



Battling by Prayer **Ephesians 6:10-20**

Imagine a Warzone

Imagine with me that you are a soldier on the battlefield in the midst of war. As you look around you see other soldiers who have been prepped for the battle. Their faces are painted to camouflage themselves, they're lying low on the ground. They have their weapons, and their eyes are scanning the field for enemies. Then you look behind you and you see some civilian walking on the field and they're walking straight into the enemy's territory, but it's as if they don't know what's going on. I mean literally, they start talking to soldiers saying, "What's going on?" They seem to have no awareness and no fear of what could happen to them. The soldiers on the ground try to silence the person and even take him down, but then he yells all the more: "What are you doing to me?!"

What's probably going to happen to that civilian if he doesn't embrace what's going on? He's probably going to be taken captive, get severely hurt or maybe even die. Now, let me ask you something. If you were in a warzone, would you want to be prepared like the soldiers or would you rather be ignorant like the civilian? I would imagine we'd all want to be prepared if we found ourselves in a warzone. And we really have no hesitation thinking that. I mean, even though the civilian isn't feeling fear and he's strolling around without a care in the world, we recognize that he's foolish. We'd rather be the trained, persevering, tired, fighting, focused soldier than the lackadaisical, "happy" civilian.

Christians Are In a Warzone

As I give that illustration, I want to confront us all here in this room to recognize that we are in a warzone. One of the concerns that I have as I look at the landscape of the Christian world around me in America at least is that I think Christians act more like civilians than soldiers. We say that "this world is not my home," but when something happens in our country that makes us uncomfortable, we seem to fight tooth and nail to get our way. When we hear about how worldly and dangerous other countries are, we tend to think *they're* in need of Jesus, and we send missionaries there, but witness to my neighbor or co-worker? Really?! That's just too scary, and besides, they go to church (or at least maybe they used to).

I still remember seeing a picture of a mom walking with her child through a concentration camp in German after the war ended. Here's a woman who lived in Germany and yet within in her own country, people were starving and dying. And what did she do? Probably nothing. I couldn't find that picture, but I did find this one:



You see the woman? She's healthy. She's well-dressed. She's next to weak, rotting bodies. What about us? Jesus teaches us that there is none good, but God alone. And then those who trust in Jesus are now called "saints" – set apart ones for God's glorious and eternal purposes. He calls us righteous, and he says that we're on the battle field. Do you believe it or do you just want to act like a civilian? The apostle Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:3-4, "³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted

him.”¹ When we hear a verse like this, I think we should see something clearly. A battle mindset should be the norm for a Christian.

Is The Battle a Rarity Or The Norm?

Now, I know in saying all of these things I could be “preaching to the choir.” Most, if not all, of us know that we’re in a spiritual battle. But here’s my concern for us specifically: we think the battle is to be the rarity and not the norm.

If you believe this way, I actually think you might embrace a type of prosperity gospel. It’s not that you believe you’ll get a house and a nice car and a big bank account because you believe on Jesus. No, I fear our belief might be more deceptively stealthy. You believe that if you trust Jesus, he’s going to give you feelings of calm. You think that if you’ve obeyed him, you’re not going to feel a battle. If you’ve taken all the right steps and done all the “right” things, God will give you the specific treat you want. So, when you feel the battle, you panic. You try to get out as fast as possible because you think God couldn’t possibly want you to stay *in the battle*. But what if you’re a soldier and not a civilian?

Listen, a civilian can run and retreat. A civilian can try to get out. But a soldier? If he retreats, he’s dishonored. Ventura, I fear that many of us really think that the Christian life is to be a vacation, a retreat of sorts. When we read our Bibles, that’s not prepping me for war – it’s soothing me for the rest of my peace-filled day. When we pray, that’s not battle – it’s calming me emotionally. When we gather with a body of believers, we’re not trying to equip the saints and strengthen them – it’s to primarily help me feel like I’m in a warm fuzzy blanket of love. Parenting is supposed to look more like an affirmation of how good of a parent I am instead of warfare for our kid’s souls – loving them even when they fight and scream. Living in this world is a battle of love to show through thick and thin that Christ is Lord and must be followed because there’s a real God and a real Heaven and a real Hell.

