

Spiritual Warfare Part 5 – The Remaining Pieces

Ephesians 6:17-20

Introduction

The Believer's Conflict

The Believer's Charge

The Believer's Covering

- The Belt of Truth
- The Breastplate of Righteousness
- The Shoes of the Preparation of the Gospel of peace
- The Shield of Faith
- The Helmet of Salvation
- The Sword of the Spirit

The Believer's Comportment

The Believer's Covering: Continued...

Ephesians 6:17 ¹⁷also receive THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, (LSB)

- Note that begins by telling believers to "receive" these pieces of the armor. This word refers to receiving something offered by another.
- This is another reminder of the divine source of our armor. It is the armor "of God."

The Helmet of Salvation (Eph 6:17a)

The Soldiers Helmet

- Roman soldiers' helmets were made of leather with metal exteriors. They often had cheek plates on the sides, forehead bands, and neck collars. It was designed to protect the head from blows from swords or clubs.
- In the same way the helmet of salvation protects our minds from the attacks of Satan.
 - **2 Corinthians 10:3–5** ³For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, ⁴for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the tearing down of strongholds, ⁵as we tear down speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, (LSB)
 - **2 Corinthians 11:3** ³But I fear that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be corrupted from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. (LSB)
- Satan will try to use confusion, discouragement, and doubt to corrupt our devotion to Christ.

The Believer's Salvation

- Past (Justification): If we are true believers, when we responded to the Gospel by repenting and placing our faith in Jesus Christ alone for our salvation, the righteousness of Christ was credited

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to our account, we were declared not guilty in God's sight, and we were sealed with the Holy Spirit. As a result, we are now free from the penalty of sin.

- **Romans 3:21–26** ²¹But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²²even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith, for a demonstration of His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶for the demonstration of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (LSB)
- **Romans 5:1** ¹Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (LSB)
- **Romans 8:1** ¹Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (LSB)
- **Present (Sanctification):** From the moment of salvation, God begins the process of progressively sanctifying us – conforming us to the image of His Son. This is possible because we have been freed from the power of sin.
 - **Romans 6:5–6** ⁵For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, ⁶knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; (LSB)
 - **Philippians 2:12–13** ¹²So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. (LSB)
 - **Ephesians 4:20–24** ²⁰But you did not learn Christ in this way— ²¹if indeed you heard Him and were taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus— ²²to lay aside, in reference to your former conduct, the old man, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, ²³and to be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴and to put on the new man, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. (LSB)
- **Future (Glorification):** The ultimate and sure destination for every believer is glorification. We will receive a resurrected and glorified body, and will serve the Lord and reign with Him forever – free from the presence of sin.
 - **Romans 8:29–30** ²⁹Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers; ³⁰and those whom He predestined, He also called; and those whom He called, He also justified; and those whom He justified, He also glorified. (LSB)
 - **Philippians 3:20–21** ²⁰For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by His working through which He is able to even subject all things to Himself. (LSB)

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- **Ephesians 1:13–14** ¹³In Him, you also, after listening to the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory. (LSB)
- **Revelation 22:1–5** ¹Then he showed me a river of the water of life, bright as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, ²in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³And there will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His slaves will serve Him; ⁴and they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. ⁵And there will no longer be any night, and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them, and they will reign forever and ever. (LSB)
- It is this future aspect of our salvation that Paul primarily has in view here. All that God has and is doing for us in Christ lays the foundation, but what protects our minds against Satan’s attacks against our minds is the hope and security we have of our future and final salvation.
 - **Philippians 1:6** ⁶For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. (LSB)

Three Illustrations of how this works

- **Job**
 - **Job 13:15a** ¹⁵“Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. (LSB)
 - **Job 19:25–27** ²⁵“As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will rise up over the dust of this world. ²⁶“Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall behold God, ²⁷Whom I myself shall behold, And whom my eyes will see and not another. My heart faints within me! (LSB)
- **Phil 3-4:1**
- **1 Pet 1**

The Sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17b)

The Soldiers Sword

- There are two words used for “sword” in the NT.
- “*rhomphaia*” – This was a large double-edged broadsword that ranged from 3-4 feet in length.
- “*machaira*” – This was a short double-edged dagger or sword about 1-2 feet in length. It was the typical sword carried by the Roman soldier. This was the sword typically referred to in the NT, and is the type of sword here in Ephesians 6:17.
- The *machaira* was a precision weapon, suitable in close combat for both offense and defense.

The Source of the Believer’s Sword

- First, we see the believer’s sword is “*of the Spirit.*”
- Divine Origin: I believe the primary emphasis is on the Holy Spirit as the origin or source of this sword. It is the Holy Spirit who gave us the Word of God.

