***EPHESIANS 6 – Weapons of Warfare***

##### Spiritual Warfare is BASIC TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP AND MISSION

Why bother with spiritual warfare? The reason is twofold. One, it is evident throughout the Bible. Two, we are called by God to spiritual warfare. Spiritual opposition is part of a biblical worldview. Believers must be equipped for spiritual warfare, for it is integral to Christian discipleship.

Spiritual opposition is the subject of both our Lord’s priestly work and our Lord’s priestly prayer. He came “to destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil” ([Heb. 2:14](https://www.esv.org/Heb.%202%3A14/)). His prayer on the eve of the cross was that His sheep would be kept from the evil one ([John 17:15](https://www.esv.org/John%2017%3A15/)).

Spiritual warfare is recognized by every New Testament writer. In his first letter to the persecuted and scattered exiles, Peter addresses an array of practical matters dealing with all sorts of ordinary issues related to suffering. He concludes the epistle with a discussion of spiritual warfare, not as something abnormal or tangential to the topic but normal and integral. Peter remarks: “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

But the vast teaching on the subject of spiritual warfare is found in the writings of the Apostle Paul, as core subject matter in the curriculum of Christian discipleship. The division, disorder, depravity, and dysfunction highlighted in the first letter to the church at Corinth are shown in Paul’s second letter to involve spiritual opposition (2 Cor. 2:11; 10:3–6; 11:14; 12:7).

It is in his letter to the Ephesians, however, that the Apostle establishes a center for the study of spiritual warfare. Every chapter touches on the subject, as Paul describes the deliverance of Christ, the call of the Christian, and the dark world in which we live as children of light, contending with spiritual forces of evil.

Though [Ephesians 6](https://www.esv.org/Ephesians%206/) contains the most focused treatment of spiritual warfare in the letter, that is not where the Apostle starts the discussion. We can follow the stream of thought beginning with the headwaters in chapter 1 to its outflow in chapter 6.

1. God's Church: its Theological Foundations (the *Indicative*) 1:1-3:21
2. God's Church: its Practical Responsibilities (the *Imperative*) 4:1-6:20

A.             Walking Worthy 4:1-5:21

1.              in unity 4:1-16

2.              in holiness 4:17-32

3.              in love 5:1-2

4.              in light 5:3-14

5.              in wisdom 5:15-21

B.             Family and Social Responsibilities 5:22-6:9

1.              family responsibilities 5:22-6:4

a.              husbands and wives 5:22-33

b.              parents and children 6:1-4

2.              social responsibilities 6:5-9

C.             Spiritual Warfare 6:10-20

1.              the alert 6:10-13

2.              the armor 6:14-17

3.              the 'all's of intercession 6:18-20

In 4:1-6:9 the apostle provided us with a list of responsibilities for Christian living. The moral issues that he begins to address in 6:10 and following extend beyond simple questions of right and wrong and thrust us into the heart of a larger, indeed, *cosmic* battle in which our enemies are not primarily other human beings but spiritual beings of indescribable evil intent.

Much of what Paul will say, at least in terms of the imagery of a soldier fully arrayed in battle armor, is taken from Isaiah (11:4-5; 49:2; 52:7; 59:17) which describes the armor of God and His Messiah. 'The Isaianic references depict the Lord of hosts as a warrior dressed for battle as he goes forth to vindicate his people. The 'full armour of God' which the readers are urged to put on as they engage in a deadly spiritual warfare (v. 11) is Yahweh's own armour, which he and his Messiah have worn and which is now provided for his people as they engage in battle (O'Brien, 457).

The various virtues and other items connected with these pieces of armor have already figured prominently in earlier portions of Ephesians: truth (1:13; 4:15,21,24,25; 5:9), righteousness (4:24; 5:9), peace (1:2; 2:14-18; 4:3), the gospel (1:13; 3:6), the word of God (1:13; 5:26), salvation (1:13; 2:5,8; 5:23), and faith (1:1,13,15,19; 2:8; 3:12,17; 4:5,13).

The best way to approach this crucial passage is phrase by phrase, verse by verse.

1.              ***"Finally"***

'Finally, after all I've said, after all the doctrine, the exhortations, the rebukes, the encouragement, here is one more thing. I've saved it for last, not because it's least important, but because it's the greatest threat. Something threatens to undermine and subvert everything we've talked about. So pay close attention!"