If we don’t see the battle as normative for daily life then God, and Christianity, is merely a therapist to help us *feel* better. Is that salvation?

Christians Must Go Deeper

Jesus said in this world you will have tribulation. We need to get the “vacation” mindset out of our minds. Now, I know that you could say, “But even Jesus would *get away* to pray.” Yes, and when we hear about Jesus’ times of getting away, he’s fasting for 40 days and being tempted by Satan. Sometimes in trying to get away, he can’t because people are following him (and he has compassion and continues to minister). Another time in prayer, he’s in immense emotional turmoil.

I don’t think Jesus’ times away were “vacations.” They were part of the battle. Yes, he was, I’m sure, strengthened through prayer and even time away, but a battle mindset was never *not* on his mind. Nor should we ever think otherwise.

Think about the saints through the ages. Job lost his family and his friends even turned on him while he was enduring unbearable pain. And the Scriptures tell us that this all happened under God’s sovereign oversight. David, a man who was after God’s own heart, was sought after to be killed on numerous occasions. He was attacked even from within his own family. The prophet Isaiah was a follower of God and yet history records him being sawn in two. The apostle Paul was beaten, shipwrecked, rejected by friends and he even said to the Corinthian church that “the more abundantly I love you, the less I am

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), 2 Ti 2:2–4.

loved.”² Then think about the apostle John. You want to talk about an island vacation? After having been plunged into boiling oil in the Colosseum, and then surviving that, he was exiled to the Island of Patmos. All of these don’t hold a candle to Jesus. Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief (Is. 53:3), being stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. His body and soul experienced the anger of man, like the others, but he also experienced the infinite wrath of God on the cross in order to reconcile people to God, have eternal life and then experience *peace and life and joy* for all eternity.

Even as I say this, you could be thinking. Wait, what? How can you go through immense suffering *and* have peace? Ah, that’s a great question. We tend to think you can have peace and joy and battle at the same time, but the Bible tells us otherwise.

Do You Believe It?

For some, you have a hard time believing these things and you might even be thinking, “Pastor Timothy, this doesn’t sound encouraging.” But I think this is a most encouraging way to think. God doesn’t sugarcoat this world and cause us to ignore the problems. I don’t have to spin my wheels in panic trying to “get out.” Instead, I’m told that there are significant problems, and I have the grace to fight for his glory and to fight for joy in him in the midst of the issues.

Also, I don’t have to be shocked by sin, pain and suffering. I remember when a pastor once told me of a statement that the 19th century pastor, Martyn Lloyd-Jones made when talking about the church. He said that when God reveals sin in the church, that’s not a sign of God’s wrath. It’s a sign of grace. When God keeps your church from seeing sin, that’s a sign of wrath. I think that’s a principle across the board. When you no longer see the battlefield. When you no longer think that there’s spiritual warfare. When you don’t feel any tensions that could be a sign of blindness on your part. So, praise God when he reveals your kids sinful hearts. Praise God when your sin is revealed. Praise God when a church member’s sin comes to light. Praise God because that means God is making us aware of the battle.

This battle is not bad. The battle is *good*. At the end of Paul’s life, he says, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”³ Paul describes his living as a Christian as a battle. And he calls the “fight” good. God opens our eyes so that we can be strengthened and encouraged and motivated and empowered in the *good* battle.

Now What?

We’re not just to say, “Praise the Lord. I see it! Now can I get back to acting like a civilian?” Just like soldiers “see” and then respond accordingly, so that’s to be the case for us as well. We’re in a battle, and we must *fight*. But how do we fight when the battle isn’t like warfare that we see here. Jesus confronts Peter saying that we don’t fight with swords. Instead, we fight with Christ’s love. But even that seems nebulous. How do we face the battle prepared as a “good soldier” in the “good fight?”

