

Ephesians 6a Spiritual Warfare

6/5/00 6:36 AM

Overview

Consider how 6:10-20 fits into the rest of the book, and then its internal structure.

External structure

Review book structure, and the place of this paragraph within it.

- Basic framework: 1:18-19, three things he wants them to know:
 1. the hope of his calling
 2. the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,
 3. the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe
- #'s 2 and 3 outline the first half of the book. The emphasis here is doctrinal; there are no imperatives, just indicative verbs.
 - God's power in raising Christ, and in raising us with him, 1:20-2:10
 - His glorious inheritance, no longer just in Israel, but in all the saints, 2:11-3:21
- The first of these, "hope of his calling," is the subject of the latter half of the book. This half is full of imperatives. It tells us how to live in view of the truths in the first half, and revisits the two themes discussed there:
 - Implications of our unity with other believers in the church, and our resulting distinction from the world, 4:1-6:9
 - Implications of God's power in us, 6:10-20. Note the reprise in 6:10: "power of his might" is the same in Greek as "his mighty power" in 1:19.

Internal structure

(ab)B(ab)A

- 11 and 13 each contain a method for being strong ("put on the armor") and a motive ("that ye may be able ...").
- 12 amplifies the motive, giving details of the enemy whom we face.
- 14ff amplify the method, giving details of the armor with which God has provided us.

10, Reprise of 1:19, 1:20-2:10

"Be strong *in the Lord*." If only we could grasp this truth, how different our lives would be. The key to our strength lies not in ourselves, but in the Lord. We are strongest when we realize our weakness and learn to trust in him. If we say, "I cannot," we are simply making a true statement. The real spiritual issue is what we say next:

- If we continue, "therefore I will not," we are denying that the Lord is with us.

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- We ought to continue, “but the Lord can, and therefore I will.”

The heroes of the Bible are not strong people, but weak people who trusted in the Lord.
Compare:

Exodus 3, the call of Moses.

Note his repeated protestations:

- 3:11, “Who am I?” No self confidence.
- 3:13, “Who are you?” In other words, “I don’t know you well enough.” I’m not spiritual enough; my own walk with God isn’t nearly enough to enable me to carry out his work.
- 4:1 “They won’t believe me.” After excuses based on himself and God, he turns to the people.
- 4:10 “I can’t talk.” Now he’s back to making excuses about himself. “I don’t have the specific skills your command requires.”
- 4:13 “Send someone else.” This denial earns him the Lord’s wrath.

Five times Moses protests. The outcome is twofold.

- The Lord is angry with him. If we have any fear of God in us, this is an outcome we should steadfastly avoid.
- He ends up doing the job anyway, but sharing it with Aaron. He still must confront the wrath of Pharaoh and of the Israelite elders.

Paul, 2 Cor 12:7-10.

God intentionally burdened him with a bodily weakness, so that he would learn to trust in God. Cf. 2 Cor 4:7, “treasure in earthen vessels.” Note that he only petitions the Lord three times, perhaps mindful of the danger in which Moses put himself.

11, 13, The Summaries

Two parts, corresponding chiasmically to the Motive and Method sections to follow.

	Method	Motive	
		Action	Adversary
v.11	<i>Put on</i> the whole armour of God,	that ye may be able to <i>stand</i>	against the wiles of the devil.
v.13	Wherefore <i>take unto you</i> the whole armour of God,	that ye may be able to <i>withstand...</i> , and having done all, to <i>stand</i>	...in the evil day...

Note the progression from v.11 to v.13.

Method:

10-11 shows that “put on, take up the whole armor of God” is metaphor for “be strong in the Lord.” The point is that we are helpless in ourselves, but can be victorious in God’s power. Our

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victory in the Christian life depends on learning *that* we need this strength, and *how* to appropriate it.

Both verses emphasize the “whole armor” = πανοπλια. Cf. Luke 11:22, “he taketh from him *all his armour* (την πανοπλιαν αυτου) wherein he trusted.” The complete set of weapons, offensive and defensive; the warrior’s full battle pack. No single weapon can do the job. The warrior must have them all.

Leave no unguarded place,
No weakness of the soul.
Take every virtue, every grace
And fortify the whole.

The Iliad tells of the Greek warrior Achilles, whose mother dipped him as an infant in the river Styx, thereby rendering him invincible to arrows, swords, and spears. However, when she dipped him, she held him by the heel, which was thereby not exposed to the waters, and remained vulnerable, and he was slain by an arrow in the heel. The armor that God has given us is comprehensive; let us not despise any aspect of it.

