attacks. It's the evil day. I mean, frankly, you could use that phrase to describe this whole age where, because we know that during this age, the devil is the prince of this world. We know that he is in a position of authority in this world, temporarily. Prince of the power of the air. There's different titles that are given to him so this whole age is an evil age.

But there is also a day of evil that comes into our lives and it's never something that we look forward to or desire. It's awful, but Paul says, I want you to be prepared for it. And the clear teaching here, in these verses, is that if Christians will be careful to understand and use that which God has given, which is the armor, we can stand. We can put up a resistance, a successful resistance against the work of the enemy.

Beginning in verse 14, he begins to outline for us the armor. Are you ready? He says, “*Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, ...*” Okay, we think to ourselves, I'm imagining here probably a new believer reading through these verses. And so he's thinking to himself, okay, I need to be ready against my spiritual enemy and stuff like that.

Alright, “*Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, ...*” And we're thinking, alright, “*belt of truth.*” Yes, “*belt of truth.*” What's that? Is it anything like wonder woman's lasso of truth? I don't know. And then suddenly the light comes on. Wait a minute, spiritual enemy? Spiritual battle? Ah, spiritual weapons. You see, that's the point. God is giving you and I, remember that, spiritual weapons to fight spiritual warfare. All right.

But you know what's interesting about the physical counterpart to these weapons is it does give us some interesting insights into what the role that these things play. Belt of truth, when Paul was probably thinking about a soldier, he would probably think about a Roman soldier most likely. The Jews saw them all over the place.

They were constantly in their visual sort of scope and so he's probably thinking of that. And the Roman soldier would wear a belt and this belt did far more than keep his britches up. The belt was used to hang other elements of the armor, other weapons, other things on him so that he had ready access to them. Now, that's interesting when you think about the belt of truth, the belt of truth.

First of all, what does the Bible say about truth that we can help apply to understanding what the spiritual aspect of this belt of truth is? Well, let me show you a verse first from Psalm chapter 18. On the screen it says,

Psalm 18:30 (ESV)

This God—his way is perfect; the word of the Lord proves true;

This God—his way is perfect; the word of the Lord proves true;

There is a power in the Word of God. How many times throughout the Scriptures does it tell us that the Word of God is true? So when we think about truth, we think about it's something we gird on. We gird the truth of God on us.

And on that truth, the truth of God's Word, hangs all the other instruments or weapons of warfare. If we don't believe the truth of God's Word, there's nothing to hang on. There's nothing to hang these things on. Right? We've got to start with the truth. It's got to start there. You can't end with the truth. Because if you don't believe going into it, you've got nothing to hang your hat on.

There's also another very important element about God's truth and it's from John chapter 8. I love this verse. Jesus said,

John 8:32 (ESV)

“...you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

“...you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Wow!, there's power in the truth, so Paul says, start by putting on the belt of truth. What does that mean for you and I, as it relates to spiritual warfare? We

see that the first thing we've got to do going into battling the enemy is we have to hold on to the truth of God's Word. And if we're smart, we're going to pattern our lives after it to the best of our ability. But I mean, we've got to hang on.

We've got to allow the Word of God to influence us. We have to be convinced in our heart and mind, this is true. No wavering. No doubt. This is true. This stuff is true. And if I don't gird myself with that understanding at the get go, I better avoid the battle, if at all possible. Problem is, you can't. As a believer, you can't. The battles will come. You better deal with the first issue and that is, the truth of God's Word.

Next, Paul says in verse 14, “...and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,” The breastplate. Now this, of course, pictures that metal armor, the shape of a human upper torso, which was common to the Roman uniform and it was a very important... You want to protect your vital organs when you're going into battle.

So again, for us this isn't a physical piece of armor. So we need to understand the spiritual significance. Notice what it is called, “*the breastplate of righteousness.*” That helps us to understand we have to lay hold of the fact that our righteousness is not our own.

Going into the battle, my righteousness is that which is given to me through Jesus Christ. And I better have an understanding of that going into a spiritual battle because you know what? The enemy knows how to play mind games. And he will replay the little videotape in your head of all the creepy, crawly things you've ever done in your life. All the things you've ever said, all the things that disqualify you from God's love, and grace, and power. And they do disqualify you, apart from Jesus.