That’s where we come to Ephesians 6:10-20. And actually, in this passage, we will see that *prayer* is the absolutely essential component to the battle. I believe this passage teaches us that **In order to engage in spiritual warfare, we need to embrace God and put on his battle gear through prayer.** Turn in your Bibles now and I want to read the passage together this morning:

² *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), 2 Co 12:15.

³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), 2 Ti 4:7.

¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; ¹⁸ praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints⁴

I'm going to take a few things out of the order that Paul gives here, but hopefully it helps us to piece together what Paul is expressing in these verses. As we can see, what Paul writes here comes as a conclusion to the letter he's written to this local church in Ephesus. "Finally, my brethren," Paul says. If he were to bring everything together, it would be to say, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." But what does that mean? It looks like doing battle. And here, Paul gets a little specific on what that looks like. He answers the question we have of "Now what?" In this text, Paul shows us that we need to:

1. Know Your Neediness (v. 12)

Paul writes, starting in verse 11, that he wants for us to ". . . be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."⁵

What I said in 4 pages, Paul says in one verse. There's a battle, and there's an immense one. It's a battle that's not like the earthly battles. Instead, it's against rulers, authorities, cosmic powers and spiritual forces. The way it's written, I tend to view these as various terms for either the same type of spiritually demonic beings or it's at least describing different classes of demons. Either way, the battle we have in this world isn't merely against a President we disagree with or abortion clinics. It's against the "god of this world" who has blinded the eyes. In Ephesians 2, Paul says to the Ephesians, "**And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience**"⁶ The "prince of the power of the air" is at work in the sons of disobedience. While we must address positions and issues around us – seeking to be salt and light – we must see that Satan and his minions are battling for the souls of mankind, to keep them blinded to believe those things. If we just address the external issues, we won't be addressing the heart. And just like a medical professional wants to get to the root issue; so Christians should seek to get to the deceiver – not merely the deception.

⁴ *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Eph 6:10–18.

⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Eph 6:11b-12.

⁶ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Eph 2:1–2.

We must get this in our minds. Understand the significance of the battle. Do you realize that Hell belches continuously because it's filled with people who willfully embraced God's gifts while rejecting God? Do you realize that the battle isn't merely for getting people to be moral, but for calling people to see that Jesus suffered for sinners so that sinners could be forgiven and reconciled to God – so that we could have a restored relationship with God?

Do you realize that you are on a battlefield, and your opposition is Satanic? Now, even as I say that, I need to qualify that statement because we can tend to over-sensualize that statement. We can think only in terms of significant demonic oppression. While that can be included, that's not the only tactic of Satan. In chapter 4:14, Paul prays "We battle against the "schemes of the devil." In chapter 4 and verse 14, Paul prays **"that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes."**⁷ Paul tells us that even false teaching is demonic. We need to be discerning with teaching that veers us away from Jesus Christ! It's demonic. We need to see that morality apart from godliness is demonic. In a myriad of ways, Satan seeks to deceive.

And Paul says that we as God's children must be discerning and recognize that we're not merely battling against what we see. We're seeking for people around us to know God and be saved. We're not against them. We're *for* their eternal good – that they would turn to God and trust Jesus for forgiveness and life. But behind them is Satan and his minions. He is who we battle against.

I don't know about you, but that actually concerns me somewhat. How can I, a weak vessel, fight against Satan? Even Peter says, **"angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against [fallen angels] before the Lord."**⁸ Angels are greater in might and power and they dare not to do that. Jude tells us Michael, the archangel wouldn't bring a judgment either. So if these angels are more powerful than we are, what hope do we have in the battle?!

Do you see our neediness? I hope so because I believe that's precisely what Paul calls us to see and embrace.