The progression between the verses is seen in their verbs:

- “put on,” v.11. It does no good to have the weapons in your locker. You must wear them if they are to help. Perhaps the primary reference here is to defensive weapons, the first to put in place, since these are the ones that are “worn.” In v.14, used of the “breastplate of righteousness.”
- “take up,” v.13. Pick it up. It’s lying there on the ground, ready for you, but you must appropriate it to yourself. Used with reference to things that are held in the hand, after the basic defensive armor is put on; used in reference to the shield of faith in v.16. Thus we have an advance here from defense to offense.

Motive:

Here we see a progression in both our Action and our Adversary.

The Action

Both verses mention our need to “stand.” V.13 goes further and tells us to “withstand.”

- The opposite of “stand” is “fall,” 1 Cor 10:12: “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” The focus is on our surviving the onslaught.
- The opposite of “withstand” is “permit.” The verb is used three times in the Balaam story (Num 22:23, 31, 34) of what the angel of the Lord did to Balaam, blocking his way so that he could not pass. This is what we are commanded to do to the Devil in Jas 4:7 (“resist the Devil, and he will flee from you”) and 1 Pet 5:9 (“whom resist steadfast in the faith”). Here our stature is much more active, resisting the Devil’s progress, so that we may turn him back.

The Adversary

Two adversaries are mentioned, and these also show a progression:

- 11, “the wiles of the devil,” his deceitful trickery. He doesn’t play fair, but will try in every way he can to trip us up.
- 13, “the evil day.” In NT only elsewhere in Eph 5:16 (pl). 5x in LXX (all indefinite): Ps 40:2 (41:1); 48:6; 93:13; Jer:17:17,18, the day of God’s judgment on Israel; always Heb יום רע or יום רעה. Cf. Amos 6:3; Eccl 12:1 (of old age). The days now are evil, but there comes a singularly evil day. Cf. 1 John: there are many antichrists, but the great antichrist is still coming. Paul continually warns believers to be prepared for persecution and tribulation (Acts 14:22; 1 Thes 3:3; 2 Tim 3:12). This armor is God’s provision to be able not only to survive, but to triumph in such struggles.

12, The Motive

Here again we have the action and the adversary.

Action

“Wrestle”—notice the personal, intimate nature of the struggle. This is not long-range artillery bombardment, but face-to-face, hand-to-hand.

Grammatically, “in heavenly places” at the end of the verse most readily modifies the elided positive of this verb: We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but we do wrestle against spiritual foes, and that wrestling takes place in heavenly places.” Ephesians is the only book in the NT that uses “the heavens (pl) as a noun; elsewhere the word is an adjective, as in “heavenly kingdom” 2 Tim 4:18 or “heavenly Father” Matt 18:35. Consider the things that are said to happen in this realm throughout our epistle:

- 1:3, where we are blessed with all spiritual blessings
- 1:20, where Christ is seated at the Father’s right hand
- 2:6, where we sit together with Christ
- 3:10, where “principalities and powers” learn through the church the manifold wisdom of God
- 6:12, where our struggle takes place.

Some suggest that situating this struggle “in heavenly places” is incompatible with the exalted description of this realm. But the Scriptures bear witness to conflict in heaven (Rev 12:7,8; Dan 10:12,13), and it should be a great comfort to us to know that our conflict, as agonizing as it may seem, is not being waged on an island far from the main forces, but in the immediate presence of our all-powerful Lord, under his complete control, where his aid is always available for us. Cf. John 12:31. He is already judged, but shall be cast out. He is like Hitler in Europe after D-Day; Calvary was our spiritual Normandy, where our champion stormed the beaches, and we are cleaning up.

Adversary

Described through a contrast: not flesh and blood, but

Not flesh and blood; this is (as the summary verses have already indicated) a spiritual struggle.

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Calvin: “Let us remember this when the injurious treatment of others provokes us to revenge. Our natural disposition would lead us to direct all our exertions against the men themselves; but this foolish desire will be restrained by the consideration that the men who annoy us are nothing more than darts thrown by the hand of Satan. While we are employed in destroying those darts, we lay ourselves open to be wounded on all sides. To *wrestle with flesh and blood* will not only be useless, but highly pernicious. We must go straight to the enemy, who attacks and wounds us from his concealment, — who slays before he appears.”