Some suggest that "finally" means "from now on" (cf. [Gal. 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.%206.17)) or "for the remaining time," referring to the period between the first and second comings of Jesus. I.e., the idea is that from now on, at all times until Jesus comes, we are at war. Be alert. Be armed. There is never a truce or ceasefire. Satan takes no holidays. He observes no Sabbath rest. There may be times of greater and lesser intensity, but never a time to relax or let down your spiritual guard.

2.              ***'Be strong in the Lord"***

The verb is best taken as a passive: 'be strengthened or 'be made strong (with the implication, 'by God; cf. 3:16). The simple exhortation "Be strong!" is both dangerous and useless. Self-reliance in spiritual warfare is suicidal. Believers do not strengthen themselves. Our strength must come from an external source, namely, the Lord. The strength of an earthly general is in his troops. But in the Christian life, the strength of the troops is in their general! See [Joshua 1:6-9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Josh%201.6-9) (esp. v. 9b). The exhortation to "be strong and courageous" is grounded in the reassuring promise that "the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (v. 9b).

The "strength" to which Paul refers is none other than the "strength" he described in [Eph. 1:19ff](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.%201.19ff). which raised Jesus from the dead and exalted him above all authority!

How might we obtain this "strength", this "power"?

\*          through prayer;

\*          by fasting;

\*          by making certain that biblical truth is forever flowing in our spiritual veins;

\*          through the fellowship and encouragement of other Christians;

\*          through praise and worship;

\*          by partaking of the Lord's Supper;

\*          through the anointing and filling of the HS; and,

\*          by adorning ourselves with the armor of God ([Eph. 6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.%206)).

3.              ***"Put on the full armor of God"***

Most believe the imagery of "armor" came to Paul from his observation of the Roman soldier to whom he was chained (6:20). Also in his mind, no doubt, were two OT texts: [Isaiah 11:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa%2011.4-5); [59:15b-19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isaiah%2059.15b-19). God is himself a warrior fighting to deliver and vindicate His people. The supernatural armor which God himself wears has been graciously made available to us. In other words, it is the armor of God not simply because He gives it, but because *He wears it*! It may also be that the imagery of 'putting on the armor of God is 'the functional equivalent of putting on the new humanity (cf. 4:24) (Lincoln, 442).

* by FAITH \_ Romans 13 – put on the Lord Jesus Christ – abiding IN HIM

4.              ***'that you may be able to stand firm***

This goal for which we arm ourselves is repeated four times in this paragraph (vv. 11, 13 [twice], and 14). Clearly Paul wants us to be immovable and steadfast and unshaken by the attacks of the enemy. Cf. [Eph. 4:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.%204.14). He means that we are to hold our position, to resist, to refuse to surrender ground to the enemy, to preserve and maintain what has already been won. Lincoln's comments are worth pondering:

'The decisive victory has already been won by God in Christ, and the task of believers is not to win but to stand, that is, to preserve and maintain what has been won”

5.              ***'The schemes of the devil"***

The word translated "schemes" = lit., *methodeias* ("methods"), i.e., wiles, tactics, stratagems, secret agendas. The plural of this word 'suggests attacks that are constantly repeated or of incalculable variety (O'Brien, 463).

What are they? Temptation, accusation, intimidation, division and other such assaults against individual believers and the church corporately. But are all Satan's "methods/tactics" explicitly revealed in Scripture?

Q: "If YOU were the devil, what tactics would you employ?"

6.              ***"Our struggle***

The Greek term translated "struggle" = *pale*, used only here in the NT and never in the LXX. It means "wrestling" (cf. verbal cognate *palaio* in [Gen. 32:24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.%2032.24)).

A: Wrestling was an extremely popular event in the athletic games held in Asia Minor, particularly in Ephesus. Thus "in contrast to the flesh-and-blood wrestling, with which the readers of Ephesians would have been quite familiar, the true struggle of believers is a spiritual power encounter which requires spiritual weaponry" (Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, p. 117).

**CLOSE COMBAT**

Ephesus was famous for the magical arts, principal among which were the "Ephesian Letters" (*Ephesiagrammata*). These six magical terms/names (*askion, kataskion, lix, tetrax, damnameneus*, and *aisia*) were alleged to possess power that would ward off evil spirits. People used them as either spoken charms to obtain power and to protect them from harm.