Jesus came and took our disqualification and nailed it to the cross and now we stand in His righteousness. And you better have a firm grasp on that if you're going into spiritual battles. Look what Paul said in 2 Corinthians related to righteousness. He said,

2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

For our sake he (God, the Father) made him (Jesus Christ) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Here's the point. You are right now the righteousness of God, through Jesus Christ, imputed to you by faith. Now, it's not something you earn, it's something you are, through Jesus. But Satan is going to do his level best to convince you otherwise.

And if you begin to somehow believe that your acceptance by God is dependent upon you being a good person, the enemy has a foothold in your life now to begin to climb up and do all kinds of nasties. And you and I have to hang on to the realization, I am righteous in Jesus, not because of my own works, not because of my own deeds, not because of my own goodness.

I am righteous in Him, through Him. I am the righteousness of God through Jesus Christ and there's nothing that you can do to convince me otherwise. Do you see how important that is to battle that protects the vital organs that protects the vital aspect of who you are in Christ.

Next, verse 15, “*and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.*” All right. Shoes, readiness, gospel, what in the world? I've heard a lot of interesting sort of interpretations of this. It's like, well we need to be ready to take the gospel into all the world. Wait a minute. Wait a minute. We're talking spiritual warfare. This is about..., the whole context is spiritual warfare so the shoes have to apply somehow to spiritual warfare.

Now here's what's interesting, the Jewish historian Josephus describes the footwear of Roman soldiers as, and I quote, “*thickly studded with sharp nails.*” Meaning, to ensure a good grip, not unlike the cleats that are worn by athletes today to get a good grip in the soil, so you're not slipping and sliding, and that sort of thing.

In fact, if you know your history, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, and all of the military victories that they won during their lifetime. It is largely believed that their successes were in part to the fact that these military leaders believed that their soldiers needed to have good footwear, believe it or not, in order to traverse difficult landscape and to get there in good shape sort of a thing.

These spiritual shoes that Paul is talking about that you and I need to don, refers to our stability and our sure footedness that comes through the gospel so we can take our stand. Remember the point of this whole thing is so you can take your stand and when the day of evil comes, you can stand, right? That's the point. Be sure you have the shoes fitted with the readiness of the gospel so you can stand, so you can stand and not be moved. That's what the enemy wants to do. He wants to move you, as in knock you down, take you out, sort of a thing.

Verse 16, he goes on, “*In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;*” In most cases, Roman soldiers carried a shield that was made out of wood. But the problem was sometimes the enemy would shoot arrows that were a flame. And so what they would do is they would overlay their shields with linen and leather, which would absorb the fire of the arrow and hopefully put it out.

In this case, Paul reveals for you and I, the goal of the shield of faith is to extinguish the fiery darts of the evil one. What are his fiery darts? You name it. His lies, his deceptions, all the things that the enemy throws at you. They're like fiery darts so there has to be a way to deflect and extinguish those things.

And it is our faith in God. It's the shield of faith. Oh, how important is faith? How key is faith? The Bible says, the righteous shall live by faith so your life depends on it? Yeah. You guys remember there's a passage from Isaiah.

Isaiah was given a message for King Ahaz because he was facing a very challenging situation with some kings surrounding him who wanted to take him out. Here's what the Lord said through Isaiah. Check this out.

Isaiah 7:9 (NIV)

“If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.”

“If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.”

That's fairly straightforward. I mean, that's not one of those kind of statements you kind of wrap in a flower. This is just kind of like laying it out there for you. If you don't stand firm in your faith, you're not going to stand at all, so you need to have faith.

How important is it that our faith be strong? It is critical to our success in spiritual warfare. Because the enemy is going to work on your faith. He desires to shatter it, not just dent it, shatter it, destroy it. And if he knows that if he can destroy your faith, there's no way you can defend yourself.

Do you remember the passage I put up earlier that talked about Peter, from Peter saying that, our enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour? 1 Peter 5:8. Here's what it says, the very next verse.