Enumerated: cf. 1:21, where a similar list summarizes our risen Lord’s authority and superiority. This is why we must be strong in him; he is dominant over them all. The items listed here appear to be different perspectives on the same set of evil spirits, and progress from the most specific to the most general description.

Principalities, powers.—Frequently coupled together.

- Sometimes used of earthly magistrates: Titus 3:1, “ Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers , to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work.”
- But here, explicitly not “flesh and blood.” Spiritual beings. In 3:10, said to be in heavenly places.
- Cf. the list of opposites in Rom. 8:38f, where “principalities and powers” are explicitly contrasted with “angels.” Is the contrast “physical vs. spiritual,” or “good vs. bad”?
- There is OT evidence that earthly governments are simply the front-ends for spiritual powers.
 - Dan. 10, the adversaries faced by Daniel’s spiritual visitor
 - Ezek 28:2 (prince of Tyre, called a man), 11 (king of Tyre, called a cherub).
 - Satan’s claim in Luke 4:5,6 that the power and glory of all the earthly kingdoms have been delivered to him; thus he is the prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).
- So Paul is here looking at the spiritual powers that lie behind the kingdoms of this world, and reminding us (by the way) not to place our trust in earthly governments, but to hold fast our position as those whose citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3:20).
- Our victory is assured: 1:21 puts our Lord far above these things, and 1 Cor 15:24 says he will put them down.

The [κοσμος]-rulers of the darkness of this world [age].—We move beyond the limited political implications of “principalities and powers” to highlight three characteristics of these rulers:

- The word “ruler” is κοσμοκρατορ, “ruler of the κοσμος,” to be contrasted with παντοκρατορ “ruler of all,” the common LXX translation of צבאות “hosts” (as in “Lord of Hosts,” cf. the quotation in 2 Cor 6:18 (65x in LXX “saith the Lord of Hosts”) and 5x in Rev (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7). This term emphasizes the **domain** of the evil spirits. They do not hold universal sway, but have a limited territory. Cf. our Lord’s designation of Satan as “the prince of this κοσμος,” three times in John (Joh 12:31 14:30 16:11). Satan is not God, and not omnipresent. He can be cast out of heaven (Rev 12:9) or

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confined to a bottomless pit (Rev 20:3). The world is his designated dominion; cf. Job 2:2. This limitation is important: the battle takes place “in the heavenlies,” which is our home court and where our enemy is out of his own domain. What an encouragement for us in our struggle.

- Their **decree** is darkness. They seek to hide and suppress the light of God’s word. True knowledge and understanding is only available to those who submit to the instruction of God’s Word.
- The word “world” is *αἰών*, referring to the present age, which is their **duration**. The day of their judgment is fixed, and God will have the victory over them.

Thus they oppose God’s truth (so we should beware of them), but they are bounded both temporally and spatially (so we should not fear them).

Spiritual wickedness.—The English is misleading. It suggests that the main focus is on wickedness, characterized by being spiritual wickedness (as opposed to, say, physical wickedness). But that is nonsense; all wickedness is spiritual. Lit., the text describes our adversary as “the spiritual things of wickedness,” that is, spiritual things characterized by wickedness. The most likely reference is to Satan’s hosts, his spiritual armies. Thus this is the most generic description of our foe: all spiritual beings who are allied with wickedness rather than righteousness.

14-20, The Method

This paragraph gives the details of the armor. With each piece, observe two things:

- Its prophetic association with the Messiah;

Eph 6:	Old Testament (mainly Isaiah)
14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth,	Isa 11:5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. Dan 10:5 a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins [were] girded with fine gold of Uphaz:
and having on the breastplate of righteousness;	Isa 59:17a For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, ... and ... the garments of vengeance <i>for</i> clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke.
15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;	Isa 52:7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!
16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.	Genesis 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. Ps 3:3; 28:7; 33:20; 59:11; 84:9, 11; 115:9,10,11; 119:114; 144:1,2; Prov 30:5
17 And take the helmet of salvation,	Isa 59:17b and an helmet of salvation upon his head;
and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:	Isa 11:4 he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked Isa 49:1,2 ...The LORD ... hath made my mouth like a sharp sword ;

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- The point of the metaphor.