7.              ***'Our struggle is not against flesh and blood***

By 'flesh and blood" Paul means humanity ([Mt. 16:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.%2016.17); [Gal. 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.%201.16); [Heb. 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.%202.14)). Behind and beneath the daily, earthly struggles with people and institutions and ideologies is an unseen spiritual battle. However, this is not to suggest that Paul intends an absolute negation (cf. Luke 10; esp. [Eph. 4:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.%204.14)). The point is not to deny that we have earthly and human antagonists. The point is that even when we do fight them, Satan lurks behind their efforts (see [Mt. 16:23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.%2016.23)).

***"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***

\*          principalities/rulers (*arche*) - a ruler must have someone or something over which to exercise dominion ([Eph. 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.%201.21); [3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph%203.10); [6:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph%206.12); [Col. 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.%201.16); [2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col%202.10); [Rom. 8:38](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.%208.38)).

\*          authorities (*exousia*) - again, authority, by definition, demands a subordinate ([Eph. 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.%201.21); [3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph%203.10); [Col. 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.%201.16)).

\*          world rulers (*kosmokratoras*) - used only in [Eph. 6:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.%206.12). Their realm as well as their character is referred to as 'this darkness, something from which believers have been delivered (see [Eph. 5:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.%205.8); [Col. 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.%201.13)).

\*          spirituals (or, spiritual forces, spiritual hosts) of wickedness in the heavenly places it may well be that this is not a separate class of cosmic powers but rather a general term for all the preceding spirits and an indication of their locality.

If all angels and demons are of the same type or rank or carry the same authority, why are they described by such a variety of terms? It would also seem that with difference in rank comes difference in power, task, etc., Remember this: our struggle is against **subjected powers!** See [Eph. 1:19ff](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.%201.19ff).

9.              ***'In the evil day"***

This phrase appears nowhere else in Paul in precisely this form, although 'the present evil age is found in [Gal. 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.%201.4) and in [Eph. 5:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.%205.16) Paul said 'the days are evil. Commentators usually point to one of three possibilities or a combination of them:

The apostle is not only speaking of this present time between the two comings of Jesus, but is also alerting believers to the dangers of the devil's schemes on critical occasions in this present evil age. There may appear to be times of reprieve for Christians, but they must not be lulled into a false sense of security, thinking that the battle is over or that it is not especially difficult. They must always be prepared and put on the full armor of God, for the devil will attack when least expected (471-72).

We now turn our attention to the six pieces of armor.

1.              ***The Belt of Truth*** (v. 14a)

The "belt" or "girdle" was not simply a strip of cloth around the waist or even a narrow belt to hold up one's pants! It was a leather apron that helped protect the lower part of the body. It had two additional functions: a) it was used to hold the sheath for one's sword, and b) one's tunic would be tucked into it whenever fighting or running (cf. l Pt. 1:13). In the OT God is described as girded with might ([Ps. 65:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.%2065.6)) and also as girding the psalmist with strength for battle ([Ps. 18:32](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.%2018.32),[39](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps%2018.39)).

What does Paul mean by "truth"?

a.              *Jesus* is the truth ([John 1:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%201.14); [14:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2014.6); [Eph. 4:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.%204.21); see also [Romans 13:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%2013.14)). Thus we pray: "I put on the Lord Jesus Christ; I clothe myself with His character; I am filled with His power; I am committed to pursuing His purity."

b.              The *Bible* is the truth ([2 Tim. 2:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim.%202.15)). Successful spiritual warfare begins with the question: "Do I accept the Bible as God's Word, inspired, infallible, inerrant, the sole authority for belief and practice?"

c.              The *church* is the pillar of truth (l Tim. 3:14-15). The church provides protection, reinforcement of biblical virtues, encouragement, stability, guidance, etc.

d.              Objective truth of Christian *doctrine* is essential ([John 17:15-17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2017.15-17); [2 Cor. 4:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.%204.1-2); [Eph. 4:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.%204.14-15)). Satan will always flourish in the midst of theological ignorance.

There are two areas in particular in which demonic lies are most prevalent and powerful:

l)               lies about God (character and attributes);

2)             lies about yourself (who you are, your identity and position in Christ, your authority/power).

e.              Truth may also refer to *truthfulness*, speech and behavior; the absence of duplicity, hypocrisy; no lying or deception ([Eph. 4:25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.%204.25); [5:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph%205.9)); perhaps also the ideas of faithfulness and loyalty (cf. LXX of [Isa. 11:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa.%2011.5)).