1 Peter 5:9 (ESV)

Resist him firm in your faith...

Resist him firm in your faith...

That's how the resistance takes place. That's how we're going to stand against the work of the enemy, through faith. Well, here's the deal. There's not one of us in this room, I am confident to say, who has not wavered in our faith at some point in our lives. Through difficulty, challenges, attacks of the enemy, doubts from below, whatever. Not one of us who has not struggled in the area of our faith.

And when we struggle, boy, that is when we need one another in the body of Christ. You know what is very, very common when people are wavering in their faith? You want to know what's common? They withdraw. They withdraw from the community of faith. And I think that's a work of the enemy to make them feel like you're really not..., you're really, you're just a hypocrite.

If you go to church today, you're just being a big fat hypocrite because you know that you're struggling in your faith right now. And all these people are going to go, hey, how's it going? And you're going to put on the face and go, it's going great man, praise the Lord. But inside there's different stuff going on. There's a heart that is struggling on the inside.

And so what people do is they just naturally withdraw from fellowship. The place they need to be the most. And you know what we need to learn to say to each other at times like that? When somebody goes, hey brother, how's it going? Not very well, my faith is really struggling right now, would you pray for me? Make them sorry they asked! Just tell them, I need prayer! I need prayer.

I love when people are honest and they just go, I just need prayer. Boy, the enemy's just really doing a number on me lately and my faith is at, I think, probably an all-time low. Would you pray for me? And I just need to be encouraged.

Oh, how we need one another at times like that. I need people encouraging me to trust in the Lord at times of difficulty and so forth. We all do. Why do we think we can go it alone? What's in our mind that makes us think I can do this thing right? We are the body of Christ for a reason. We are connected for a reason. And when my left hand hurts, my right hand comes right over and grabs it. It doesn't even think about it. It wants to, and we as the body of Christ want to reach out and touch those and encourage those who are struggling in their faith.

Verse 17, he says, “*and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,*” This is really interesting. Helmets have been worn in battle for a long time, and they're still worn today by soldiers, and it's obvious why. To protect the head. I mean, good grief. That's a pretty important thing, your noggin. Thinking spiritually or figuring this thing out spiritually as to what this helmet is all about, we're okay, so helmet of salvation, what are we talking about?

Well, actually, Paul, graciously, spoke of this in a different letter. And he gave a little further insight when he talked about the helmet. Let me show you this on the screen. For 1 Thessalonians, chapter 5, he wrote,

1 Thessalonians 5:8 (ESV)

But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, (already talked about that) and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

The helmet is the hope of salvation and without a doubt, one of the enemy's most powerful tools in his arsenal is to destroy your hope. Because if he can do that discouragement sets in and you are easy prey. I mean, it does way more than take the air out of your spiritual tires. It takes you out of the race. When we become hopeless, phew! But the helmet of salvation protects us against that hopelessness and discouragement by reminding us of important things that are connected to my salvation. You see, because of my salvation, I got to remember that because I'm saved, there are implications to that salvation.

I'm not just yeah..., how do I want to say this? So many times we get saved and we think hey, I'm saved man, I'm going to heaven and that's it. I got my fire insurance, man, yeah. When my day comes, I'm not going down. I'm going up praise the Lord, but there's so much more to your salvation. The helmet of salvation tells you so many more things. Let me show you what Paul wrote in Romans chapter 8. Love this passage.

Romans 8:30-31 (ESV)

...those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

...those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

That is the implication of your salvation. If God is for you, who can be against you? So wear it like a helmet and understand that it is more than just your fire insurance. It is all that goes along with it. Called, justified, glorified, and with the Lord in such a way that nothing can be against you.

Let's look at the third point on our highlight of Paul's remarks.