2. Know Your God (vv. 10-11).

Look at verses 10-11 again with me: ¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God . . ."⁹ What is Paul calling the Ephesian Christians to? In one word: faith. The word faith, by definition means "trust, reliance or dependence." Do you get the way he's emphasizing that in verse 10? He does it by stating two phrases and building one upon the other. The first phrase is to be strong *in the Lord*. How am I going to be strong in my life and the daily battles that God has ordained for me to face? It's not by me saying, "Look at me. I'm so strong." Instead, Paul says that it's in seeing and esteeming God above all. It's in admitting my weakness and my complete inability to do *anything* apart from Jesus. I can only be strong *in the Lord*.

⁷ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Eph 4:14.

⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), 2 Pe 2:11.

⁹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Eph 6:10–11.

This phrase teaches us several things, but I want to bring out two. First, Christians are secure in Jesus. What an awesome message to know when we're on the battlefield? Are we going to be taken by Satan as prisoners of war? Absolutely not. We are in the Lord! We are secure.

The second point that Paul is bringing out in this phrase here in Ephesians 6 is that we are actually strengthened by the Lord by being secured in him. We don't see this in our English translations, but this phrase is actually written in the passive form. Meaning that it can be translated, "Be continually strengthened in the Lord." Let the knowledge of Jesus and the gospel message that tells us of his love, commitment, eternal power, grace and hope fill you up and strengthen you. As you received Jesus by faith, so live by dependence on him and all he has and continues to do for those who trust him! Know your God, Ventura. It's not *you* who strengthens you. Jesus strengthens you. He will never leave you nor forsake you. You're not in this battle alone – ever!

And that point is emphasized by the next phrase "in the strength of his might." It sounds almost odd for Paul to say that. Listen to how this could be translated, "Be continually strengthened in the Lord in the strength of his might." Do you hear the emphasis of Paul? Be strengthened in Jesus by the strength of Jesus' might. You are weak, Christian. Paul says that elsewhere, but he also says, "When I am weak, I am strong." Jesus' strength is seen clearly through our weakness. So, don't try to impress God by putting on your own armament for the battle. That's ridiculous. How can you possibly fight against Satan in your own strength? You need the battle-gear of Jesus! And, Paul commands us to live each day in utter dependence on Jesus because Jesus' might is invincible, and he gives his might to us for his glory and fame! So, know your weakness and know your God!

3. Know That Victory Is Not Easy, But It Is Guaranteed (vv. 13-14).

Just because God is at work within us does not mean that God guarantees ease of life. Verses 13-14 say, "¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴Stand therefore" ¹⁰

Therefore. Why is that word there? It's there because there is a real, intense, serious, eternally significant battle. THEREFORE, we're told to take up the armor of God. We'll talk about the armor in a moment, but have you noticed the number of times that the word "stand" is used here? Within these two verses, you see "stand" twice and "withstand" once. These words show the intensity of the battle. We stand on the promises of God, but that doesn't mean it's easy. If all you're doing is standing, that means that there's great force against you.

But this idea of "stand" also communicates victory. I'm reminded of the song *The Star Spangled Banner*. This song was written by Francis Scott Key who, along with a man by the name of Skinner, were tasked to seek for the freedom of an American by the British soldiers. When Key and Skinner were aboard the British ship, they did secure the man's freedom, but they overheard the British plans of attack. As a result, they were held hostage on a boat until the British completed their attack in Baltimore. As Key was on the boat, he looked out to see bombs and rockets giving light in the harbor. Because of the shooting, he could see the flag still waving in the sky, but once the fighting gave way, he had to wait until morning to see if the Americans still had victory. Would the flag still be standing? In the morning, the fort took their smaller storm flag down and then put up the larger flag. When Key writes, "and the flag was still

¹⁰ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Eph 6:13–14.

there,” he was saying, “And we were victorious!” This flag, to this day, is protected by the Smithsonian museum and is a sign of victory. And all it did was stay on the flagpole over the fort.