2.              ***The Breastplate of Righteousness*** (v. 14b)

The "breastplate" (*thoraka* from which we get "thorax") usually extended from the base of the neck to the upper part of the thighs, covering what we would call the abdomen or trunk.

Is this righteousness "objective" (imputed) or "subjective" (imparted)?

a.              Objective righteousness = the breastplate of our justification, our righteous standing/position through faith in Christ; our legal holiness ([Phil. 3:3-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.%203.3-8); [2 Cor. 5:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.%205.21); [Rom. 3:19-24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.%203.19-24)).

b.              Subjective righteousness = the breastplate of experiential holiness of life ([Eph. 4:24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.%204.24); [5:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph%205.9)).

"*Victory begins with the name of Jesus on our lips. It is consummated by the nature of Jesus in our heart*" (Francis Frangipane).

3.              ***Shoes of the Gospel*** (v. 15)

This is a reference to the half-boot or military sandal worn by the Roman legionary. Hobnails or studs underneath provided stability. Two interpretations have been suggested:

a.              We are to shod/fit our feet with preparation or readiness for the gospel of peace, i.e., we are to be prepared and ready to proclaim the glorious gospel of peace ([1 Pt. 3:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet.%203.15); [Isa. 52:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa.%2052.7); [Rom. 10:13-15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.%2010.13-15)).

The gospel is the power of God by which people are set free from Satan's captivity and tyranny ([2 Cor. 4:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.%204.3-4); [Eph. 2:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.%202.1-2); [Acts 26:18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2026.18)). See especially [Rev. 12:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.%2012.10-11).

b.              The NIV takes the other view, namely, that our feet are to be fitted "with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace." Thus, it isn't readiness to proclaim the gospel but readiness that is produced in us by the gospel. More specifically, the peace which the gospel produces is to prepare us for Satan's attacks.

Peace? (l) Peace with God ([Rom. 5:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.%205.1-2); [Col. 1:19-22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.%201.19-22)). (2) Peace of God ([Phil. 4:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.%204.6-7)). 3) Peace with others ([Rom. 12: 18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.%2012.%2018)).

Therefore, the reference is either to *the peace in the gospel* which we proclaim or to *the peace of the gospel* which we experience. Paradoxically, it is in the midst of spiritual *warfare* that we are called on to proclaim spiritual *peace*!

4.              ***The Shield of Faith*** (v. 16)

The "shield" refers to an oblong device @ 4 ft. long and 2 ft. wide. It was made of two layers of wood glued together and covered first with linen and then with hide. It was then bound on top and bottom with iron. Its purpose was to defend against the incendiary missiles of the enemy, i.e., arrows dipped in pitch, set aflame, and launched.

What are the "missiles/darts/arrows" of the Evil one? O'Brien believes they depict 'in highly metaphorical language, every kind of attack launched by the devil and his hosts against the people of God (480). I believe Paul's focus is more narrow:

\*          the sudden and unexpected eruption in our mind of vile images and thoughts that shock and surprise us (such that are obviously and undeniably contrary to our most basic desires);

\*          words and pictures that disgust you and violate your God-given sense of propriety/morality leap into your mind; e.g., blasphemous thoughts about Jesus; revolting images of sexual perversity; suicidal urges; compulsive thoughts of doing horribly violent things to family/friends; unaccountable impulses to rebel against God, against one's family, against one's church; subtle insinuations against God's character/goodness; false feelings of guilt.

Frequently, people report these things to occur while reading the Bible (not newspapers or magazines), while praying, while praising God. This aggravates feelings of personal guilt and worthlessness, insofar as such occasions are regarded as spiritual ("What kind of person am I that I would have such thoughts/fantasies at precisely the time I should be loving and worshipping God?").

Q: "How do I know the difference between the fiery missiles of the evil one and the sinful activity of my own flesh?"

A: 'My own evil desire will probably be all too familiar to me, a predictable pattern I've battled with. The HS is also quick to convict me of my own sinfulness. Flaming arrows, on the other hand, come like a shot out of the blue, with a nearly irresistible intensity. With such assaults there is also often confusion and excessive guilt, especially if it was an angry impulse which unleashed its fury on another person" (Tom White, 72).