Major Points of Paul's Remarks

- Be strong in the Lord
- Put on the (full) armor
- **Take your stand**
- Stay alert
- Keep praying

It's, take your stand and to do this, we got to go all the way back up to verse 13. We'll do this very quickly. Look at verse 13 with me. *“Therefore take up the whole armor of God, (so) that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, (and that means having gone through the fight, having gone through the melee of the battle) to stand firm.”*

Stand!. You got it? That's the point. The point is that we stand. After the battle is done, we're standing. The enemy wants to do the opposite to you. He wants to lay you out. He wants to destroy you. And he knows that some people can be destroyed who are not trusting in the Lord, His power, and so forth. So he's going to try it on you, too. But the point for you is to stand. And God's promise to you and I is that we will stand when we walk in the power of the Spirit and utilize the armaments that are given to us spiritually to deal with these issues. He promises us. He promises you and I, we will stand, alright?

The fourth and the fifth points on Paul's remarks. So I've highlighted both of them are, stay alert and keep praying.

Major Points of Paul's Remarks

- Be strong in the Lord
- Put on the (full) armor
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- **Keep praying**

Those things really go together a lot. Let me read here again to you from verse 18. Look with me there in your Bible. Verse 18, “*praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, (here's the other element) keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication...*”

You see that it's all part of one thing, keep alert, making supplication, that's praying. “*...for all the saints.*” And Paul even says, pray for me too, while you're at it.

This whole thing of staying alert, I want to take that one first. I personally think this is one of the biggest challenges facing modern day believers. Just, because, I don't know. I think probably just life, our technology, all the stuff that we just think is so grand, it provides so many distractions. So many distractions that can so easily be used by the enemy to draw us into a place of spiritual slumber.

That's something we have to guard against. Paul says keep alert with all perseverance, and it means that you're going to have, it's going to be a struggle to keep alert. It's a struggle. Just like prayer is a struggle, which we'll talk about in a minute but staying alert is a struggle. Let me show you what Paul said to the Romans, and of course to us. Romans chapter 13,

Romans 13:11-12 (NIV)

And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

And do this, (he said, first of all) understanding the present time. (and you have to understand the time that you're in, he says) The hour has already come for you to (we need to) wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

It's time, time to wake up. God..., it's cool. God is waking people up. It's neat to see. I've seen people right here in this fellowship who've been sleeping for years. Maybe coming with a spouse or even coming alone and just come to church. But there's a slumber and they sit through the service, and they sit through worship, and they shake hands, and they this and that, but they're sleeping.

And then sometimes lots of different things can wake them up. Many times it's a huge challenge that they have to face or whatever. And suddenly, they are wide

awake. And I mean, their eyes are open, but more importantly, their heart is open to the Lord in ways that it has never been open before. And they're not just sitting in their chair anymore. They are locked on, they're connected, they're looking, they're...

And I can even see it as a pastor, when I'm looking at people's eyes, I can see that they are like, connected. I mean, there is like, talk to me, I need the Word of God. And it's an incredible thing. It's like, the lights are on. Right? They woke up. Paul says we all need to wake up.

Then we come to prayer. Once again, verse 18, he says, "*praying at all times in the Spirit*," I want you to notice that. In fact, you might even underline that in your Bible, if you do that sort of thing in your Bible.

"*Praying at all times*." That's an incredibly critical phrase, because you see, we're praying at all times. Understand what praying is, you guys. Praying is really getting in there and doing the battle. But if you're not praying at all times, that means you're going to be out of practice when the battle time arrives.

Do you know that's what often happens when people go through intense battles in their lives. They haven't been praying. They haven't been praying at all times, and so they come down front, or they come to me, or they come to somebody else they know in the body of Christ, and they go, pray for me. And I get that.

We should be getting people to pray for us, but sometimes they're asking for prayer because they are so out of practice, that now the battle is here, it's like a soldier who never went through any kind of military training and he's just simply thrown into the battle. Can you imagine?

Can you imagine giving him a gun and all the other things that he's supposed to carry on to the battlefield? His helmet, and then the boots, and he's got everything, and he's never had one moment of training. Nobody showed him how to use the gun, nobody showed him how to do this or that, how to crawl when there's shrapnel going, he knows none of that. He's just thrown into the battle and you go, there, fight the battle. How's he going to do, you suppose?