Many commentators see in this list a reflection of the armor of the Roman soldiers guarding Paul. But two essential pieces of the Roman panoply are missing: the spear and the greaves (shin guards). Comparison with the OT, mostly Isaiah (see table), shows that Paul's inspiration is scriptural rather than secular. This is the armor of Messiah, the divine warrior, coming into the world. Compare Isa 59:17. "Armor of God," belonging to God." We are to wear it because we are his body, fulfilling him.

Compare 1 Sam 17:38,39. David could not use Saul's armor, because he had not proved it. Nor had Saul; he would not go against the Philistine. Our armor is from our brother, one who is like us, who has proved it for us in combat with our foe and has left him mortally wounded.

There are seven items in the list. Prayer is not associated metaphorically with a weapon, but we include it in the list for two reasons:

- It is a standard component of warfare (no atheists in foxholes!).
- It is integrated grammatically into the sentence, joined to v.17 with a participle rather than breaking off with a new finite verb.

The seven items appear to be arranged chiastically, A BC D B'C' A'.

- The center element, the shield of faith (16), is distinguished from the others in three ways.
 1. It is the only one to name explicitly the detail of the enemy's attack against which it is directed.
 2. It is by far the most common OT metaphor for the divine warrior's armor.
 3. It is introduced by the fourth participle in a row. The next two items are introduced by a new finite verb, marking a turning point.
- The outer elements, prayer (18-20) and loins girt with truth (14a), both deal with how we speak.
- The BC pairs begin with a defensive item (breastplate in 14b, helmet in 17a), and continue with an offensive one (shoes in 15, sword in 17b). B and B' are paired in Isa 59:17.
- A reverse pairing in the BC items may also be discerned:
 1. B and C' both deal with the word of God (as a guide to "faith and love" in the breastplate, and as our main offensive weapon)
 2. C and B' both deal with the gospel (as we offer it to others, and rely on its message ourselves).

14a, Loins Girt with Truth

Exposition

Reference to Christ: twofold.

- The closest lexical and grammatical parallel in the LXX is the theophany in Dan 10:5, but here the belt is described as a material, and we are not told what it symbolizes.

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- Isa 11:5 is a more direct reference to faithfulness or truth *alhqeia* as an appropriate belt, again with a clear messianic reference.

No “about”: “having the loins girt.” People’s garments were long and flowing, and to prepare for action, one pulled up the hem between the legs and tucked it into the belt to keep from tripping. Cf. God’s exhortation to Job, 38:3; 40:7; like someone hitching up his trousers before a fight. This is preparatory to vigorous action.

Truth as the “belt” into which the garment is tucked keeps us from stumbling. A vivid reminder of the difficulties to which deception leads. Mark Twain: “I always tell the truth. It takes less memory than lying.”

It is not unusual that we would begin our preparation with truthfulness.

- God began creation by speaking words that conformed with reality; in fact, that conformed reality to themselves.
- Our God “cannot lie” (Tit 1:12), and “is not a man, that he should lie” (Num 23:19).
- Our Savior’s adornment with this garment is reflected in his claim to be “a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God” (John 8:40).

Abuse of language is a distortion of God’s greatest gift to his creatures. God is not a man, that he should lie. We who are godly must not abuse language in deceit.

Constructions (not in sermon)

1. Absolute

- XGR Absolute, preparation for battle, 1 Kings 20:11; 2 Kings 3:21
-)ZR Dt, Ps 93:1 (cf.(Z in previous clause); Isa 8:9
-)ZR Isa 45:5 “I have girded thee”
- XGR (context “sackcloth”) Joel 1:13

2. girding the loins

- transVerb:XGR+patient:MTNYM Ex 12:11; 2 Kings 4:29; 9:1
- transVerb:XGR + instrument:B-(OZ + patient:MTNYM Prov 31:17
- transVerb:)ZR + patient: XLCYKA Job 38:3; 40:7
- transVerb:)ZR + patient: MTNYM Jer 1:17
- patient: MTNYM + passVerb: XGR + instrument: B-KTM-)UPAZ Dan 10:5 (compare LXX hJ ojsfuV" aujtou' periezwsmevnh ejn crusivw/ Wfa with Eph 6:14 perizwsavmenoi thVn ojsfuVn uJmw'n ejn ajlhqeiva; this appears to be the closest syntactical parallel. If Dan 10 is indeed the LJC, this is another instance of the Lord’s armor becoming ours.