Q: 'What is the 'faith' to which Paul refers?"

A: "There are at least 3 kinds of Christian faith: l) *saving faith* (product of the new birth); 2) *sanctifying faith* (the fruit of the HS), which comes in two forms: a) our faith/belief in the truth of God's Word (faith in the doctrines of the Bible) and b) faith in the trustworthiness/goodness of God himself; 3) *supernatural faith* (a spontaneous gift of the HS). Paul probably has in mind the second of these: sanctifying faith (l Pt. 5:8-9; l [John 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%205.4)).

Observations on faith:

l)               Faith, in and of itself, does not protect us against Satan. Rather, it is the object/focus of our faith: God and his powerful presence in our lives ([Prov. 30:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov.%2030.5); [Ps. 5:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.%205.12); [2 Sam. 22:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Sam.%2022.3)).

2)             Nevertheless, it is we who extinguish the fiery darts of the evil one through faith. We are active. Faith is something we do.

3)             Faith functions as a shield of protection in several ways:

a.              [Heb. 11:24-26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.%2011.24-26) - it was Moses' faith in the glory of the coming Christ and the rewards of obedience that enabled him to say No.

b.              When Satan whispers, "God may have cared about you once before, long ago, but His interest in who you are is gone," you lift up the shield of faith and say, "That is impossible. God is immutable. He cannot change. His concern for me is eternal. What He has promised me He will fulfill."

c.              When Satan whispers, "God doesn't love you anymore; not after you've failed him so many times," you lift up the shield of faith and say, "That is impossible. God's love for me can't cease to exist, for He demonstrated it when He gave his Son to suffer in my place."

d.              The shield of faith functions whenever we say to the enemy, "I'm going to believe God when He tells me that there is great gain in godliness and therefore I will not fall prey to your seductive temptations."

The shield of faith functions each time we hold up the truth of the Scriptures under the onslaught of Satan's lies.

5.              ***The Helmet of Salvation*** (v. l7a)

The principal battleground in spiritual warfare is in the mind. Hence, we have need for a helmet of protection, a "spiritual hardhat," if you will. The helmet of the Roman soldier was made of iron or bronze with a sponge of some sort lining the inside.

The "helmet of salvation" is most likely a reference to the *assurance* of our salvation: "That which adorns and protects the Christian, which enables him to hold up his head with confidence and joy, is the fact that he is saved" (Charles Hodge).

Satan knows he can gain a major strategic advantage over us if he can sow the seeds of doubt in our minds concerning our relationship with God.

In every instance of serious and sustained demonic attack that I have encountered, the individual was plagued with doubt concerning his/her salvation.

"Such is Satan's envy and enmity against a Christian's joy and comfort, that he cannot but act to the utmost of his strength to keep poor souls in doubt and darkness. Satan knows that assurance is a pearl of such price that will make the soul happy forever; he knows that assurance makes a Christian's wilderness to be a paradise; he knows that assurance begets in Christians the most noble and generous spirits; he knows that assurance is that which will make men strong to do exploits, to shake his tottering kingdom about his ears; and therefore he is very studious and industrious to keep souls off from assurance, as he was to cast Adam out of paradise" (Thomas Brooks, *Heaven on Earth*, p. l30).

To put on the "helmet of salvation," therefore, means to live in the knowledge and assurance of the truth expressed in [Romans 8:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%208.1),[31-38](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Romans%208.31-38) and [Hebrews 13:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb%2013.5-6).

There is nothing Satan can do to alter or undermine the fact that we are saved. Not "angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" ([Rom. 8:38-39](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.%208.38-39)). But, what he can do is erode our assurance and confidence that we are saved. Our salvation, our standing with God, does not fluctuate or diminish with our success or failure in spiritual battles. But Satan is determined to convince us that it does.

See also l Thess. 5:8-9 in which our "helmet" is the "hope of salvation." In other words, this assurance of salvation is not simply a confidence *now* that I'm saved *now*, but also a confidence *now* that I *will be* saved later.

[**2 Corinthians 10:3-5**](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor%2010.3-5)

The fact that we need a helmet for combat points to the urgency of guarding our minds/understanding/thinking/thoughts.