This is the idea Paul is getting at when he says “having done all, to stand.” Think of it another way. The battle is raging. Satan and his army is attacking. The clouds of fury are against us daily through various types of struggles and temptations and situations, but then when the clouds lift and you can finally see something through the rubble, Satan looks and every single Christian still stands. What does that speak to Satan? He’s lost the battle and he has no hope to win the war! The Christians still stand. So yes, it’s an intense battle, but Jesus, by his strength of his might, guarantees victory.

So you have no need to fear. You don’t need to stay in your sin. You are victorious in Jesus. Stand up and don’t take defeat as a way of life! Stand because you’re secure. Stand because you’re victorious in Christ!

Now that we know our God, our weakness and also the victory in the midst of intense fighting, we can now know our battle gear.

4. **Know Your Battle Gear (vv. 14-17).**

Let’s read verses 14-17 again together: ¹⁴Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”¹¹

Now, if we are strengthened by Jesus’ strength, and we are putting on God’s armor (not ours). And if we’re standing *in Jesus*, then what we see is that our victory is dependent on God – not us. Yet Paul still says “put on” the whole of God’s armor. This phrase “put on” is used by Paul elsewhere. In chapter 4, he talks about putting off the old self and putting on the new self. The way Paul talks in that chapter and in Colossians 3 is actually pretty intriguing by what he says: “You have put on the new self, so put it on!” To say it another way, “Because you *are* righteous, live out your identity.” I think the same can be said here with this armor. All of the pieces of armor that are mentioned here are God’s gifts to those who trust Jesus. Look at the battle gear. They are Truth, Righteousness, the Gospel of Peace, Faith, Salvation and the Word of God.

This war analogy actually traces back to Isaiah 11:5, where we read of the Messiah that **“Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.”**¹² In Isaiah 59:17, we read of God that he looked for justice and found none, so **“¹⁷ He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.”**¹³ This battle gear *is* God’s battle gear, and he gives it to all who trust Jesus! Amazing grace!

Jesus fought the battle against our sin on the cross – conquering death – so that we could have life and the ability to wield his battle gear! All because of Christ, we are victorious soldiers with God’s armor.

¹¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Eph 6:14–17.

¹² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Is 11:5.

¹³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Is 59:17.

Paul now uses analogy to help us to understand the importance of each gift we have been given through Jesus.

The *belt* was used to keep the clothes together so that you're not tripping over yourself in battle. God's Truth empowers us to stay focused and able to battle and not be tripped up against the deceitfulness around us in the world. We now have *the Truth* because Jesus *is the Truth!* In battle, we are determined to focus on God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit.

The *breastplate* protected your heart – the center of your being! I believe this “righteousness” is the gift of God given to us – the righteousness of God that we receive apart from the Law. It's the righteousness of Jesus that's granted to us that protects us in battle. This is something we never lose, but it's something we can often forget! Christian, do you realize that God has given you a righteous standing before him. This righteousness withstands the onslaught of the accuser of the brethren and it also compels us to live righteous and godly lives in this present age.

Then we have *shoes*. This speaks of movement. In the Roman world, soldiers would have long spikes on the bottom of the shoes so that they would not give up any ground to the enemy. For Christians, our shoes are the gospel of peace. This peace is reconciliation with God. And if God is for us, who can be against us. We have the gospel, and we are to not give any ground to Satan. Instead, we move forward with the gospel – which is the power of God unto salvation – for everyone who believes. We preach this gospel, and God draws people to himself as we proclaim it. So in the battle, we don't merely focus on externals, we need to share the gospel message to people and watch as God converts citizens of darkness into citizens of Light!

Then we have a *shield*. The shield protected the whole body, but God's shield is different than the world's shields. In ancient culture, they would have flaming darts to burn the wooden shields. God's shield can withstand the enemy's darts! And get this, the shield is *faith*. The shield is dependence – not on me, but on God! In battling, we don't say, “God, I'm going to prove myself to you.” In battle, God is saying, “Look to me for complete strength. Depend on me and I will prove myself to you!”