And that's the way a lot of Christians, frankly, face spiritual battles. There's been no training, there's been no perseverance, there's been no keeping on in prayer. And then the battle begins to just rage and they're just (pastor Paul screams) and they're just caught in the crossfire. You got to get in shape for the battle. I watch some of these videos sometimes of these people, you know, going through like bootcamp, I get tired watching the videos of what these

people have to do to prepare for battle. But you know what it's what you and I better be doing spiritually speaking.

And please make no mistake about prayer, it is hard work. Anybody who thinks prayer is easy is kidding themselves. Prayer is hard, and I don't want to, I don't want to pray. I'm not very good at praying. Pray! When you get an invitation, pray. Stop giving excuses. Oh, I'm not very good at praying. Get good at praying. This is not one of these optional things, you guys. Prayer is not optional.

Start praying. Get to pray. And if you're like, well, I just keep forgetting to pray, then you know what? I've told you this in almost 28 years. How many times have I told you guys? Prayer is a challenge for me. I have to set times on my calendar to pray. I kid you not. And what I do is, now that I'm the senior pastor, I just make my staff have to be there. That's what I do. I create prayer times and I tell them they have to be there. And that's how I stay on course with praying. Make yourself dependent on somebody else. That really helps. If you're kind of setting your time for prayer and it's you and you alone, you're probably going to fall off.

I remember back in the early 80s, you guys remember the movement that started the pray for one hour? Some of you guys who were believers in the 80s might remember that. I think it was like Rock Church, somewhere in south. There was this thing about pray for an hour. Can you pray for one hour? And I got this book and I got all jazzed about prayer. I was like, yeah, I read the book. It was like a locker room talk and I was ready to go and pray. I'm going to pray. But I didn't get anybody to pray with me. I just thought, I'm just going to go down in the basement of our house. There's this really quiet place where I can pray. Lasted about two days before I was like, praying is hard. And if you're not depending on somebody else, you're probably going to fall off the wagon so, I would really encourage that.

But just understand going into it, it's hard. Prayer is hard work. Sometimes it's like trudging through deep mud to pray. Don't expect it to be this delightful, okay, now we're going to pray and we're going to come out smelling like a flower. No, we're going to be sweaty and dirty. And we're going to like..., we, cause we just did some spiritual battle.

By the way, that's why Paul says to pray in the Spirit. Pray in the Spirit. People don't pray in the flesh. You will end up exhausted and discouraged. We must learn to pray in the Spirit.

Okay, I want to give you a quick summary of the gist of what we've been talking about here today. Quick summary.

Summary

- This life is a battle field

First of all, number 1, **this life is a battlefield**. Please understand that. I really believe that our culture today wants us to believe that this life is just, our goal here is just to be happy, you guys. I just want to be happy. Don't you want to be happy? Can't we just all get along and be happy? This life is a battlefield. It is warfare.

Summary

- This life is a battle field
- A dangerous enemy is at large

Secondly, **we have a dangerous enemy who is at large**.

Summary

- This life is a battle field
- A dangerous enemy is at large
- Worldly temptations are many

Number 3, **worldly temptations are many** (around every single corner.)

Summary

- This life is a battle field
- A dangerous enemy is at large
- Worldly temptations are many
- Our flesh is weak

Fourth, you better get used to this one, **our flesh is weak**.

Summary

- This life is a battle field
- A dangerous enemy is at large
- Worldly temptations are many
- Our flesh is weak
- Jesus won the victory on the cross

Fifthly, **Jesus was victorious at the cross.**

Summary

- This life is a battle field
- A dangerous enemy is at large
- Worldly temptations are many
- Our flesh is weak
- Jesus won the victory on the cross
- In Christ we are more than conquerors!

And sixth, because of that, **in Him, we are more than conquerors.**

And that is what we need to remember. Those are such important elements to remember, particularly the last 2: Jesus won the victory, and because He is victorious, because He is the Victor, capital V, I can now live in that victory.

I want to end by giving you one final promise from God's Word. It's from James, chapter 4, and it goes like this,

James 4:7-8a (ESV)

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and (here is the promise) he will flee from you. (but all the things we've been talking about today, about the full armor, that's how you resist. That's how you do the work of resisting. And then finally,) Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.