3. girded with a garment

- transVerb:XGR + beneficiary:)TM + instrument:)BNT Ex 29:9; Lev 8:7,13

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- instrument:(B+)BNT) + transVerb:XGR Lev 16:4
- transVerb:XGR +linen ephod 1 Sam 2:18; 2 Sam 6:14
- transVerb:XGR +sackcloth 2 Sam 3:31; 1 Kings 20:32; Isa 15:3; 22:12; Jer 4:8; 6:26;49:3; Lam 2:10; Ezek 7:18; 27:31; Joel 1:8
- transVerb: XGR + location: (L-XLCYM (Sackcloth understood?) Isa 32:11
- agent: hills + transVerb:XGR +GYL joy (metaphorical) Ps 65:13
- transVerb:)ZR + &MXA Ps 30:12
- transVerb:XGR +girdle Ps 109:19
- transVerb:)ZR+XYL “strength” 1 Sam 2:4; Ps 18:33, 40
- instrument:)ZOR (UR + passVerb:)ZR + location: B-MTNYM 2 Kings 1:8
- agent: LBU\$AY + transVerb:)ZR + patient: -NI Job 30:18
- patient: (God) + passVerb:)ZR(N) + agent: B-GBURAH
- transVerb:)ZR (D) + implement:ZIQWT “sparks” Isa 50:11
- transVerb: XGR + instrument: B-YZ(“sweat causer” Ezek 44:18

4. girding on weapons

- transVerb:XGR + instrument:)T CLY MLXMH (no explicit beneficiary; same as subject) Dt 1:41; sword 1 Sam 17:39; 25:13
- transVerb:XGR + instrument:sword + location:MTXT LBDYM + location:(L-YRQ Judg 3:16
- transVerb: XGR + instrument:sword Judg 18:11, 16, 17; Ps 45:4
- new (sword) 2 Sam 21:16

5. be afraid 2 Sam 22:46

6. restrain Ps 76:11

14b, Breastplate of Righteousness

Isa 59:17 lists this as an element of Messiah’s armor when he comes into the world, and couples it with faithfulness (LXX αληθεια).

The breastplate protects the viscera, the vital organs. You can easily survive a blow to your arm or leg, but next to the head, the trunk is the most vulnerable. Even today, policemen wear Kevlar vests to protect this part of the body.

Personal misconduct, like personal dishonesty, opens us up to the most deadly attacks of the enemy. The foundation of our armor is integrity in speech and action.

- 1 Tim 5:14, “give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully”

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- Tit 2:7,8 “In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine [shewing] uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, 8 Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you..”
- 1 Pet 3:16 “Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.”

Righteousness in our personal lives is important not just for its own sake, but also for its implications in our combat. Moral failings are not just of consequence to us individually, but weaken us in the combat, because they open up avenues for the accuser. He is fundamentally *יטשן*, the accuser, *ο διαβολος*, the slanderer, and our shortcomings provide him with the essential fuel for his attacks. When our savior came, he was armed with truth and righteousness, and we must be the same. 2 Cor 6:7, “the armor of righteousness.”

In 1 Thes 5:8, Paul describes the breastplate as “faith and love,” two element of his favorite triad “faith, hope, love.” These sum up the two tables of the law (faith = love for God; love = love for our fellow), and thus the whole of practical righteousness.

15, Shod with Preparation of the Gospel

The figure recalls Isa 52:7. Note the singular, “feet of him.” The reference is first of all to the Messiah, the one who brings good news of salvation to Israel.

Recognizing the messianic thrust of this whole passage helps us understand the sense of “preparation.”

- It is widely understood as subjective genitive: we have been prepared by hearing and believing the gospel.
- But the reference to Isa 52:7 makes it more likely that the point here is objective genitive: we are prepared to carry the gospel. Being shod with the preparation of the gospel is then parallel to 1 Pet 3:15, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and [be] ready always to [give] an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” This also makes more sense in connection with shoes. Being prepared to tell others about Christ equips us to go. This is the first offensive weapon. We do not just stand and defend ourselves, but can now march out against the foe.

The gift of evangelism (Eph 4:11) is specifically that of the church planter, and is not common to all believers. But all should understand the basic gospel clearly enough to explain it to their acquaintances, “ready to given an answer.”

16, Shield of Faith

This is the fourth of the seven elements. Being at the center, we might expect special emphasis, and in fact it is the only one to identify explicitly the enemy armament that it is intended to oppose. Consider first the opposition, then this wonderful weapon.