Then we have the *helmet* of salvation. This again is something we don't lose. It's something we can forget, though. Paul is saying that we are to remind our minds of the salvation we have been given. We need the gospel permeating all of his thoughts. In the battlefield of our mind, emotions, homes, churches, workplace, we need to remember the great salvation we've been given. We need to ponder the glorious Savior who was crucified for our sins and rose again so that we would be free to follow God and love him!

But how are we going to know the salvation without the *sword*? This is the only offensive weapon mentioned in the battle gear. The sword is the sword of the Spirit. By the way, we have the Trinity in this passage. God's armor, the Messiah's strength and armor, and the Spirit's sword. This sword is the Word of God. We have even read of Jesus' resistance against Satan in the wilderness as he quoted Scripture. Ventura, do you believe that the Bible is *that* powerful? So often, I think Christians run to so many other solutions – either not thinking the Bible is powerful enough or they want a quicker fix. When we do that, I think we settle for putting Band-Aids on gaping wounds. God himself says that we must believe the power of the Scriptures and use that in the warfare. Whatever the timeframe or resistance we experience, we must resolutely believe that God's Word is far greater than words that come from my puny wisdom. So, in battle, that's why we as a church emphasize the Scriptures so much. With the Word, we have eternal sustenance! That's our offensive weapon against all deception!

I trust we see that when Paul says to put on God's battle gear, he's actually saying that we need to "put on" those things that we already have!

But now that I've gone through all of this, you could be thinking, "I thought this was a sermon about *prayer*?! What does all this have to do with *prayer*?" Ah, good point. I did say earlier that **In order to engage in spiritual warfare, we need to embrace God and put on his battle gear through prayer.** So why haven't I spoken more on prayer up to this point? Because I think the point is made when we recognize just how fierce the battle is and how glorious our God is, and then we say, "None of this matters without prayer. You're dead on the battlefield without prayer." That's what we see in verse 18: "praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints . . ." ¹⁴

Some people can focus so much on the gear that I think they might miss *everything*. If you're focusing on trying to put on and wield the gear apart from verse 18, you're going to make *no progress whatsoever*. All you're doing is depending on and esteeming yourself. That's not faith, and apart from faith, it's impossible to please God. Instead, we need to think of putting on the armor this way: You have a little child who's 2 years old. They need to put on their clothes in the morning. You say, "You need to put on your shirt," but are you saying that they're going to get it on all by themselves? No way! You put the shirt on over their head, and guide their arms into it. You put on their diaper. You put on their pants or skirt. You put on their leggings or socks and shoes. You said, "Put it on," and while they have it on, you ultimately did it.

Paul tells us that we embrace God and put on the gear through prayer: "praying at all times in the Spirit." From the moment you wake up to the moment you go to sleep, you should be praying throughout – asking for the Spirit's strength and wisdom – depending on his Sword. And, Paul emphasizes the need to pray by saying that we should pray with prayer and supplication. This is zealous, persevering, persistent praying. Then we're told we are to keep alert and continue to be praying not only for your own selves, but for the believers! **Apart from prayer, we have no energy. Apart from prayer, we won't revel in righteousness, salvation, Truth. Without prayer, we won't understand the Word of God. We won't grow in faith. We won't be discerning against the enemy. Without prayer, we have no faith. Without prayer, we'll assume or forget the gospel of peace.**

Do you want to fight sin? Do you want to grow in holiness? Do you recognize you're on the battlefield as a soldier? Pray! Since God's your strength and he will answer your prayers, you can trust the eternal Creator! Someday, all believers are going to see God, and he is going to call us victorious, and it's not because of us, but because of him and his strength at work in us. Someday the God of peace will crush Satan underneath our feet (see Rom. 16:19-20) – and it's to his name that belongs all the glory as he impelled us through prayer to do this. To be without prayer is to be without faith. To be without faith is to be without God. But to have God is to have everything – all his gifts. And if you have God and his gifts, pray! May his promises strengthen our resolve to be a persistently praying people.

¹⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Eph 6:18.