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- **2 Timothy 3:16** ¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, (LSB)
- **2 Peter 1:20–21** ²⁰Know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes by one's own interpretation. ²¹For no prophecy was ever made by the will of man, but men being moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. (LSB)
- Divine Power: Because the Holy Spirit is the divine author of the Word, it has divine power.
 - **Hebrews 4:12** ¹²For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (LSB)
 - **Isaiah 55:11** ¹¹So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what pleases Me, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it. (LSB)
 - **Romans 1:16** ¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (LSB)
- Divine Instruction: Not only is the Holy Spirit the source of Scripture's content and power, He is also the one who instructs us, enabling us to understand His Word.
 - **John 14:26** ²⁶"But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. (LSB)
 - **1 Corinthians 2:12–13** ¹²Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the depths graciously given to us by God, ¹³of which depths we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual depths with spiritual words. (LSB)
 - **1 John 2:20** ²⁰But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. (LSB)

The Nature of the Believer's Sword

- Next, we see that the sword is identified specifically as the "*Word of God.*"
- We have already looked at the divine inspiration, power, effectiveness, and accessibility of God's Word. Regarding its content, we can also note the following:
- **Psalm 19:7–10** ⁷The law of Yahweh is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of Yahweh is sure, making wise the simple. ⁸The precepts of Yahweh are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of Yahweh is pure, enlightening the eyes. ⁹The fear of Yahweh is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of Yahweh are true; they are righteous altogether. ¹⁰They are more desirable than gold, even more than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. (LSB)
 - The Word is:
 - perfect – without error
 - sure – trustworthy, faithful, reliable
 - right – righteous, just, upright
 - pure – clear and unstained/compromised
 - clean – morally, ethically clean
 - enduring forever – eternal, never outdated
 - true, righteous altogether – sufficient for comprehensive righteousness
 - The Word produces:
 - Restoration – spiritual life, conversion

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- Wisdom
- Joy
- Spiritual Enlightenment
- Righteousness
- Because of this, the Word is to be desired above all else.

Wielding the Believer's Sword

- In Ephesians 6:17, when Paul refers to the Word of God, he doesn't use the more expected term *logos*. Instead he uses the term *rhema*.
- *Rhema* is used more frequently of the spoken word or a specific statement.
- When wielding the Word of God, the idea is not abstract general Biblical knowledge, but bringing specific principles and passages of Scripture to bear on specific situations. It's the active proclamation of Scripture to ourselves and others.
- Know the Word: Wielding the Word requires precision and diligent study.
 - **2 Timothy 2:15** ¹⁵Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. (LSB)
- Wield the Word to Strengthen our Faith
 - **Romans 10:17** ¹⁷So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. (LSB)
 - **2 Timothy 3:16** ¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, (LSB)
 - **Psalms 19:11–14** ¹¹Moreover, by them Your slave is warned; In keeping them there is great reward. ¹²Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults. ¹³Also keep back Your slave from presumptuous sins; Let them not rule over me; Then I will be blameless, And I shall be acquitted of great transgression. ¹⁴Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O Yahweh, my rock and my Redeemer. (LSB)
- Wield the Word to Battle Temptation/Sin
 - Christ did exactly this in **Matthew 4:1-11**
 - Satan tempted Christ to distrust the providential care of God. Jesus responded by quoting from **Deuteronomy 8:3** 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.' (LSB)
 - Satan tempted Christ to presume upon God. Jesus responded by quoting from **Deuteronomy 6:16** 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.' (LSB)
 - Satan tempted Christ to ambition, to fulfill it his own way. Jesus responded by quoting from **Deuteronomy 6:13** 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.' (LSB)
 - In each case Christ understood Satan's tactics and the **heart** of his temptation.
 - In each case Christ drew upon specific passages of Scripture that addressed **root** of those temptations.
 - We need to understand the root causes of the temptations we are struggling with.
 - We need to identify, study, and learn passages of Scripture that deal with both the behavior and root issues of the heart.
 - We need to preach these passages to ourselves whenever we face the temptation.
- Wield the Word to Strengthen our Brothers and Sisters In Christ

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- **Ephesians 4:15** ¹⁵but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, that is Christ, (LSB)
- **Romans 15:14** ¹⁴But I myself am also convinced about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, having been filled with all knowledge and being able also to admonish one another. (LSB)
- Wield the Word in Corporate Worship
 - **1 Timothy 4:13** ¹³Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching. (LSB)
 - **2 Timothy 4:2** ²preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and teaching. (LSB)
 - **Colossians 3:16** ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with gratefulness in your hearts to God. (LSB)
- Wield the Word in Gospel Proclamation
 - **Isaiah 52:7** ⁷How lovely on the mountains Are the feet of him who proclaims good news, Who announces peace And proclaims good news of good things, Who announces salvation, And says to Zion, “Your God reigns!” (LSB)
 - **Matthew 16:18** ¹⁸“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. (LSB)
 - **Matthew 28:18–20** ¹⁸And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to keep all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (LSB)