Opposition: “all the fiery darts of the Wicked One

This expression leads us to a sober consideration of our enemy’s power.

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- A “dart” is a pointed missile, whether hurled by hand (a spear) or with a bow (an arrow). Either way, it can attack from afar off, unlike our weaponry, which includes only a sword and requires close combat.
- It is a “fiery dart,” that is, smeared with pitch or other inflammable material and set aflame before being launched, so that it not only injures the place where it strikes, but also sets in motion a destructive process that spreads beyond its immediate target. Cf. Jas 3:5,6.

Weapon: Shield of Faith

The image of the shield is by far the most common class of spiritual armor described in the Bible. Most of the references are by David, in the Pss, thus prefiguring the Messiah.

Note how commonly associated with trust in the Lord, thus the “shield of faith” is subjective genitive, “the shield that faith wields.” This central weapon is none other than the Lord himself, invoked as our protection.

- Abraham, after surrendering his spoil to the king of Sodom: Genesis 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, **Fear not**, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.
- David fleeing from Absalom: Ps 3:2,3 Many *there be* which say of my soul, *There is no help for him in God*. Selah. 3 But thou, O LORD, *art* a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.
- Ps 28:7 The LORD *is* my strength and my shield; my heart **trusted** in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.
- Ps 33:20, 21 Our soul **waiteth** for the LORD: he *is* our help and our shield. 21 For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have **trusted** in his holy name.
- David, fleeing from Saul, Ps 59:11 Slay them not, lest my people forget: scatter them by thy power; and bring them down, O Lord our shield.
- Ps 84:9, 11 Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed. ... For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good *thing* will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.
- After denouncing the lifeless idols: Ps 115:9,10,11 O Israel, **trust** thou in the LORD: he *is* their help and their shield. 10 O house of Aaron, **trust** in the LORD: he *is* their help and their shield. 11 Ye that fear the LORD, **trust** in the LORD: he *is* their help and their shield.
- Ps 119:114 Thou [art] my hiding place and my shield: I **hope** in thy word.
- 144:1,2 [A Psalm] of David. Blessed [be] the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, [and] my fingers to fight: 2 My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and [he] in whom I **trust**; who subdueth my people under me.
- Prov 30:5 Every word of God [is] pure: he [is] a shield unto them that put their **trust** in him.

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- *(Not David) Ps 91:4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.*

Note the two components that run throughout these:

- God himself is the shield;
- We wield him by faith.

The best defense against Satan's attacks is recognizing our God's invincibility. Our call is to "be strong in the Lord." Satan wants to get our attention on ourselves, but our victory comes when we focus our attention on the Lord and rejoice in his strength and power in the fight.

There were several kinds of shields in antiquity. Paul uses the word for a large shield the size of a door, that can cover the whole body, almost a portable fort. Nothing can touch us when we recognize God's power to protect us.

This shield is able not only to deflect the enemy's darts, but to "quench" them, to put out the fire and stop the spread of damage.

17a, Helmet of Salvation

As the Lord's armor, it is listed in Isa 59:17.

This is to be "received," not just "taken," as though it is assigned by our commander himself as we head out to battle.

Along with the breastplate, this protects the most vulnerable parts of the body.

Paul's interpretation is clarified by his expansion of the item in 1 Thes 5:8, "hope of salvation." Satan frequently attacks us by raising questions in our minds as to the certainty of our salvation. He would have us doubt whether he who has begun a good work in us can indeed perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. He draws our attention to our own failings, and creates doubt in us as to our real relation with God. But our savior trusted in his Father to deliver him, and so may we.

Compare Paul's confidence:

- 2 Tim 1:12, I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.
- Rom 8, 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? [shall] tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- 1 Pet 4:19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls [to him] in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

17b, Sword of the Spirit

Isa 49:2 (cf. 11:4) associates this with the promised Messiah, an image picked up in Rev 1:16; 2:16; 19:15.

Ephesians 6a Spiritual Warfare

- Consider how he used it with Satan in the temptation: Matt. 4:1-11, 4x “it is written” to answer the tempter, parrying defensively.
- John 14:10, “the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.” He claimed that his message was from God.
- Rev 2:16 and 19:15 threaten an offensive use as well. Imagine how terrifying it will be on the day of judgment for people to stand before their creator and hear him simply recite the law.

We have a reasonable picture of traditional Jewish teaching in the Mishnah: “Rabbi X says this, Rabbi Y says that, ...” In contrast, our Savior answered with, “It is written.” This contrast is crystallized in Mark 1:21,22, “he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.”