1.              *The Nature of our Weapons*

a.              NIV - 'For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does." I.e., we live and minister in flesh and blood bodies, but we repudiate the standards and values of the world; we do not utilize its tactics/schemes to achieve our goals.

b.              Our weapons have divine power, not human/worldly/fleshly power. Lit., *dunata to theo*, which can be taken one of four ways: l) made powerful by God; 2) divinely or supernaturally powerful; 3) powerful in God's perspective; or 4) powerful for God. In any case, on any view, our weapons work! They are divinely effective. They get the job done because God works in/through them.

c.              What are our weapons? Since our adversaries are spiritual, so, too, must our weapons be spiritual. E.g., truth, righteousness, faith, assurance of salvation, the Word of God, prayer, praise, etc. What are the world's weapons that Paul repudiates? Human ingenuity and wisdom, showmanship, flash, charm, powerfully persuasive personalities, eloquence devoid of the spirit.

2.              *The Purpose of Our Weapons*

What can our weapons do?

a.              They destroy "fortresses" (NASB) or "strongholds" (NIV). See [Prov. 21:22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov.%2021.22) (the people in a city would build a sturdy outer wall for security; inside it they built a *stronghold*, a massively fortified tower to which they could retreat as a last line of defense).

b.              To what do "fortresses/strongholds" refer? Verse 5 gives the answer: (l) "arguments" (NIV) or "speculations" (NASB) = lit., thoughts, plans, intentions. Cf. [2 Cor. 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.%202.11); [4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor%204.4); [Rom. 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.%201.21); l Cor. 3:20. He is saying that his/our weapons "destroy the way people think, demolish their sinful thought patterns, the mental structures by which they live their lives in rebellion against God" (D. A. Carson); (2) "every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God" (NASB), "every pretension that sets itself up against the kingdom of God" (NIV). I.e., every arrogant claim, every haughty or prideful thought, every pompous act that forms a barrier to knowledge of God. I.e., every argument used to rationalize sin and unbelief and delay repentance.

In sum, our warfare is aimed at dismantling and tearing down the sinful reasoning and rationalizations which are strongholds by which the mind fortifies itself against the gospel.

c.              "Taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ," i.e., ideas/notions/plans are taken over and transformed as they come into a new allegiance.

Two additional issues:

Second, contextually Paul is talking about "strongholds" in the lives/minds of non-Christians. But do Christians have them too? Yes. Such intellectual/philosophical/moral enemies to the kingdom of God don't automatically disappear when we get saved.

A stronghold is "a mindset impregnated with hopelessness that causes us to accept as unchangeable something we know is contrary to God's will" (Silvoso). Or again, strongholds are negative patterns of thought that cripple our ability to obey God and thus breed feelings of guilt and despair.

They are burned into our minds either through repetition over time (such as occurs in an abusive, incestuous relationship) or through a one-time traumatic experience.

The solution is in experiencing the truth of [Rom. 12:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.%2012.1-2) and [Eph. 4:20-24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.%204.20-24). (l) Fill your mind with God's Word (memorize Scripture). (2) Affirmations of your Christian identity. 3) [Phil. 4:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.%204.8). (4) Challenge every negative/destructive thought the instant it enters your mind; evaluate it in light of the Word.

6.              ***The Sword of the Spirit*** (v. l7b)

The "sword" (*machaira*) refers to the short (12-14 inches) straight sword used in close combat. Another term (*romphaia*) refers to the long sword. Satan not only launches fiery missiles from afar, he also moves in close for hand-to-band combat!

It has been. argued that since the sword is our only offensive weapon, spiritual warfare is largely, if not exclusively, defensive. But: the sword was the only offensive weapon a Roman soldier carried! The point of the armor was to prepare a soldier for fighting in battle, in whatever form that battle might be.

The Spirit is not himself the sword. The Word is the sword. This sword is "of the Spirit" in the sense that it is the HS who gives power both to the written and spoken Word of God.

I do believe Paul is talking about the spoken word of God here in v. 17. Three reasons:

(l) The majority of cases where *rhema* is used in the NT = individual utterances/sayings.

(2) Satan cannot read our thoughts/minds, hence the need to speak aloud our resistance to his efforts.