The Believer’s Compartment

Ephesians 6:18–20 ¹⁸praying at all times with all prayer and petition in the Spirit, and to this end, being on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, ¹⁹as well as on my behalf, that words may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel— ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains—so that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. (LSB)

The Importance of Prayer (Eph 6:18)

- Grammatically, “praying” connects all the way back to the exhortation in verse 14 to “stand.”
- Prayer is not an additional piece of armor, but the disposition of the believer enabling the effective employment of the armor.
- *Prayer is critical because every piece of Christian armor is useless without it. Prayer is like oil. Just as every part of an engine is useless without oil, so every part of Christian warfare is vain without prayer. Fighting Satan without prayer is like David fighting Goliath in Saul’s armor. The armor doesn’t fit, and it is ineffective against the blows of the enemy – Joel Beeke¹*

¹ Quoted in *Spiritual Warfare* by Brian Borgman, Rob Ventura (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books), 88.

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- *We can only appropriate the armor through prayer. The armor of God does not consist of literal pieces we can put on; rather, it consists of spiritual truths that the Christian appropriates through prayer. Prayer imparts effectiveness to the armor and employs God's strength, enabling us to stand.*²

The Manner of Prayer (Eph 6:18)

Prayer is Constant

- **Colossians 4:2** ²Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving; (LSB)
- **1 Thessalonians 5:17** ¹⁷pray without ceasing; (LSB)
- **Philippians 4:6** ⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (LSB)
- The idea with “at all times” is not that we literally pray 24/7. Rather it’s that we pray in all circumstances and at every opportunity.
- This is driven by a deep sense of our own weakness and dependence on the Lord.
- *The spirit of a true convert is a spirit of faith and reliance on the power, wisdom, and mercy of God, and such a spirit is naturally expressed in prayer. True prayer is nothing else but faith expressed. True Christian prayer is the faith and reliance of the soul breathed out in words.* – Jonathan Edwards³

Prayer is Varied

- We are called to pray “with all prayer and supplication”
- The variety of our prayers can be seen in the disciple’s prayer in **Matthew 6:9–13**.
- Prayer is how we...
 - Commune with our Heavenly Father.
 - Express our worship to Him.
 - Submit our own wills to seeking His will.
 - Submit our requests, intercessions, and petitions (with thanksgiving).
 - **Philippians 4:6** ⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (LSB)
 - Confess our sins and seek His forgiveness.
 - Express our dependence on Him for our daily needs and spiritual strength.

Prayer is in the Spirit

- Next, our prayer is to be done “in the Spirit.” This is NOT a reference to praying in tongues. There is nothing in the text or context that would allow such an interpretation.
- Praying in the Spirit is praying in submission to, dependence on, and agreement with the Holy Spirit.
- This starts by being transformed by the renewing of our mind through the Word of God, and then living a life of obedience in step with the Holy Spirit.

² Borgman & Ventura, *Spiritual Warfare*, 88-89.

³ Quoted in *Spiritual Warfare* by Brian Borgman, Rob Ventura (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books), 90.

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- **Romans 12:1–2** ¹Therefore I exhort you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice—living, holy, and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. ²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may approve what the will of God is, that which is good and pleasing and perfect. (LSB)
- **Galatians 5:25** ²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk in step with the Spirit. (LSB)
- When we don't know how to pray the Holy Spirit helps us.
 - **Romans 8:26–27** ²⁶And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; ²⁷and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (LSB)
- Remember the connection between the Sword of the Spirit and praying in the Spirit – another aid in praying in the Spirit is to pray through Scripture.

Prayer is Alert and Persistent

- We are to be “alert” or watchful in our praying, with “perseverance.”
- **Mark 14:38** ³⁸“Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (LSB)
- **1 Peter 4:7** ⁷The end of all things is at hand; therefore, be of sound thinking and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. (LSB)
- We need to be watching dangers, threats, and spiritual needs in our own lives, in the church, and in the world around us, so we will be equipped to bring those concerns before the Lord.
- We need to persevere in our prayer, never giving up.

Prayer is for All the Saints

- So often it's easy to become self-absorbed and inward focused in our prayers.
- But our prayer is to be outward focused, praying for ALL the saints.
- Samuel, after addressing the Israelites' demand for a king, said this:
 - **1 Samuel 12:23a** ²³“Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against Yahweh by ceasing to pray for you; (LSB)
- Paul modeled this throughout his letters to the churches. He was constantly praying for them.
- Paul's prayers also modeled the right kind of petitions (Eph 1:15-23; Eph 3:14-21)

The Illustration of Prayer (Eph 6:19-20)

- Paul's Humility: Despite being an Apostle and minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, for which he was currently in chains, Paul recognizes his own weakness and need for prayer.
- Paul's Request: Paul's request is not for personal comfort, protection, or deliverance. Paul's concern is for boldness in gospel proclamation. His concern was that he would stand firm in the battle.
 - NOTE: I personally wonder if the “to this end” in verse 18 might be pointing to this request.