If we only share with others our own thoughts, we shall always be diffident, lacking in authority, and weak. When we use the “quick and powerful” Word of God (Heb 4:6), we too can speak with authority. Thus Paul exhorts us to “hold fast the form of sound words” (2 Tim 1:13).

If Satan can get us to question the authority of the Word of God, we will be greatly weakened. Recall Dr. Fullerton’s picture, perhaps from his own experience in WW1: As you rush the enemy with your bayonet, he protests, “Hey, wait a minute. Did you notice that your bayonet is made of rubber?” If you turn your attention from the battle to examine your bayonet, you are lost. Never argue with the enemy about the authority of the Word. Just give it to him..

18-20, Prayer

Each of the items mentioned thus far has been associated with a corresponding action:

- your loins *girt about* with truth,
- *having on (wearing)* the breastplate of righteousness;
- your feet *shod* with the preparation of the gospel of peace;
- *taking* the shield of faith,
- *take* the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit

The last item involves no noun, but just the verb: praying. Yet it is integrated grammatically with the rest of the list, leaving little question that Paul intends us to understand it as part of our preparation for battle.

Christ’s Prayer Life

That prayer was characteristic of our Savior’s life is beyond question. Ps 22:2 prophesied of him, “I cry in the daytime, ... and in the night season.”

- Luke 6:12 he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.
- Matt 14:23 he went up into a mountain apart to pray: (Mark 6:46)

Analysis of the Passage

The backbone of the text is two main verbs, “praying” and “watching.” The second amplifies the first. Consider each clause in turn, then focus our attention on those for whom prayer is to be made.

“Praying”

This is the generic verb for any kind of speech directed to God. It is qualified with three phrases:

“Always.”— “Praying always” goes back to the Lord’s command in light of the approaching “evil day,” Luke 21:36, “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” Compare 1 Thes 5:17, “Pray without ceasing.” Our life is to be one of constant conscious fellowship with the Lord. The Psalmist knew this: “Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice” (Ps 55: 17).

“With all prayer and supplication.”—“Prayer” is the generic word for discourse with God. “Supplication” refers specifically to asking him for something. “All” encourages us not to be shy with God. There may be some things you wouldn’t share with your boss, or your friends, but we should tell God everything.

“In the Spirit.”—The expression “praying in the Spirit” occurs here and in Jude 20, where it is clear that the Holy Spirit is meant. “In the Spirit” here means “by means of the Spirit,”

Technical note: see spreadsheet for full analysis. Without εν, the dative with verbs of speaking might be misunderstood as the addressee.

Background verses on the role of the Spirit in prayer:

- Rom 8:15,16. v.15, εν ω κρᾶζομεν is an example of prayer “in the Spirit.” His role (v.16) is to make us mindful of our close relation to God so that we can pray with more fervor and intimacy. Cf. Gal 4:6; Rom 5:5.
- Rom 8:26, he actually intercedes for us.

[Calvin’s excellent comment on Jude 20:

Such is our sloth, and that such is the coldness of our flesh, that no one can pray aright except he be roused by the Spirit of God; and that we are also so inclined to diffidence and trembling, that no one dares to call God his Father, except through the teaching of the same Spirit; for from him is solicitude, from him is ardor and vehemence, from him is alacrity, from him is confidence in obtaining what we ask; in short, from him are those unutterable groanings mentioned by Paul (Romans 8:26.) It is not, then, without reason that Jude teaches us, that no one can pray as he ought without having the Spirit as his guide.]

“Watching”

“Watching” is literally “staying awake,” then by metaphor “paying attention.”

Thereunto.—The relation between the two is expressed in the expression “thereunto” (“watching thereunto,” εις αυτο τουτο... The construction appears also in Rom 9:17; 13:6; cf. 1 Macc 10:84 (no τουτο). In both Romans passages it means “for this purpose” (προσκορτερεω

never governs εἰς in the NT). So the point is that we are to watch for the purpose of prayer. Two possible meanings.