Basis? a) No text says he can read our minds. b) He is a creature and therefore has limitations. Satan is not God! c) Such knowledge is portrayed in the Bible as peculiar to God. Knowing the heart/mind/intents/thoughts/motives of a person is an ability or prerogative reserved for God alone ([Pss. 139:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.%20139.1-4" \t "_blank), [23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Pss%20139.23-24); [26:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Pss%2026.2); [7:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Pss%207.9); [Jer. 17:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer.%2017.9-10); [Rom. 8:27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.%208.27); l Cor. 4:5; l Thess. 2:4; [Heb. 4:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.%204.12-13)). d) Otherwise, there would be no place of unassailable communion with God.

(3) We are to wage war and resist the Enemy as Jesus did in [Mt. 4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.%204), by speaking it aloud (the "word" which Jesus spoke [the *rhema* which proceeds out of God] was Scripture. Must it always be so with us? Cf. [Mt. 10:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.%2010.19)).

In summary, there are three primary ways in which we wield the sword of the Spirit:

\*          We PROCLAIM the Word (as Jesus did); cf. [Rev. 12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.%2012)

\*          We PRAY the Word ([Eph. 6:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.%206.18-19); [Acts 6:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%206.4); [John 15:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2015.7))

\*          We PRAISE with the Word (i.e., sing the Scriptures)

**Contrary to what some have said, prayer is not the seventh piece of spiritual armor. Grammatically, both "praying" and "keeping alert" (v. 18) are connected with the verb "stand" (v. 14). In other words, prayer is that which characterizes and permeates the whole of the Christian soldier's activity: "Take your stand, praying, . . . Put on the belt of truth, praying . . . Put on the breastplate of righteousness, as you pray . . . " etc.**

*Observe the four "All's" of prayer*

1. **Praying at ALL times in the Spirit** –

prayer is to be continual and unceasing

1. **We are to pray "with ALL prayer and petition"** (v. 18a).

The different kinds/types of prayer available to us include silent prayer, audible prayer, public prayer, private prayer, both short and long prayers, prayer with fasting, prayer with feasting, prayer with praise, petition, intercession, rebuke, doctrinal praying, emotional praying, resisting-the-enemy praying, prayers of thanksgiving, confession, prayer for healing, for help, for courage, etc.

As prayer pertains specifically to spiritual warfare, consider five forms it may assume:

a.              Praying for ourselves and others to be given insight and understanding into who we are in Christ and what is ours through faith ([Eph. 1:15ff](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.%201.15ff).).

b.              Prayers of resistance and rebuke of the enemy. E.g.,

"Satan, I rebuke you in the authority of Jesus Christ. I declare your works in my life destroyed. Jesus triumphed over you in the wilderness, on the cross, and in the grave. His resurrection has sealed your fate. I triumph over you now in the strength of his name. I resist and rebuke your efforts to oppress, afflict, or deceive me. I remove from you the right to rob me of the joy and fruit of my salvation. Through the power of the blood of Calvary, I command all powers of darkness assigned to me, sent to me, or surrounding me now, to leave. Go where Jesus Christ orders you to go, never to return" (Tom White, 116).

c.              Prayers of protection, to shield, guard, support,, etc.

"Lord, I commend and entrust \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ into your watchful care. May your glory surround and protect him/her. May you drive away the enemy and deliver him/her from all evil and temptation and every attack of the evil one."

d.              Prayers for the places where you go, stay, live (especially when traveling or in a strange location). E.g.,

'Lord, I claim this place for your purposes. I stand on the truth of your Word: 'The scepter of the wicked will not remain over the land allotted to the righteous' ([Ps 125:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps%20125.3)). I believe you have given me this place. I dedicate it to you, and ask you to fill it with your holy presence. I separate myself from any iniquity that has occurred here in past times. I apply the power of Jesus' blood to remove any desecration of God's name in this place. I ask you, in Jesus' authority, to set watching angels around this property for your purposes, protecting your servant from the work of the evil one" (White, 118-19).

e.              Prayer for the demonized when you are ministering to them. E.g.,

"(l) that the demons may be cut off from all communication and help from other demons and Satan,

(2) that the demons would be confused and weakened in their hold on the person,

**3) We are to "Keep alert with ALL perseverance**  (v. 18b).

- Stay awake and be persistent!

**4)**  **Making supplication for ALL the saints (pray for all the saints) –**

- 1 Timothy 2 Paul commands us to pray for all people, and here all the saints (believers)