- Literally, it is a good thing to stay awake (or arise early) to pray. The Psalmist knew this: 22:2; 63:6. Cf. Christ's all-night vigil in Luke 6:12 before choosing his disciples, and in Gethsemane (22:41-46) before his sacrifice. His words to his disciples on this occasion are a rebuke to us all: "Why sleep ye: Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Sleep is necessary to life and health, as is food, but in particularly critical times, it makes sense to forego both and spend the time in prayer and fellowship with the Lord. We may take as our direction the magnitude of the crises which led the Lord to such vigils. For most of us, the problem is not spending too much time in fasting and vigil, but in spending too little.
- In a figurative sense, "watching unto prayer" means "being attentive so that you may pray." Prayer is not the mouthing of vain formulas, but a conversation with God based on our careful observation of the state of the world and the needs of those around us. A military scout is trained to observe and remember what he sees so that he can discuss it with his comrades and his commanders. As soldiers of Christ, we are to be watchful, and to found our prayer on that thoughtfulness.

With all perseverance.—Persistently, even when it is difficult, even when we are distracted. Prayer is a warfare.

For whom are we to pray?

Paul asks prayer for two groups:

1. "for all saints." Compare our Lord's prayer in John 17, for all who would yet believe. Heb 13:3, We should remember our brothers and sisters under persecution, suffering for the sake of the gospel.
2. "for me"—amplified in what follows. Here is choice instruction on how we can uphold one another in prayer.

For himself, Paul requests prayer for two things (indicated by *ina*):

- *What* to say: "that utterance may be given unto me." Lit, "a word." He is claiming the Lord's promise in Matt 10:16-19, that the Lord will provide us with the right thing to say. He modifies this request by indicating the purpose of such an utterance (bold proclamation, in keeping with his appointed role as the Lord's ambassador.)
- *How* to say it: "that I may speak boldly." He recognizes his own weakness in this area, and asks their prayer that he might be bold, in spite of his vulnerable position.

Analysis: The Hope of His Calling, with respect to the Greatness of His Power

- 10 To loipon, adelfoi mou, *e)ndunamou^sqe*
e)n kuri/w|
kai\ e)n tw^| kra/tei th^s i)sxu/os au)tou^.
- 11 *e)ndu/sasqe* th\n panopli/an tou^ qeou^
pro\s to\ du/nasqai u(ma^s sth^nai pro\s ta\s meqodei/as tou^ diabo/lou:
- 12 o/(ti ou)k e)/stin h(mi^n h(pa/lh pro\s ai(^ma kai\ sa/rka,
a)lla\
pro\s ta\s a)rxas,
pro\s ta\s e)cousi/as,
pro\s tou\s kosmokra/toras tou^ sko/tous tou/tou,
pro\s ta\ pneumatika\ th^s ponhri/as e)n toi^s e)pourani/ois.
- 13 dia\ tou^to *a)nalabete* th\n panopli/an tou^ qeou^,
i(/na dunhqh^te
a)ntisth^nai e)n th^| h(me/ra| th^| ponhra^|
kai\ a(/panta katergasa/menoi sth^nai.
- 14 *sth^te* ou)^n
perizwsa/menoi th\n o)sfu\n u(mw^e)n a)lhqei/a|,
kai\ e)ndusa/menoi to\n qw/raka th^s dikaiosuh/s,
- 15 kai\ u(podhsa/menoi tou\s po/das e)n e(toimasi/a| tou^ eu)aggeli/ou th^s ei)rh/nhs,
16 e)n pa^sin a)nalabo/ntes to\n qureo\n th^s pi/stews,
e)n w(^| dunh/sesqe pa/nta ta\ be/lh tou^ ponhrou^ [ta\] pepurwme/na sbe/sai:
- 17 kai\ th\n perikefalai/an tou^ swthri/ou *de/casqe*,
kai\ th\n ma/xairan tou^ pneu/matos,
o(/ e)stin r(h^ma qeou^,
- 18 dia\ pa/shs proseuxh^s kai\ deh/sews proseuxo/menoi e)n panti\ kairw^| e)n pneu/mati,
kai\ ei)s au)to\ a)grupnou^ntes e)n pa/sh| proskarterh/sei kai\ deh/sei
peri\ pa/ntwn tw^e)n a(gi/wn,
- 19 kai\ u(pe)r e)mou^,
i(/na moi doqh^| lo/gos e)n a)noi/cei tou^ sto/mato/s mou,
e)n parrhsi/a| gnwri/sai to\ musth/rion tou^ eu)aggeli/ou
- 20 u(pe)r ou(^ presbeu/w e)n a(lu/sei,
i(/na e)n au)tw^| parrhsia/swmai w(s dei^ me lalh^sai.